Multiracial Women Administrators' Sense of Belonging on Campus:
A Qualitative *Plática* Approach

By

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored sources of belonging for multiracial women administrators via diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practices undertaken at a historically white university, specifically UC Berkeley. This study infused storytelling through *pláticas* (interactive interviews) conversations with five individual participants, and one group *plática* (interactive focus group) with five research participants and the researcher. A four-element framework was designed to incorporate various critical theoretical perspectives to address the complexity of the participants' experiences. The findings from this study captured participants' experiences pertaining to their self-identity, perceptions from others, and the iterative nature of self-reflection that informed their experiences in the workplace. DEIB policies and practices were discussed regarding the inherent challenges, invisibility, and offensive demands to be a "bridge" between People of Color and white people. Participants advocated for multiracial affinity spaces in order to establish community and situate their unique experiences. As indicated through participants' experiences, this research elevates the multidimensional nature of intersectionality in the workplace and encourages to expand existing DEIB practices in order to better encompass a holistic sense of belonging.

Keywords: multiracial women administrators, sense of belonging, DEIB practices

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Dedication

To all the multiracial women who battle feelings of invisibility, and feel like you don't belong—I hear you and see you. You are enough. As an adaptation of the words from Maggie Kuhn, I encourage you to "speak your truth, even if your voice shakes."

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> It has been my experience that one way to build community…is to recognize the value of each individual voice. (hooks, 1994, p. 40).

As hooks (1994) described, valuing individual voices is an important way to build community. This research study illuminates the power of voice through *pláticas* in order to uplift the lived experiences of multiracial[1] women administrators and their sense of belonging at a historically white[2] institution.[3]

As a way to role model the authenticity and co-construction of knowledge deeply infused into the *plática* methodology, I situated this research as both the researcher and a participant. I have been told I am not Black enough, or that I am too white to identify as a Person of Color. When I share my identity, people have second-guessed that I am multiracial—specifically Black and white, with Native American ancestry. In a nation that is often binaried around race—white or People of Color—I have been divided. I have been excluded from race-related community spaces: white affinity group spaces and spaces for People of Color. Community as a multiracial woman within higher education has always been a question mark for me. This challenged my sense of belonging, first as a student within higher education spaces and now as an administrator within higher education. This changed when I began connecting with other multiracial women

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[1] For the purposes of this research, the term "multiracial" is an umbrella term that is meant to describe people who have more than one racial identity, in which some may choose to identify as "two or more races," "biracial," "mixed," or "multiracial."

[2] Guided by the work of Harris (2017) and Pérez Huber (2010), I chose to capitalize Black, Latina, Asian, and other minoritized group labels, including People of Color and Women of Color, "as a form of linguistic empowerment" (Harris, 2017, p. 1055). I have not capitalized white to challenge hegemonic frames that situate white as dominant and to reduce the power that comes with capitalization of the term "white" (Pérez Huber, 2010, p. 93).

[3] This is situated within the framework of historically white institutions (HWIs) (Harris, 2019), by which whiteness is a "structuring property" that "shapes the consciousness of individuals and "systematically deforms—and informs—every aspect of the social world" (Owen, 2007, p. 208) including the individual experiences of multiracial people (Harris, 2019). Hence, the term HWI is referenced in my research in order to describe whiteness as a structuring property embedded into the foundation of the University of California Berkeley.

leaders after 16 years within higher education. These networks were a saving grace for me in terms of being seen, heard, and included as a multiracial woman leader.

The impetus for this study was to better understand the experiences of multiracial women administrators beyond my own singular experience, especially in light of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) policies and practices that have been elevated across higher education institutions. I explored the following research question: In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? In this introduction, I will highlight the importance of sense of belonging in relation to the experiences of multiracial women administrators, and also provide background and contextual information within the specific context of UC Berkeley where this study is situated.

My experiences of exclusion and inclusion based on personal and social identities relate to what has been discussed in psychological literature as a *sense of belonging*. Sense of belonging is important because it describes the sense of connectedness one has to their environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), as well as whether one feels respected, accepted, valued, and that they matter (Strayhorn, 2019). The concept of sense of belonging has been previously researched to examine college student retention, cocurricular involvement, and group membership for students of color (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Sense of belonging emerged as an important consideration when there were concerns about students leaving higher education without degree attainment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). There was also research focused on the transition and integration into the campus community for students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Current sense of belonging research within higher education has been focused on students, which creates a gap regarding the experiences of higher education administrators. Administrators serve a key role on campus (Rush & Olivier, 2021) in which they are often responsible for creating and increasing students' sense of belonging. According to Settles-Tidwell (2021), there is a gap in literature focused on the impacts of sense of belonging for administrators within higher education. My research aimed to fill parts of this gap regarding sense of belonging within the context of administrators, with a focus specifically on multiracial women administrators.

Thus, although cultivating a sense of belonging is important for students, it is pertinent for the staff experience as well. Specifically, in the context of the University of California (UC) Berkeley, where this research is situated, 19% of minoritized staff reported experiencing exclusionary behaviors over the past 12 months, such as fearing for one's personal safety, experiencing hostile/offensive behaviors, or being singled out as a spokesperson for one's group (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022d). These statistics suggest the importance for conversations and research regarding sense of belonging for the staff experience at UC Berkeley. Hence, this research uplifts the intentional need to incorporate more opportunities and structural support for initiatives aimed to address a sense of belonging.

The spirit of this work points to the impact of a sense of belonging on institutional progress—not only towards inclusive practices but on individuals' ability to navigate and persist to academic success. In this case, the corollary to minoritized students leveraging their sense of belonging to persist towards academic success would be multiracial administrative leaders leveraging their sense of belonging to advance in their careers and also as beneficiaries of campus policies geared towards DEIB initiatives. A focus on professional staff in terms of sense

of belonging is crucial for realizing the aspirations of DEIB efforts in higher education. It helps to hold institutions accountable for their commitment to infusing a DEIB lens throughout the campus experience.

Sense of belonging for multiracial women is crucial to discuss because their experiences are important and often overlooked in the research. Previous research highlighted threats to sense of belonging for multiracial people, such as multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011) and feelings of isolation (Harris, 2017). Research on multiracial students paralleled research on belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and emphasized a lack of acceptance and limited institutional structures to support multiracial people (Harris, 2019). Research on Women of Color highlighted feelings of isolation, loneliness, and imposter syndrome (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). However, there is limited research from an intersectional lens focused specifically on multiracial women administrators. Emerging research by Harris (2019) has started to broach this topic, and argued multiracial women experienced a hostile campus climate with limited institutional structures that support multiracial people.

Multiracial individuals are steadily growing as a population within higher education. Increased awareness of multiracial populations may be attributed to recent requirements that now allow students, faculty, and staff to select two or more racial groups on demographic information forms (Jackson et al., 2020). Although multiracial populations are rising, monoracial paradigms and structures within education often limit space for individuals with two or more races to be recognized (Jackson et al., 2020). These monoracial paradigms are directly connected to *monoracism*, which is defined as the "social system of psychological inequality where individuals who do not fit monoracial categories may be oppressed on system and interpersonal

levels because of underlying assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 125).

This concept of monoracism stems from the denial of multiple coexisting racial identities in favor of a single monoracial categorization (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). Monoracism has at least two impacts that exist simultaneously in reference to a sense of belonging. Firstly, monoracism operates as a system of power based on race that reinforces the institutionalization of exclusive categories of racial/ethnic identity. Secondly, it potentially erodes the sense of belonging of individuals with intersecting racial/ethnic identities. Both impacts undermine campus DEIB efforts by removing the options for being represented holistically, as the norm is often to force people to conform to binaried racial categories. Monoracial structures often exist through specific forms and paperwork where multiracial individuals can only check one box for racial background or category and limited formalized groups or connection opportunities for multiracial people (Harris, 2017). This monocentric framework within higher education may lead to multiracial microaggressions and feelings of isolation (Harris, 2017). It is important to consider what support mechanisms are in place within the work setting to counteract these monocentric paradigms and multiracial microaggressions, which impact a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators.

One way that higher education institutions have attempted to disrupt the barriers to sense of belonging is the establishment of race-based affinity groups. These affinity groups were often formed to create community among individuals based on shared identities such as race (Davis et al., 2020). Research by Pour-Khorshid (2018) demonstrated the need for racial affinity spaces as a way to focus on the struggles that critical educators of color experienced and opportunities for solidarity.

In addition to affinity groups that may be offered within select higher education institutions, campus DEIB initiatives help to strengthen sense of belonging. At UC Berkeley, some common DEIB initiatives occur through workshops or trainings that are mandatory for staff. For instance, the UC system has a six-series module about managing implicit bias designed to increase awareness of implicit bias and reduce its impact within the university community (University of California UCnet, 2022). In my experience as a hiring manager at UC Berkeley within the past few years, there have been two required trainings for staff-led recruitment committees: Managing Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process and Search Advisory and Hiring Committee Best Practices, which included information regarding implicit bias.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging was formed in the summer of 2020 in response to the "double pandemic," referring to the major impact of the COVID-19 virus and the escalation of ever-present racial discrimination and systemic racism (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022c, p. 78). As described by Forrester (2021), the context of COVID-19 also involved racism, social uprisings, and police brutality that coincided with the pandemic. It is important to connect these elements in regards to the impact of the pandemic.

Considering that the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging is still relatively new at UC Berkeley, information is still being populated and explored. There is a website that features programs, resources, and opportunities for UC Berkeley staff in regards to the role of DEIB on campus (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022c). Specific data in this report highlight the 28 staff organizations available at UC Berkeley (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022c). As this is an emerging office with regards to focus on the staff experience, at the time of publication of this dissertation, there is limited information regarding the specific impact of DEIB initiatives on staff.

UC Berkeley's Division of Equity and Inclusion provides leadership and accountability for the campus to integrate equity, inclusion, and diversity into campus life (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022a), yet there is always work to be done. In addition, it falls on all of us within the campus community to better engage with DEIB practices at various levels and within our sphere of influence. Sense of belonging is a relevant concept and priority for all individuals within the campus community.

This study explored how multiracial women administrators experienced a sense of belonging on campus, especially within the context of a historically white institution with increased DEIB practices and initiatives. I incorporated the *plática* methodology to have candid conversations with five research participants in order to share ideas, knowledge, and memories (Delgado Bernal, 2020; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). We engaged in reciprocal story sharing that disrupted traditional forms of Western research (Delgado Bernal, 2020; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) in order to better understand a sense of belonging in relation to experiences as multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. Through these unique *pláticas* and research findings, this study unveils the critical rationale for expanded concepts pertaining to sense of belonging, the urgency for incorporating intersectional frames within DEIB practices, and increased institutional support for elements of belonging and DEIB. In the remaining sections of this introduction, I will provide additional background and context to emphasize the importance of sense of belonging for staff and advocate for intentional focus on multiracial women administrators within the context of UC Berkeley.

Background and Context

Administrators, also known as professional staff, are the largest population of nonfaculty staff within higher education institutions and serve a key role in the daily functions to advance

institutional missions (Rush & Olivier, 2021). Findings of the current limited research on administrators have demonstrated the value of administrators and staff within the higher education environment (Rush & Olivier, 2021). The increased diversity of students in college environments has prompted attention to ensuring faculty and staff are matching these growing diversity numbers (Kwon, 2017). Previous research illuminated the pertinence of staff diversity within higher education institutions (Kwon, 2017; Settles-Tidwell, 2021). This staff diversity is necessary for many reasons: to acknowledge multiple identities and ways of thinking, to support the growing diverse populations of students, and to contribute to the broader mission of the university (Kwon, 2017).

Staff diversity at large is an important consideration, it is especially important to consider the specific groups that may or may not often be included in the limited available research. More specifically, this gap in research may further connect to the absence of conversations related to a sense of belonging for staff. Sense of belonging has been studied and explored for student populations to better understand retention and support needs (Hoffman et al., 2002), specifically for students of color and underrepresented groups (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). This research highlighted a connection between campus climate and sense of belonging and indicated that students benefit from membership in shared community spaces (Hoffman et al., 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Although the overwhelming amount of existing research helps to better understand student needs, research is lacking with regards to the staff experience. Rush and Olivier (2021) emphasized the importance of research on the staff experience. Staff are engaged in their positions, perceive their work contributions as positive, and strive to be student centered while also being mindful of revenue generation, supporting faculty, partnering with the community,

and overall supporting the institution (Rush & Olivier, 2021). Research regarding Women of Color leaders parallels the research regarding the importance of sense of belonging for students. Previous research highlighted the feelings of isolation, loneliness, and burnout (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021) and encouraged the need for networks and allies as a form of support (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). Furthermore, research by Settles-Tidwell (2021) indicated there are considerable gaps regarding sense of belonging for Women of Color in leadership. More specifically, there is limited research regarding Women of Color and their intersectional identities, particularly for multiracial women who exist beyond the single categories of race.

I have made connections from previous research that highlight potential challenges and barriers to sense of belonging for multiracial individuals. Research has indicated multiracial individuals experience monoracism, in which white supremacy manifests in the idea that single-race identities are the norm and used as an element of privilege (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), especially within educational structures (Harris, 2017; Jackson & Samuels, 2019; Jackson et al., 2013; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020). In addition, research has highlighted multiracial microaggressions that often challenge one's feeling of being seen, heard, and included (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011). These factors, compounded with the feelings of isolation, loneliness, and burnout addressed by Women of Color administrators, may impact one's sense of belonging to the campus community. Therefore, there is a need to address research pertaining to the sense of belonging with an intersectional lens to better situate the experiences of multiracial women administrators.

This qualitative study involved *pláticas* with participants who either currently work at UC Berkeley or have worked there within the past five years. UC Berkeley is known for the Free

Speech Movement, strong student activism, and operating with a diversity and equity focus. Despite the launch of a Division of Equity and Inclusion over a decade ago (Settles-Tidwell, 2021) and increased initiatives focused on DEIB, concepts pertaining to equity and inclusion may not be as widely applicable for multiracial staff.

With a sense of belonging in mind, in this current climate where DEIB initiatives are becoming more established on campus, it is important to consider who is included in these policies and practices and who may be excluded. According to Kwon (2017), an inclusive culture is beyond "recruiting a certain quota of people with underrepresented identities, but about having leadership that is invested in filling an organization with people who are from various multiple identities and ways of thinking, supporting them all to perform their highest potential" (p. 13). With this in mind, there are specific initiatives at UC Berkeley aimed to improve recruitment and campus climate for people of underrepresented ethnic minority students, such as the African American Initiative and the Latinx Thriving University initiative (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022b; UC Berkeley Hispanic Serving Institution Initiative, 2022). Although the staff experience is not clearly addressed in these initiatives, staff are often chairing the committees and pushing the initiatives forward. Race-based staff organizations are in existence at UC Berkeley, but are divided into categories that present as monoracial in nature, such as the Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance, Black Staff & Faculty Organization, Filipinx Faculty & Staff Association, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), and the Native & Indigenous Council (Identity Based Staff Orgs, 2022).

Racial-based affinity groups that appear monoracial in nature may cause multiracial individuals to feel excluded. The element of monoracism through data reporting has compounded my feelings of exclusion as a campus administrator and affirms the importance of

this research study. More specifically, at UC Berkeley there is no specific demographic data for multiracial students or staff (UC Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis, 2022b). There are categorical data for underrepresented minority students at large and for specific monoracial categories, but there is not a section for multiracial individuals (UC Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis, 2022b). Although the assumption is that everyone at a university would feel a sense of inclusion because of the aforementioned initiatives and data reports, the *pláticas* in this research revealed that not every group feels included. This stemmed from the element of monoracism, which is a reflection of a system of power built on singular racial categories that continues to shape these DEIB initiatives.

This study builds on previous research regarding sense of belonging and further explored the concept of sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators. Challenges/barriers to sense of belonging and institutional recommendations for increased sense of belonging were discussed in this study. Lastly, implications for policy and practice were addressed, as well as recommendations for future research. This study concludes with a researcher's reflection to delve further into my thoughts going into my research, lessons learned, my role as researcher and participant, and takeaways as a scholar practitioner.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study was undertaken to explore the sense of belonging of multiracial women administrators at a historically white institution of higher education. First, the literature review discusses the relevant research on sense of belonging, as it was a central concept of concern in this work. Second, the review proceeds with an examination of the literature regarding multiracial women on campus given that multiracial women are the focus for this study. More specifically, challenges and barriers to sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators are discussed, including monoracism and monocentricity in higher education and multiracial microaggressions. Potential sources of belonging for multiracial women administrators are further explored, including affinity groups as counterspaces for belonging.

Previous research and definitions pertaining to sense of belonging have often focused on the student experience. For example, Strayhorn (2019) described a sense of belonging as it pertains to whether students feel respected, accepted, valued, cared for, and included and that they matter. In research that explored how culturally engaging campus environments influence sense of belonging, Museus et al. (2018) emphasized that college educators serving diverse undergraduate students should make efforts to provide holistic support and serve as conduits to connect students to broader campus support networks.

Although this may be a valid hope and lofty goal for staff to accomplish, it is important to consider who is supporting staff in these endeavors. Senior administrative staff play an important role on campus as visible leaders and role models whom students look towards and who also guide university decisions (Kwon, 2017). While staff are continually focused on students and their sense of belonging, there is a considerable gap in research and focus on belonging for

campus administrators. With this in mind, there are limited definitions and measures associated with a sense of belonging for higher education staff.

In the context of this study, a sense of belonging is described as feeling seen, heard, and included in the campus community. For the purpose of this project, sense of belonging refers to the psychological feeling of belonging or connectedness, whether it is connection to a cultural, professional, or other type of group or community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). I applied this notion of sense of belonging by exploring ways in which multiracial women administrators experience belonging via DEIB practices at a historically white institution.

There are gaps in the research regarding sense of belonging and the administrator experience within higher education. Therefore, I have adapted this information based on definitions and findings from previous research focused on sense of belonging for students in the university environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2019), as well as sense of belonging scales used to measure concepts of belonging associated with conversations about race, racial discrimination, and privilege (Kernahan et al., 2014). The commonalities associated with sense of belonging for both students and staff can be directly connected to race and the impacts of identity. For example, research has indicated the power of connection based on shared group membership (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and the importance of allies and support networks as a form of retention and support in order to balance feelings of isolation and loneliness (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). Although previous research has not directly connected the experiences of students and staff in terms of sense of belonging, parallel connections can be made that inform the trajectory of future research needs.

There are recent innovations in the literature about multiracial staff experiences that I build from (Harris, 2017). In order to accomplish that, I incorporated studies that explored a

sense of belonging. I answered what we already know from the research and what we need to know to address my guiding research question: In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? This literature review takes up other research that has explored these topics, including sense of belonging within educational settings at large, experiences of Women of Color administrators and why belonging is important to address, previous research specifically focused on multiracial individuals and belonging, and challenges/barriers and potential sources of sense of belonging for multiracial individuals.

Sense of Belonging in Higher Education Communities

Research has pointed to the importance of facilitating a sense of belonging within campus communities across a variety of identities and solidarities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Settles-Tidwell, 2021). However, previous research regarding sense of belonging tended to focus on the student experience (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kernahan et al., 2014). Parallels from this research may be connected to the administrator experience on campus, but few studies directly broached this topic. Previous research regarding sense of belonging helped to highlight the sense of connectedness college students may have with their environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In addition, this concept of sense of belonging was applied to examine student retention and cocurricular involvement for students of color (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

According to Hurtado and Carter (1997), sense of belonging contained both affective and cognitive elements that impacted how an individual evaluated their role in the group. Specifically, studying a sense of belonging helped researchers identify which forms of social interaction enhanced students' affiliation with their colleges (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In

studying a sense of belonging, researchers assessed which forms of social interaction enhanced students' affiliation and identity with their respective colleges (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Hurtado and Carter tested a conceptual model of sense of belonging to examine how Latino students' college experiences in their first and second years contributed to their sense of belonging in their third year.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) used Tinto's (1975) model of student departure as a premise, and referenced a sense of belonging as "cohesion among diverse students" (Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 328). In their research, Hurtado & Carter hypothesized a model of students' sense of belonging that showed a causal relationship between students' background characteristics (gender and academic self-concept), transition to college in first year, and perceptions of hostile racial climate in second year. The study combined four sources of survey data on students as part of a longitudinal study of Latino college students among top Pre-SAT achievers who were semifinalists for a national scholarship award; data collection for 237 respondents was included as part of this research (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Findings showed membership in social–community organizations for Latino students led to a stronger association with a sense of belonging at their college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). When applied to this research study regarding multiracial women administrators, the potential corollary for these affective and cognitive elements may connect to the importance of social–community spaces and self-representation in group membership, which may inform a sense of belonging.

Although the findings are important to acknowledge, the longitudinal data collection method over a 3-year period, combined with a survey methodology, created limited space for additional factors to be considered. Furthermore, the research was limited to the connection between sense of belonging and academic activities and/or student organizations. It is important

to consider additional factors associated with a sense of belonging beyond structured academic activities or student organizations. Nevertheless, as demonstrated through the increased focus on the staff experience with regards to DEIB at the University of California (UC) Berkeley (UC Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022c), opportunities for navigating a sense of belonging are important within the campus community.

Previous research has aimed to develop, test, and refine instruments to better understand the concept of a sense of belonging. In their research to develop a perceived cohesion scale to capture how individuals feel connection to certain groups, Bollen and Hoyle (1990) identified two dimensions that were important: sense of belonging and feelings of morale associated with group membership. This Perceived Cohesion Scale has been tested in various populations, including colleges, cities, and nations; it is utilized to understand collective affiliations that can contribute to one's sense of belonging to a larger community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Sense of belonging was further operationalized through a sense of belonging scale adapted from research by Kernahan et al. (2014). This scale was created based on research regarding sense of belonging and how students' feelings correlated with learning about race in a classroom setting (Kernahan et al., 2014). The researchers hypothesized that feelings of belonging within the classroom correlated with student learning about race (Kernahan et al., 2014). Data were collected from 134 participants across three courses focused on race and diversity at the same university in the Midwest (Kernahan et al., 2014). Anonymous survey data were collected through a pretest during the first day of class and posttest during finals week (Kernahan et al., 2014). Both surveys included the same measure of racial attitudes associated with racism and racial privilege; only the posttest included questions about belonging and demographic questions (Kernahan et al., 2014). A sense of belonging scale was created for the

survey, which consisted of statements based on a sense of belongingness, trust of others, feeling secure, and feeling listened to in the class (Kernahan et al., 2014). This scale drew the connection to affective statements pertaining to feeling heard and developing trust and a level of belongingness that was important to situate within my research study.

Research findings indicated that across all three courses, feelings of belonging predicted perceptions of learning, graded forms of learning, and increase in racial awareness (Kernahan et al., 2014). These results make a direct connection to sense of belonging as positively correlated with students' learning, their grades, and awareness of racial privilege and discrimination (Kernahan et al., 2014). Although there are limitations in the ways sense of belonging was measured from beginning to end of the course, this research draws parallels related to sense of belonging and conversations about race. This research created a sense of belonging measurement scale that can be used for future research. These scales and previous research help to provide framing for the concept of sense of belonging, which can be very broad.

Sense of belonging as a concept is relatively new within research settings, but it is clear educators can do more to enhance this concept. In order to advance the goals of DEIB, it is imperative we focus on a sense of belonging within the realm of higher education—more specifically, to focus on the intersectional experiences of multiracial women administrators. A way to center this conversation is to explore previous research regarding sense of belonging for Women of Color in higher education.

Sense of Belonging for Women of Color

As discussed in research by Settles-Tidwell (2021), the initial design of higher education was not intended for women and People of Color. Several researchers have focused on Women of Color administrators and their experiences within educational communities (Huang, 2012;

Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). Many Women of Color in academia have expressed feelings of isolation, loneliness, burnout, and imposter syndrome (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021). Studies also show the importance of allies and support networks for Women of Color as a form of retention and support (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). These studies are foundational grounding points that highlight experiences of Women of Color in leadership and make loose connections with the importance of a sense of belonging.

Settles-Tidwell (2021) briefly connected concepts associated with sense of belonging and experiences of Women of Color administrators. Settles-Tidwell emphasized the gap in research about how underrepresented Women of Color administrators negotiate their relationships as "outsiders" within historically white institutions and "insiders" to challenge institutional inequities like racism and sexism that impact marginalized students and staff (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). Research by Settles-Tidwell explored the lived experiences and tools used by female administrators focused on social justice to work within historically white institutions and make institutional change that benefited marginalized groups. Settles-Tidwell focused on the imposter syndrome that participants battled, in which they experienced moments of self-doubt and perceived themselves as not smart or skilled enough. Many Women of Color in academia reported feelings of isolation, loneliness, and burnout as a result of tokenism and stereotypes (Huang, 2012). These feelings and experiences can strongly impact connection to their sense of belonging within the work setting (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021).

Women of Color administrators described an internal battle within themselves about identity, in which they actively did not identify as an administrator or feel like they belonged at their institution (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). This lack of belonging persisted, even as participants moved to top positions within their organization (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). This concept of

belonging was limited in Settles-Tidwell's (2021) research, which demonstrates the importance for continued research on this topic for women administrators, especially Women of Color.

General research themes related to Women of Color in higher education have focused on strong supportive networks as a way to build community and sustain participants in their administrator roles on campus (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). Other significant research contributions regarding Women of Color administrators emphasized the importance of acknowledging their work and need for institutional support (Huang, 2012; Warren, 2019). Warren (2019) uplifted the experiences of Black women leaders and urged academia to analyze and change efforts to "recruit, retain, and develop educational administrators of these same groups who are charged with the care and responsibility" for people in higher education institutions (p. 2).

The roles of institutional allies, mentors, and networks of support are critical to Women of Color administrators and help them maneuver their roles as leaders, challenge microaggressions, and develop a sense of support and community (Huang, 2012; Warren, 2019). As part of her research, Warren (2019) explored how support networks impact retention of Black women confronted with racial microaggressions within the community college system. Warren performed qualitative interviews with 15 Black women administrators within the community college setting. Research participants shared that they employed the support of family members, friends, and mentors to cope with racial microaggressions they experienced in their roles as college administrators (Warren, 2019). Based on this information, Warren emphasized that support networks provide women administrators with a source of empowerment and encouragement, validate their experiences, and are essential to their success and retention within their colleges.

Although the previous research highlighted significant experiences pertaining to Women of Color leaders, it was lacking in participants who identified as multiracial. It was unclear about categories used to define someone as a "Woman of Color" in the research context and whether multiracial women would be included in this category. This further perpetuates the monoracial framework that is often the dominant narrative in research. Hence, this research study draws attention to the need for expanded focus to ensure multiracial women are included in the conversation.

Sense of Belonging for Multiracial Women on Campus

One of the leading researchers on multiracial women has studied experiences of multiracial students and staff within higher education (Harris, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019). Research by Harris (2015) has expanded knowledge about multiracial college students' experiences, led to the emergence of multiracial critical race theory (MultiCrit; Harris, 2016), and continued to uplift the unique lens of multiracial women within historically white institutions (Harris, 2019). Her work has focused on multiracial women and helped to fill a gap within the research community.

For dissertation research, Harris (2015) explored multiracial participants' racialized experiences on campus as a way to expand limited knowledge about multiracial college students. Harris (2015) conducted 30 qualitative interviews with 10 multiracial women undergraduate students attending a predominantly white institution. Harris (2015) used a critical qualitative approach and narrative inquiry to center the voices of multiracial women in order to challenge the status quo and detail how they encounter the world. Harris (2015) analyzed the data using critical race theory and critical race feminism, and identified themes regarding multiracial women and racial stereotypes, coping with racialized experiences, multiracial microaggressions,

and the manifestation of whiteness on campus. Participants noted how intersections of race and gender influenced how women navigated their experiences on campus (Harris, 2015).

As a follow-up to this study through the use of dissertation data, Harris (2016) produced a research article pertaining to the applicability of critical race theory as a frame for multiracial students in higher education. Harris (2016) operationalized key constructs by building from the concepts of critical race theory to inform MultiCrit, which expands information to include specifics regarding the intersections of multiple racial identities. MultiCrit is further described in Chapter 3, which includes the Theoretical Framework section of this dissertation.

Harris (2019) also explored multiracial women students' social interactions at a historically white institution to disrupt the privileged location of whiteness and systems of domination in higher education. In three semistructured interviews with 10 multiracial women college students, major themes described how multiracial women did not fit with monoracial communities and a lack of visibility in spaces on campus (Harris, 2019). Participants indicated a lack of acceptance into monoracial communities because they did not fit into stereotypical understandings of monoracial things, such as "how one should look (Asian enough), speak (Spanish), and act (sing and step)" (Harris, 2019, p. 1039). Participants also named institutional components that supported racial boundaries across monoracial categories, such as low structural diversity and a hostile campus climate (Harris, 2019). These factors, combined with the lack of a multiracial community and limited institutional structures to support multiracial people (e.g., no physical space for multiracial people), constrained multiracial women's interactions on campus (Harris, 2019). Participants discussed how the lack of multiracial community contributed to their feelings of invisibility on campus (Harris, 2019). This research demonstrated how the lack of

belonging and connection impacted experiences of multiracial women students on campus. Furthermore, it also highlighted lack of institutional structures and support for multiracial people.

Challenges/Barriers to Sense of Belonging for Multiracial Women Administrators

Monoracism and Monocentricity in Higher Education

Dominant constructions of race, which are rooted in white supremacy, often privilege single-race identities (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). Monoracism is the manifestation of three dominant ideologies within US society: white supremacy (a system that protects and privileges whiteness and white people's entitlement to power, dominance, and control; used to justify processes of dehumanizing, killing, and enslavement of people who are not white), monocentricity (viewing single-race identities as the norm and using that as an element of privilege), and racial essentialism (belief that race is an internal and external characteristic that is biologically inherited) (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). Monoracism has been identified as a major stressor impacting identity development, which incites feelings of confusion, isolation, and exclusion (Jackson et al., 2013). This reinforces and enables the unique kind of racism and discrimination that multiracial people experience, which often leaves them to battle monoracism alone (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). It is difficult, according to these researchers, to put words to these experiences because it is often hard to explain the feelings and impacts of monoracism.

Harris (2017) highlighted how monoracism operated within higher education. Harris (2017) described institutional monoracism as "the vein that carries and embeds white ideology, the disease, throughout society and education, giving rise to Multiracial microaggressions, a symptom of the disease" (p. 1068). One's multiraciality is often denied in institutional spaces due to monoracial structures, such as through specific forms and paperwork where people can check only one box for racial background, as well as limited student and faculty groups and

organizations (Harris, 2017). This parallels research regarding experiences of Women of Color in academia, who have expressed similar feelings of isolation, loneliness, and burnout (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021). These shared experiences highlight the importance of the potential impact of monoracism as it affects multiracial administrators' sense of belonging.

Research by Jackson et al. (2020) and Stohry and Aronson (2021) demonstrated how the identities of multiracial faculty and staff impacted their experiences within higher education. Their studies illuminate the monoracial paradigms that exist within higher education and the impact they have on multiracial individuals (Jackson et al., 2020; Stohry & Aronson, 2021). For example, research by Stohry and Aronson highlights the assumptions others have made about multiracial individuals, even questioning their presence in certain spaces, which raises feelings of invalidation or legitimacy. With this in mind, Stohry and Aronson argued for urgent shifts in education to legitimize the complexities and "unseen nuances/faces of race" (p. 16). This argument aligns with the idea of challenging monoracial paradigms, which are often rooted in dominant ideologies around race.

Jackson et al. (2020) centered their research within a MultiCrit framework to address the monocentric spaces, structures, and policies that multiracial individuals navigate in the higher education environment. Jackson et al. (2020) performed a qualitative study with four multiracial women faculty participants, all with a multiracial background of Black and white. This research was unique because it was a polyethnography and created space for participants to "collectively explore our multiracial identity experiences in higher education in lieu of dominant paradigms of white supremacy…and monocentricity" (Jackson et al., 2020, p.171). This methodology is important because it emphasized research outside of the dominant monoracial categories, which often create strict parameters for data collection. Furthermore, it creates an avenue for the

participants to tell their own stories (Jackson et al., 2020), and there is power in being able to do this on their own terms.

The findings of Jackson et al. (2020) demonstrate how participants were forced to choose one identity, which caused internal and external pressure to limit themselves to fit into a monoracial category. This led to a focus on the multidimensionality of being multiracial, in which there are varying experiences despite similar racial categories (Jackson et al., 2020). Findings from the polyethnography reveal that despite these varying racial identity labels and expressions, the monoracial paradigm continues to be embedded within higher education (Jackson et al., 2020). It is important to further explore the impacts of these pressures and what multiracial women do to counteract these experiences. This informs the underlying component of my research regarding the monoracial paradigm and impacts on sense of belonging. The demand is to reshape these structures in order to acknowledge multiracial women administrators and affirm their presence on campus. Although monoracism is rampant and infused within education settings, there are additional challenges to sense of belonging that may also be experienced more regularly for multiracial people, including multiracial microaggressions.

Multiracial Microaggressions

Multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011) stem from research regarding microaggressions, which are the layered, cumulative, subtle, and unconscious forms of racism that target People of Color (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020; Solórzano et al., 2000). According to Solórzano et al. (2000), racial microaggressions have a negative influence on the collegiate racial climate. Racial microaggressions are a form of everyday racism that keeps students of color "in their place" at the margins of predominantly white universities (Yosso & Benavides López, 2010, p. 87). The

culminating effects of microaggressions may lead to feelings of rejection on campus (Yosso & Benavides López, 2010).

The impacts of racial microaggressions have strong impacts on individuals within the college setting. Research has evolved to focus specifically on multiracial microaggressions and their impacts (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011). Most of this research has drawn attention to the existence of multiracial microaggressions (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nadal et al., 2011) and linked conversations about multiracial microaggressions and college students (Harris, 2015; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016).

As a leading researcher on multiracial microaggressions and administrators in education, Harris (2017) used a racial microaggressions analytical framework, critical race theory, and critical multiracial theory to explore multiracial campus professionals' experiences with multiracial microaggressions in higher education. This research focused on the racialized experiences of 24 multiracial campus professionals across the United States (Harris, 2017). The researcher utilized semistructured interviews for participants to respond to questions pertaining to support systems on campus, their institution's commitment to multiracial identities, and racial identity influence on experiences with colleagues (Harris, 2017). Research findings demonstrated that experiencing racial microaggressions results in racial battle fatigue, stifles capability to survive and work, and creates barriers from creating inclusive environments to promote student learning and development (Harris, 2017). This aligns with information shared by Jackson and Samuels (2019), in which they argued multiracial microaggressions impact one's development and sense of identity.

As discussed by this research, there are significant challenges/barriers to sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators. Some of these barriers include the element of monoracism that is embedded within our systems, including education (Harris, 2017; Jackson & Samuels, 2019), as well as multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011). With this in mind, it was an important element of this research study to explore opportunities to disrupt barriers and incorporate a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators in higher education.

Potential Sources of Sense of Belonging for Multiracial Women Administrators

Affinity Groups as Counterspaces for Belonging

As described throughout this research study, it is important to engage further in sources of belonging for multiracial women administrators, especially when considering DEIB initiatives and practices that currently exist at UC Berkeley. Previous research suggested sense of belonging was associated with stronger campus connections (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and whether one feels respected and accepted in their environment (Strayhorn, 2019). Research has demonstrated potential threats to sense of belonging for multiracial individuals within higher education, such as monoracism (Jackson & Samuels, 2019; Jackson et al., 2013), multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011), and feelings of isolation (Harris, 2017). With this in mind, it is important to consider potential sources of sense of belonging to counteract these barriers. Engaging with counterspaces, such as affinity groups, is one way to disrupt the challenges associated with these threats to sense of belonging.

Affinity groups are designed to provide space for people with similar racial or ethnic backgrounds to discuss issues that are important to them (Abdullah & McCormack, 2008).

Research by Yoo et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of creating a safe and affirming space to support one's multiracial identity. Yoo et al. developed the Multiracial Experiences Measure to assess the unique racialized experiences that impact multiracial people. Through two qualitative surveys of 300 multiracial people across the United States, Yoo et al. (2016) found common themes of experiences, including denial or rejection of one's multiracial identity and/or being questioned or wrongly classified by others because of an ambiguous racial appearance. With this in mind, one of the factors that helped to mitigate these impacts was to "create a third space" that is a safe and affirming space where one can feel supported with regards to their multiracial identity (Yoo et al., 2016). This third space could potentially be categorized similarly to a counterspace or affinity space.

Within the educational space, affinity groups have been convened for students who do not identify with dominant groups, and have often been offered in response to experiences of isolation and microaggressions (Myers et al., 2019). Students who participated in affinity groups had a strengthened sense of community and expressed a sense of relief to have a space and opportunity to talk about their concerns and struggles without a fear of alienation or judgment (Myers et al., 2019). Affinity groups are designated spaces for underrepresented individuals and provide a sense of community and connection.

Affinity groups can be viewed as a form of counterspaces, which disrupt the dominant systems and structures that exist within higher education. Yosso and Benavides López (2010) documented the significance of counterspaces in order to highlight the persistent struggles of survival and resistance for individuals on the margins of higher education. Counterspaces are forms of resistance against monoracism (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero et al.,

2020; Yoo et al., 2016) and multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017; Jackson & Samuels, 2019).

Multiracial counterspaces were described as a buffer for multiracial individuals who experience monoracism and other stressors (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). Counterspaces provide an escape from daily environments where multiracial people may experience "stigma, hostility, and marginalization" (Jackson & Samuels, 2019, p. 63). These spaces support and affirm multiracial identity as multiple and multidimensional (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). With this in mind, they may create the space to address dynamics of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) in terms of the multiplicity of various intersections of identity. Groups based on shared identity can provide a more intimate and supportive space to stimulate honest reflection and explore impacts of race and racism on everyday lives (Abdullah & McCormack, 2008), such as monoracism (Harris, 2017; Jackson & Samuels, 2019; Jackson et al., 2013; Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020) and microaggressions (Johnston-Guerrero et al., 2020; Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020; Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso & Benavides López, 2010). Multiracial affinity groups as counterspaces serve as one source for an increased sense of belonging among multiracial women administrators.

This literature review has discussed research on sense of belonging as a concept studied mainly within the context of college students. Previous research argues why sense of belonging is important to address for Women of Color administrators (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021). Parallels and connections can be made to this urgency for similar research regarding multiracial people in higher education (Harris, 2015, 2017, 2019), especially with potential barriers to sense of belonging in mind, such as monoracism (Harris, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020; Stohry & Aronson, 2021) and multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010;

Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011).There are further opportunities to explore elements of sense of belonging for this population group, especially with DEIB initiatives in mind. Having discussed the relevant literature that serves as the foundation for this study, in this next section I present the theoretical frameworks that were used to frame the parameters of this research.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Based on the insights gleaned from the literature regarding sense of belonging concepts and considerations for multiracial women administrators, I used five theories as an organizing framework to explore sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators at the University of California (UC) Berkeley: multiracial critical race theory (MultiCrit; Harris, 2016), multiracial cultural attunement (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), validation theory (Rendón, 1994), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and multidimensionality (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). In addition, a sense of belonging was further operationalized from a theoretical framework lens in this section of the research.

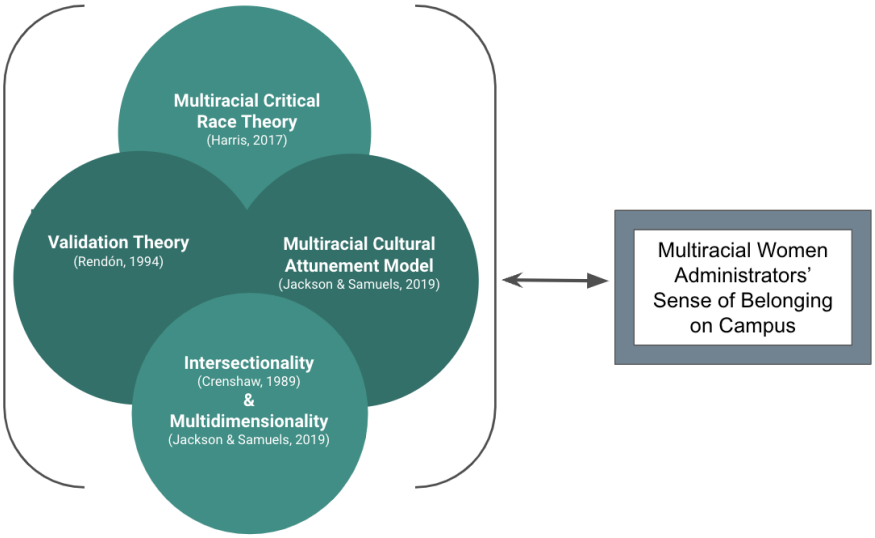
MultiCrit (Harris, 2016) gives voice to the experiences of multiracial individuals and is grounded in education. Multiracial cultural attunement (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) focuses on acknowledging and affirming multiracial individuals and their truths and disrupting oppressive social structures as a way to identify opportunities for change. Validation theory (Rendón, 1994) emphasizes the importance of environmental factors, organizational structures, and institutional agents to help individuals feel part of the educational community and cared about as a whole person. With regards to the experiences of a whole person, intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) emphasizes the intersections of racism and sexism for Women of Color. Together, these five theoretical frameworks operate in tandem to shed light on the experiences of multiracial women administrators and the potential impacts on the sense of belonging within higher education.

A visual representation of these combined theoretical frameworks is provided below in Figure 1. These five theoretical foundations are grouped together to indicate their shared connection with regards to the impact on sense of belonging for multiracial women

administrators. The overlapping circles indicate the theories can have an impact individually and at the same time collectively on multiracial women. The color of the circles is not indicative of a specific component for the visual; it is solely to differentiate the five specific theoretical foundations. The bidirectional arrows indicate these theories can inform multiracial women administrators' sense of belonging interchangeably. In addition, multiracial women administrators' sense of belonging may inform how these theories shape their experience.

Figure 1

A Four-Element Framework to Examine Sense of Belonging Among Multiracial Women Administrators



Multiracial Critical Race Theory (MultiCrit)

MultiCrit is a theoretical framework connected to my research because it gives voice to the experiences of multiracial individuals. Harris (2016) expanded on critical race theory and laid the foundation towards MultiCrit based on research involving multiracial women undergraduate students. This theory can be applied to multiracial campus staff, specifically multiracial women

administrators. This theory parallels the focus of my dissertation because it is grounded in experiences within higher education.

MultiCrit builds on the key concepts of critical race theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theorists use a CRT framework to center research focused on systems of oppressions that challenge and disrupt dominant ideologies ingrained in educational theory and practice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Pérez Huber, 2009). Specifically, "race and racism are endemic and permanent" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 472) within the United States context. CRT highlights the linkage to white supremacy and racial superiority, which manifests in institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). According to Ledesma and Calderón (2015), CRT effectively names and challenges the white supremacist patriarchy that has historically shaped educational opportunity. One symptom of this white supremacist patriarchy, among many, is the limited structures created to address racial categories that fall outside of a monolithic lens.

Although CRT is grounded in many aspects of research, there are critiques, which led to the creation of MultiCrit. Harris (2016) brought a critical perspective regarding CRT because it does not fully capture multiracial individuals' experiences due to the focus on a monoracial paradigm of race. Although CRT places emphasis on "naming one's own reality" or "voice," (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 56), there is no space for multiracial perspectives outside of the Black/white racial binary (Harris, 2016). There is a potential nod to the multiracial experience because CRT addresses the benefits and privileges associated with the proximity to whiteness, and how this shapes the perception of race (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This proximity to whiteness is important to acknowledge with regards to multiracial individuals, as some individuals may pass as monoracial white and therefore experience the privileges

associated with whiteness. Harris (2016) challenged the dominant ideology assumption that all multiracial individuals have white heritage. Furthermore, it is a gross assumption that because they have white heritage individuals can "traverse white communities, or that these individuals care to use these mechanisms to do so" (Harris, 2016, p. 810). Harris (2016) did not focus on passing in the construction of MultiCrit, but encouraged future research to explore this topic. Although passing and colorism are important to address, there is more to multiracial individuals and their experiences beyond their proximity to whiteness.

As an offshoot to CRT, MultiCrit centers the many racial experiences of multiracial individuals (Harris, 2016, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020). My study specifically concentrated on four of the eight tenets of MultiCrit: (a) experiential knowledge as a way to center multiracial voices and knowledge of their experience within higher education, (b) challenge to dominant ideologies centered around monoracism, (c) expansion of the multiracial paradigm beyond a single binary, and (d) understanding of the role of intersectionality for multiracial individuals to demonstrate how their racial background impacts their experiences on campus (Harris, 2016).

Dominant ideologies assume multiracial people do not experience their race or encounter racism (Harris, 2016). Highlighting the experiential knowledge of multiracial individuals disrupts these dominant ideologies regarding race and multiraciality and centers their voices (Harris, 2016). MultiCrit places emphasis on race as socially constructed in categories that are monoracial in nature, which results in a strict monoracial-only paradigm that is reflected throughout United States society (Harris, 2017). This monoracial paradigm is then perpetuated through the pervasiveness of monoracism, which is utilized by white society to keep these strict monoracial categories and perpetuate racism (Harris, 2016, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). This theory also addresses components associated with intersectionality. MultiCrit challenges that

intersectionality should expand beyond singular social identities and create space for the racial backgrounds of multiracial individuals, as this has a significant impact on their campus experiences (Harris, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020).

MultiCrit is an important theoretical framework for this study because it highlights the narratives of multiracial individuals, is grounded from a higher education lens, and addresses the elements of monoracism, multiracial microaggressions, and intersectionality, which are foundational components to the literature associated with multiracial people within higher education.

Multiracial Cultural Attunement Model

Jackson and Samuels (2019) developed a model of multiracial cultural attunement that stems from research and direct practice with families from a social work lens. The multiracial cultural attunement model has four fluid and potentially overlapping phases: (a) critical reflexivity, (b) engagement, (c) exploration, and (d) collaborating in action (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). The model maintains a focus on valuing the lived experiences of others, identifying opportunities for change, and affirming multiracial people (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). I have made the connection that this model is applicable for higher education administrators and leaders to better understand how to create an increased sense of belonging for multiracial women leaders. The model seems to assert that there are stages of identifying as multiracial to which folks are attuned over time, or through a range of experiences. With this in mind, I anticipated within-group variations in the self-awareness and expression of multiracial identity that may become relevant in understanding the nature of sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators.

Critical Reflexivity

The first phase of the model, critical reflexivity, requires one to be critical of one's own identities, beliefs, and assumptions and recognize they are not universal truths (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). This is connected to the monoracial paradigm that is embedded within higher education. There is a dominant narrative, often centered in whiteness, that drives educational institution's structures and policies (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). Problematically, the dominant narrative rarely requires critical reflexivity, which leads to structures that are inherently exclusive in nature.

When critical reflexivity is encouraged, or demanded, in higher education spaces, it creates an opportunity to think outside of the box and beyond one's individual truth. Critical reflexivity encourages people to think beyond their own personal experience and consider their actions of interrupting monoracism and marginalization (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). When put into action from a diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging lens, critical reflexivity can activate leadership and administrators' agenda to disrupt and eliminate oppressive social structures. An example of this would be to interrupt this cycle of binaried conversations and structures based on single-race identifiers. It may present itself as offering a multiracial affinity space conversation or several different affinity space options during various different dates and time frames so people can attend multiple spaces.

Engagement

The second dimension of the multiracial cultural attunement model is engagement, which centers deeply valuing the lived experience of another (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). The three practices associated with this component of the model are (a) creating a counterspace where multiracial individuals can challenge dominant narratives and facilitate well-being, (b)

humanizing relationships based on authenticity and shared respect, and (c) maintaining a stance of radical acceptance (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). This involves creating intentional space for multiracial individuals to connect and build community in the form of counterspaces. Growth-fostering counterspaces are spaces where multiracial individuals can decenter dominant narratives and focus on well-being and transformation (Case & Hunter, 2012). The engagement phase involves deep appreciation for one who shares their lived experiences, which increases the level of respect one feels (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). This phase connects to the importance of recognition and validation of multiracial women leaders and their experiences.

Exploration

The exploration phase builds on the information shared by individuals in relation to their personal experiences and identifies opportunities for change (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). In this phase, higher education leadership and administrators continue to validate multiracial women administrators' experiences, emotions, and ways of meaning (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) while also creating space for autonomy of thoughts, feeling, and action (Berlin, 2005). This is a practice of affirming and validating one's view and lived experience as valid (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) and not making assumptions about what one may need. This reinforces the importance for multiracial women administrators to feel respected and heard (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), with an emphasis on creating change.

Collaborating in Action

The last phase of collaborating in action further reinforces acknowledgement, recognition, and support for multiracial individuals (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). In this phase, higher education leadership and administrators can partner with multiracial women administrators to affirm them and interrupt oppressive social structures. People can actively

serve as counteragents against the dominant narratives of race that uniquely stigmatize multiracial individuals (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). Furthermore, this phase activates a group of individuals to advocate against unjust practices and policies that unfairly target multiracial individuals (Jackson & Samuels, 2019)—for example, simply asking the question "What about people who identify as multiracial?" when there are policies drafted or prompts to gather based on racial identity. It helps to have more people in the room to ask the questions, rather than its falling on one of the few multiracial individuals who may be in the space.

This interactive model of multiracial cultural attunement can be framed towards higher education leaders and peer administrators to better understand the lived experiences of multiracial women administrators. This understanding may yield to more affirmation and validation, especially when juxtaposed with the monoracial structures and paradigm that often exist within higher education. This model also includes a more active component, with the call to collaborate with multiracial individuals to decenter the dominant narrative and disrupt oppressive systems that cause the erasure of multiracial experiences. Some ways to do this involve creating and advocating for multiracial counterspaces for well-being, transformation, and connection.

Intersectionality and Multidimensionality

"An intersectional and multidimensional perspective directly challenges singular monolithic conceptualizations of race, multiraciality, and identity itself" (Jackson & Samuels, 2019, p. 79). Legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, where she describes the experiences of Women of Color as products of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism (Crenshaw, 1989). Due to their intersectional identity as women and Women of Color in a world where systems focus on either race or gender, they are marginalized within both systems (Crenshaw, 1991).

Although the term has now come to be used to explain the interconnectedness of oppressions for a variety of marginalized identities, it is important to acknowledge the initial creation of this term as focused on Black women and their experiences. According to Crenshaw (1989), Black women are treated in ways that deny their uniqueness and denote their experiences as general compared to other groups. Some participants in my research study identify as Black, and others do not. Using the term intersectionality is meant to address the combination of race and gender identities with regards to experiences as multiracial women leaders. However, the history of the term is important as pertaining specifically to the experience of Black women.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and the concept of multidimensionality (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) acknowledge the role of other social identities and the differentiating impacts despite shared racial backgrounds (Jackson & Samuels, 2019; Jackson et al., 2020). Multidimensionality encourages critical race theorists to consider the role of privilege merging with other privileges and oppressions simultaneously (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), while recognizing that encounters of race and monoracism are nuanced based on varying appearances and racial identity labels (Jackson et al., 2020). People may experience multiraciality differently; for example, multiracial people with light skin or those who have closer proximity to whiteness may have privilege associated with this status in ways that dual-minority or darker skinned multiracial people do not (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). These concepts of intersectionality and multidimensionality allow space for multiple aspects of identities to engage together at the same time, such as race and gender.

According to Bernal (2002), critical race-gendered systems of knowledge emerge from experiences a Person of Color may have when racism and sexism may intersect. Intersectionality raises awareness of interactions within and across systems and highlights the complexities that

exist (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). There isn't one single experience for multiracial women. Lived experiences can be influenced by the intersections of race and gender, thus impacting the way multiracial women administrators experience the word and their roles in higher education.

It is important to situate intersectionality within a higher education context. In a research study on Women of Color administrators, Settles-Tidwell (2021) highlights that there are limited studies focused on the lived experiences of Women of Color administrators and their intersectional identities (p. 129). Specifically, there is a gap in research that highlights the ways in which underrepresented Women of Color administrators negotiate their relationships as "outsiders" within historically white institutions and "insiders" to challenge institutional inequities like racism and sexism that impact marginalized students and staff (Settles-Tidwell, 2021, p. 3). Settles-Tidwell argues that underrepresented leaders of color "do not have the luxury of separating their racial and ethnic identity and politics from their administrative duties" (p. 7). Warren (2019) asserts that Women of Color contend with the perceptions and assumptions about them being women, while simultaneously being confronted with microaggressions (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020; Solórzano et al., 2000) that target their intersections of race and gender. The effects of intersectionality are often not directly addressed or named, especially with regards to a niche group such as multiracial women leaders.

Validation Theory

Validation theory refers to the intentional and proactive affirmation of students by agents in and out of the classroom (i.e., faculty, students, staff, family members, peers) in order to validate students as valuable members of the college community and creators of knowledge and build personal development and social adjustment (Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Rendón, 1994). Validation theory (Rendón, 1994) considers environmental factors and agents such as

organizational structures and individuals that can impact students' growth and development (Linares & Muñoz, 2011). When validation is present, students experience a feeling of self-worth and feel accepted and recognized as valuable (Rendón, 1994). Validation can help students feel like they are part of the learning community and cared about not only as a student, but as a person (Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Rendón (1994) emphasized that faculty and administrators should fully engage in the validation of students in order to transform their experiences. The role of faculty and administrators in validation of students is an essential factor. Although there continues to be an emphasis on the student experience with regards to validation theory, there is limited research regarding validation theory for stakeholders in higher education beyond students. Linares and Muñoz (2011) advocated that future research needs to include validation for faculty. This scope should be expanded to include administrators in general, along with specific populations such as multiracial women administrators.

Validation theory can be directly connected to a sense of belonging and the importance of being seen, welcomed, and included within institutions of higher education. Validation theory provides a foundational framework to explore how multiracial women administrators can be affirmed as valuable members of the campus community. Established organizational structures and opportunities for community may generate a greater sense of validation, belonging, and acceptance.

Sense of Belonging

Previous descriptions of the concept of sense of belonging have focused on the student experience. Strayhorn (2019) described a sense of belonging as in relation to whether students feel respected, accepted, valued, cared for, included, and that they matter. In the context of this study, a sense of belonging is described as feeling seen, heard, and included in the campus

community. For the purpose of this project, sense of belonging focuses on the psychological feeling of belonging or connectedness (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

As discussed throughout this dissertation, there are gaps in the research regarding sense of belonging and the administrator experience within higher education. Therefore, I have adapted this working definition of sense of belonging based on definitions and findings from previous research focused on sense of belonging for students in the university environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2019) as well as sense of belonging scales used to measure concepts of belonging associated with conversations about race and racial discrimination (Kernahan et al., 2014). Given the focus on multiracial women administrators for this research, I tried to incorporate information from previous studies focused on People of Color, including Women of Color. My hope is this conceptual definition related to sense of belonging can be expanded with continued research focused on intersectionality for administrators within the higher education community.

The theoretical frameworks discussed in this proposal demonstrate how five theories impact sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley: MultiCrit (Harris, 2016), multiracial cultural attunement (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), validation theory (Rendón, 1994), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and multidimensionality (Jackson & Samuels, 2019).

The visual representation in Figure 1 illustrates the shared nature of how the theories work in tandem with one another or individually to inform one's sense of belonging. In this next section, I will discuss the methodology and methods for my research.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore sources of belonging for multiracial women administrators via diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practices undertaken at a historically white institution, specifically at the University of California (UC) Berkeley. It was important to focus on a single campus in order to highlight experiences of multiracial women administrators in one context through a *plática* methodology. My rationale for focusing my study on UC Berkeley was because of the assumptions about DEIB practices there and my lived experiences as a multiracial woman administrator at the institution who actively sought sources of belonging for my decade of work there on campus. What gets normalized within the UC Berkeley context is a manifestation of societal norms. The institution is still influenced by the broader society and stepped in systems of oppression. Although it is known as a flagship campus that is moving the needle forward in terms of DEIB, there is still work to be done. What is often assumed to be a safe space to learn about social justice may simultaneously be a place where staff feel excluded based on intersectional identities pertaining to both race and gender.

Research Design

In setting out to design this study, I had my own lived experiences in mind as someone who identifies very similarly to my research participants. As I will detail further in this chapter, my own positionality included some commonalities with participants that are important to address as the researcher. In alignment with Chicana/Latina feminist and *plática* methodologies, this is already a departure from how we typically think about the role of researchers and the relationships with their participants (Delgado Bernal, 2020). *Plática* methodology positions participants and researchers as shared contributors in terms of knowledge production, which is a

challenge to more traditional forms of research (Delgado Bernal, 2020). With this in mind, my motivations for doing this were grounded in a *plática* methodology in order to create space for shared experiences and connections between participants and myself as the researcher. This situated us in a unique reciprocal relationship where we could fully explore the tensions around DEIB policies and practices that are designed to make people feel more included but instead seem to amplify the invisibility of multiracial women administrators. I have embraced the *plática* methodology to challenge monoracial hegemonic practices within education, while recognizing my positionality as both an insider and outsider for this research.

This study is guided by the question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? This study used a qualitative approach with a *plática* methodology to explore how multiracial women administrators experience a sense of belonging through DEIB policies and practices at UC Berkeley. Qualitative design is applicable for this research because I wanted to give voice to participants' experiences by collecting stories through a narrative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, qualitative researchers work inductively to build patterns, categories, and themes by organizing data into units of information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research helps to uplift the experiences of participants through a strong narrative approach. The voices of participants can speak loudly through the lens of qualitative research.

I have placed emphasis on qualitative research because there is value in highlighting stories and narratives and connecting this to individuals' lived experience. I believe creating space for people to be heard, seen, and included is one step towards equity and leading for change. The next step forward is pairing this with action. As discussed by Villenas (1996), it is important to be cognizant of the multiple roles of the researcher. As a researcher, I wanted to

situate myself as a listener, learner, and advocate for change. I believe I met these goals through the lens of a qualitative *plática* design focused on a narrative analysis. I have used these data to amplify the stories of multiracial women administrators with regards to their experiences with belonging at UC Berkeley. The experiences of multiracial women leaders within this particular study at UC Berkeley contribute to our understanding of opportunities to enhance a sense of belonging, specifically when considering DEIB practices and policies.

Plática Methodology Overview

Data were collected through a *plática* approach. *Pláticas* are informal conversations that may happen one-on-one or in group spaces and allow people to share ideas, knowledge, and memories (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2020). These informal conversations allow us to "witness shared memories, experiences, stories, ambiguities, and interpretations" that provide unique knowledge connected to one's background and history (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 99). *Pláticas* are conversations between the researcher and participant that break down the stiff environment that may often exist during the research process. It is meant to encourage reciprocal sharing and generate coproduced knowledge.

The *plática* methodology is built on five principles: (a) it is grounded in decolonial *feminista* thought, (b) the research involves a relational component that honors the participants as co-constructors of knowledge, (c) one's lived experiences are connected to the process of research, (d) a *plática* can be a space of healing, and (e) research is a process that involves both reciprocity and vulnerability (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). *Shared vulnerability* is a strategy that I engaged; as the researcher I had to be willing to share personal details of my life if I was asking participants to do the same (Huber, 2019). Shared vulnerability opens the possibility of collective storytelling and challenges the power of the researcher–participant relationship

(Huber, 2019). This method also encouraged collaboration and relationship building as a key component of the research process (Delgado Bernal, 1998). This reciprocal process was especially important for my research. Stories are a gift, and sharing one's personal story is an act of vulnerability.

According to the late activist–scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, People of Color must draw on their own approaches and methodologies as a way to transform the limited scope of academia (Anzaldúa, 1990; Yosso & Benavides López, 2010). A *plática* methodological approach was chosen because it is aligned with the research paradigm that honors participants as co-constructors of knowledge, in which the lived experiences are key elements connected to research (Delgado Bernal, 2020). Delgado Bernal (ASHE Office, 2019) also emphasized how the *plática* methodology situates the participants as active contributors in knowledge production, rather than assuming the researcher is the only one with the knowledge. As a methodological approach, *pláticas* assert there is reciprocal knowledge production between those who are within institutions of formalized research and those who are in communities engaged in research (ASHE Office, 2019). This is a unique and necessary way to engage in academia while weaving the personal and academic together (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). As a methodology, *pláticas* humanize research and encourage us to consider the "sociohistorical contexts and structural oppression that mediate the experiences of marginalized groups in our research approaches and practices" (Huber, 2019, p. 1). This information suggests that *pláticas* legitimize stories and experiences as an important part of the research process.

Pláticas are rooted in Chicana/Latina feminist methodology, which disrupts dominant epistemological boundaries, encourages possibilities for conducting research, and reimagines what it means to teach and learn (Delgado Bernal, 2020) Using Chicana/feminist methodology as

ways of knowing challenges Western notions of neutrality and the force to split the mind and body in the research process (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2020). It is one step towards decolonizing the process of research (Delgado Bernal, 2020) and encourages us to think bigger and beyond traditional research methodologies. *Pláticas* are not just a method of collecting data; they are a commitment to move away from Western notions of research. According to Bernal (2002), the Eurocentric perspective has viewed experiential knowledge of People of Color as deficit, or has ignored it altogether. *Pláticas* are aligned with how one sees the world and understands it (Delgado Bernal, 2020) and affirms the different ways knowledge and data can be obtained. There is also an acknowledgement of the vulnerability associated with sharing information about identities and personal stories.

Linkages Between *Plática* Methodology and Theoretical Frameworks Guiding This Study

The *plática* methodological approach was chosen with the five aforementioned theoretical frameworks in mind: multiracial critical race theory (MultiCrit; Harris, 2016), the multiracial cultural attunement model (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), validation theory (Rendón, 1994), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and multidimensionality (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). It is important for the voices and experiences of multiracial women administrators in higher education to be uplifted and included in prominent research. Along with qualitative research, *pláticas* disrupt traditional research and aim to amplify unheard voices. Scholars have articulated that new knowledge is often uncovered by those who are often unheard or not considered in research (Pérez, 1999, as cited in Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). This parallels my theoretical framework in terms of validation theory (Rendón, 1994), which affirms participants are cared about as a whole person in relation to their participation in the research and educational community. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as a theoretical framework is discussed from

various compounded perspectives, including gender and multiracial identity. It is also highlighted in multiple ways pertaining to the staff experience, such as the institutional and administrator identity. MultiCrit (Harris, 2016) and multiracial cultural attunement (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) provide the lens to elevate shared experiences gleaned from the *pláticas.*

Setting

I focused my research on one institution, UC Berkeley. It was important to take the approach to focus on a single campus in order to highlight experiences of multiracial women administrators in one campus context through a *plática* approach. There was rationale building I did before I began my study because of the DEIB policies at UC Berkeley and the assumption that UC Berkeley is a premier institution for social justice. Research participants reflected on their preconceived notions of what it would be like to work at UC Berkeley versus their actual lived experience at the institution. A place that was viewed as always doing social justice in a perfect way was a beacon for participants. Many reflected on how the campus has challenged them and given them space to grow and develop. Others reflected on the disappointment of DEIB-related practices and feeling a sense of invisibility regarding their multiracial identity. There is a potential irony in an institution that is so well known for being a leader for DEIB yet inadvertently creates conditions for folks to feel systematically excluded. A campus known for leading the nation in progressive higher education has neglected to consider the ways in which monoracial approaches to diversity and inclusion have created experiences of exclusion for multiracial communities on campus. UC Berkeley is not only unique considering external perceptions about DEIB practices, it is a flagship research university that has been a historically white institution.

UC Berkeley is a large land-grant public research university located in the northern California Bay Area, founded in 1868 (UC Berkeley, 2022). The land-grant aspect is significant because it was designed to serve all California communities (Douglass, 2021), which contributes to the founding origins associated with a diversity lens. Ironically, this did not really include all California community members, as there was no provision initially made for the admission of women (Douglass, 2021). A provision by the Board of Regents in 1870 stated the equal right of women to enroll at UC Berkeley without quotas, which was rare, as many public universities used quotas to restrict women to 20% or lower of the student population (Douglass, 2021).

UC Berkeley is the first of nine undergraduate campuses within the UC system. Based on fall 2021 enrollment data, UC Berkeley has 31,800 undergraduate students and 13,200 graduate students (UC Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis, 2022a). UC Berkeley is a "large, multi-layered, and bureaucratic community, and excellence is embedded throughout its structure and culture" (Kwon, 2017, p. 45). This striving for excellence has also pushed conversations regarding equity, inclusion, and social justice.

As a flagship campus, UC Berkeley is well known for research, activism, and setting a "national and international tone" (Settles-Tidwell, 2021, p. 49). There is a legacy of strong student activism, challenging the administration, and creating space for voices to be heard. It is known for the Free Speech Movement, in which students protested the administration in the 1960s for attempted censorship of speech (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). Berkeley's long-standing history of activism has helped to shape the culture of advocacy and continued focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Division of Equity and Inclusion at UC Berkeley provides leadership and accountability for the campus to integrate equity, inclusion, and diversity into campus life (UC

Berkeley Division of Equity & Inclusion, 2022a). The division stemmed from limited representation and underrepresented students' demands due to discontentment with their experiences on campus (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). This division, combined with leadership from the first female chancellor in the 150-year history of UC Berkeley and campus priorities focused on building community, increasing diversity, and becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution by 2027, continue to put Berkeley on the map (Settles-Tidwell, 2021; UC Berkeley Office of the Chancellor, 2022; UC Berkeley Strategic Plan, 2022). UC Berkeley is often considered to be the trailblazer of diversity and inclusion because of the history associated with the 1960s Free Speech Movement and perceptions of the campus climate and experience.

However, UC Berkeley still has room for growth. According to Settles-Tidwell (2021), despite UC Berkeley's focus on diversity, it continues to be a historically white institution with both representation and hegemonic culture. Fall 2021 data reveal that 23.2% (1,614) of fall 2021 first year students and 28.4% (755) of transfer students identify as underrepresented minority students (UC Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis, 2022a). These numbers are important to highlight the demographic data of the student population in terms of race.

Furthermore, of the 8,462 staff and 1,511 faculty employed at UC Berkeley, 43% of all staff are white; the white staff hold 66% of the managerial and upper professional classification positions (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). The majority of campus leadership is "reflective of Whiteness in thought, practices, and decision-making" (Settles-Tidwell, 2021, p. 40). Data are not available on UC Berkeley websites regarding enrollment counts for students who identify as multiracial/biracial/two or more races (UC Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis, 2022a). This highlights the fact that UC Berkeley has gaps in the way data are collected and shared

regarding multiracial students, faculty, and staff, suggesting that multiracial individuals on campus are made invisible and not counted as part of the campus community.

In 2020, as a response to the racial reckoning and continued violence against Black and Brown individuals across the nation, UC Berkeley launched a series of initiatives focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice. For instance, an Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) was launched with People and Culture (Human Resources) that provides learning opportunities and engagement for staff employees to increase cultural fluency and racial literacy (UC Berkeley People & Culture, 2022). This specifically acknowledges the importance of DEIB practices throughout the institutional framework, and creates opportunities to intentionally dive into these topics for the benefit of the larger staff experience.

Participants

Participants in this study are campus administrators who self-identify as both multiracial/biracial (two or more races) and women. *Plática* participants currently work at UC Berkeley or have worked at UC Berkeley within the past 5 years. I used a purposeful sampling technique in order to identify these participants. The focus of purposeful sampling is to discover, understand, and gain better insight; a sample must be selected that can best yield the specific information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Patton (2015) emphasizes the logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling steps from understanding of specific, information-rich cases.

My goal was to identify at least 10 research participants. The small population of multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley presented challenges with this participant goal. I initially sent outreach to seven potential participants. Five out of seven participants agreed to meet with me and participate in the *pláticas*.

Table 1

Research Participants

Pseudonym	Self-identified gender identity	Self-identified racial identity	Years worked at UC Berkeley (5 or less/6 or more)
Paige	Cisgender woman	Biracial Asian	6 or more
Ellie	Cisgender woman	Mixed	5 or less
Maya	Female	Mixed race	5 or less
MRS	Female	Mixed and "two or more races"	5 or less
Lily	Female	Biracial	6 or more

Note. UC = University of California.

Participants' racial identity descriptors ranged based on how they self-identified. For the purposes of this dissertation, the common description of "multiracial" was used. However, it is important to give voice to participants' specific descriptions based on how they choose to self-identify, as there are varying racial identities and expressions that one may choose to use (Jackson et al., 2020) and this disrupts socially constructed categories that are often monoracial in nature (Harris, 2016). Three participants identified as "mixed" or "mixed race," and two identified as "biracial." All participants happened to have racial identities that also included being part white and a minoritized identity. Although this was not a specific criterion for research participation, it is an interesting component that was discussed in some *pláticas* and highlighted in some of the themes and analysis.

In terms of years worked at the research setting, three participants had worked at UC Berkeley for 5 years or less, and two participants had worked at UC Berkeley for 2 years or more. Participants' professional work on campus varied from leadership positions to student-

facing and administrative support roles. These differing time frames and roles associated with the university helped to provide various perspectives and ranges of experiences.

Data Collection

Preliminary Pilot *Pláticas*

Prior to engaging in my formal data collection process, I conducted pilot *pláticas* as a way to learn the process and gain insights on how participants were experiencing the process as well. I wanted to ensure I was conducting the *pláticas* in a way that honors the intentionality of this specific methodology. *Pláticas* are meant to be conversational in nature, and to honor the participant as a co-constructor of knowledge in the research process (Delgado Bernal, 2020). Therefore, it was important that I practice doing a few *pláticas* so I could feel more comfortable engaging in this type of data collection for my research. I wanted to be relaxed in the conversation and not feel pressured or performative, so my participants felt comfortable. I also wanted to ensure I was creating a space that felt more relaxed so participants could engage in this conversational format. I was constantly channeling the idea of disrupting Western notions of research, in which interview spaces often feel stoic or intense.

I also wanted to do pilot *pláticas* in order to test my *plática* protocol. I wanted to ensure the protocol questions made sense, the flow was smooth, and the questions weren't too leading in nature. I constantly checked my protocol questions against my research question: In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? This was done in order to ensure there was alignment, with the caveat that the actual *plática* conversation may take us in different directions. I also created space by including a follow-up question at the end to prompt participants to share any additional

information they would like me to know. My intention for this open-ended question at the end was to build in space for participants to share final thoughts.

I reached out to two individuals with a request for a one-on-one pilot *plática* interview. Both individuals were administrators who worked within the UC system and identified as biracial/multiracial women. I intentionally reached out to these individuals because my research focused on biracial/multiracial women administrators, and I wanted to align the pilot participants with my proposed research participants. In addition, many of my *plática* protocol questions were focused on intersectionality in terms of experiences pertaining to race and gender. I wanted to test these questions to determine the flow during the pilot *plática*.

I was intentional in testing as many components of my research as possible in the pilot process. In my outreach, I shared that I was a student at UC Davis and provided information about my proposed research. I provided information about the pilot *plática* participation, which would involve approximately 2 hours of their time for the following components: (a) completion of a 15-minute preinterview questionnaire via Google Form, (b) a 1-hour pilot *plática* interview via Zoom, and (c) a 30-minute debrief after the pilot *plática* interview to discuss learnings and takeaways from the process that I could apply for my future research and dissertation process. I also provided brief information about the *plática* methodology so participants knew it would be conversational in nature and allow them to share ideas, knowledge, and memories (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2020). I provided pilot participants availability time frames in January/February 2023. Once participants confirmed their interest and availability, I sent a confirmation email with the preinterview questionnaire and Zoom link for the virtual call. I also reiterated that this was for practice purposes only and would not be included in my dissertation research. Each pilot *plática* was 1.5 hours, into which I folded in time to do a casual

check-in with each participant, share brief information about my research, and engaged in a pilot *plática* conversation along with recording via Zoom with participant consent. I deleted the Zoom recordings immediately after the conversations. Following the conversation, I also sent pilot participants a $25 Amazon gift card as an appreciation for their time and engagement in the process.

The pilot *pláticas* were beneficial and aided my research process immensely. It was helpful to do the full information sharing in advance and align as closely with my dissertation process as possible, including sending the preinterview questionnaire and utilizing my pilot *plática* protocol. I made extensive changes to the *plática* protocol after the conversations based on feedback from pilot participants and extensive memo processes after each conversation.

Based on feedback and reflections from the pilot *plática*, I folded in time to do more casual check-ins at the beginning of the conversation to ask how participants were doing, building in some shared time for connection. As discussed by Delgaldo Bernal (ASHE Office, 2019), this aligns with the *plática* framework, considering this methodology was coined after casual conversations around the kitchen table. I also framed specific prompting questions to focus on intersectionality in terms of gender and race (e.g., experiences pertaining to being a biracial/multiracial administrator who is also woman identified) rather than keeping them separate. This was a suggestion provided by pilot *plática* participants in order to embrace more components pertaining to intersectionality and delve deeper into my specific research question.

The pilot *plática* participants affirmed my research topic and expressed gratitude for the space and conversation, which gave me the confidence to keep moving forward. Both pilot participants and research participants were appreciative of the *plática* methodology based on its reciprocal and conversational nature. They expressed gratitude for the space to talk about their

experiences as multiracial women administrators, as many had never been provided this opportunity. This affirmed my choice for this methodology as it aligns with my focus on honoring participants' stories and experiences and creating a platform for them to feel comfortable engaging in the research process.

Plática Data Collection Process

The *pláticas* were initially performed one-on-one with participants, in which the data were collected by me as the researcher. In addition, there was an option for participants to join a group *plática* together along with me as the researcher, which was scheduled after the one-on-one *plática*. I developed a preliminary open-ended *plática* protocol in advance of the *pláticas* to initiate the conversation. I kept the theoretical frameworks in mind, specifically considering ways to invite multiracial women administrators to share their experiences with regards to sense of belonging while being mindful of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and the importance of validation theory (Rendón, 1994). In addition, I applied components of the multiracial cultural attunement model (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) and MultiCrit (Harris, 2016) in terms of grounding the conversation with affirming their experiences and centering their voices and experiences within higher education.

Individual *Pláticas*

Pre-*Plática* Process. Participants initially received research information via email invitation from me as the researcher. This initial outreach outlined brief information about my study in terms of exploring sources of belonging for multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. I also shared that interviews would be done in a conversational format (i.e, *plática*) to hear more about experiences pertaining to this topic. I prompted participants to sign up for a

conversation time with me via the WeJoinIn website (https://www.wejoinin.com/), and shared more information would be provided once the conversation was confirmed.

After participants signed up for an interview time with me, I provided a confirmation email with more information and logistics in order to best prepare for the conversation. The email included the confirmed date and time of the *plática* conversation. I also shared the Zoom link for the conversation so participants knew we would be engaging virtually. I wanted to include more information about the *plática* format for the conversation, including the intentionality for my choice to use *pláticas* as a method for my data collection. I emphasized the focus was to allow participants to share ideas, knowledge, and memories (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2020). In addition, I shared that *pláticas* honor participants as co-constructors of knowledge, in which the lived experiences are connected to the research process (Delgado Bernal, 2020). I emphasized that *pláticas* are meant to encourage reciprocal sharing and generate coproduced knowledge, which is especially important for my research.

I prompted participants to complete an online preinterview questionnaire via Google Form (approximately 15 minutes) in advance of the *plática* conversation. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather brief background and demographic data in advance from participants, allow participants to pick their own pseudonym, and reiterate specifics about my research process. It was important to allow participants to pick their own pseudonym to give agency to participants and their stories.

I included open-ended questions that prompted participants to share how they identified racially, as well as based on gender. There are many different ways one may describe oneself racially and based on gender. Rather than having participants check a box option, I wanted to give the space for them to self-identify as they preferred. I also prompted participants to share if

they identify with a specific racial identity (e.g., biracial/multiracial/mixed/two or more races) because I wanted to use this specific self-identified description for each participant in my dissertation. This was intentional because it aligns with the idea of seeing and honoring participants as they choose to identify, rather than making assumptions. I also asked for background information pertaining to participants' role on campus at UC Berkeley and/or their role when they were last employed at the institution and how long they had worked at UC Berkeley. I also provided an optional question to ask if there was anything else participants would like to share as part of this preinterview questionnaire in preparation for the interview conversation. I included this optional question to ensure I was creating space for participants to share any needs or information they'd like for me to consider as part of this process. This also aligns with the idea of centering participants' needs and considerations as part of the research process; I wanted to approach this conversation with care and intentionality from the beginning.

I also included an information sheet in this confirmation email, which outlined more specifics about my research and consent information. My study was exempt, meaning that a signed consent form was not required. However, I wanted to share consent information with all participants for transparency, and also reviewed this information as part of the logistics at the beginning of the conversation. This was done intentionally to ensure I was centering the participants and their experience engaging with me as the researcher, reducing assumptions in terms of what participants should typically expect in the research process, and reducing barriers of traditional Western research regarding information sharing (Bernal, 2002; Delgado Bernal, 2020; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

I recognized that all of my participants were working full time in administrator roles that might require timely meetings and schedule changes. I sent a reminder email to participants

before our scheduled *plática* conversation reiterating the date and time, the Zoom link, and the reminder to complete the preinterview questionnaire. I also provided the opportunity for participants to reschedule if needed considering any potential availability conflicts.

***Plática* Process.** During the *plática* conversation, I provided time and space for a general check-in with each participant as a warm-up to the conversation. This aligns with the argument for the *plática* methodology, in which small-talk conversations are an important part of the research process (ASHE Office, 2019; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). I provided brief information and reminders about the intentionality for the *plática* method, hopes and goals for the conversation, and general housekeeping regarding consent and the voluntary nature of the conversation. I also asked each participant two logistical questions at the end of the conversation. The first was regarding the potential anonymity of UC Berkeley or naming the campus specifically as part of my study. I wanted to seek information and approval from each participant in terms of identifying UC Berkeley as another way to center participants' voices in the research process. Furthermore, I was also mindful of participants' anonymity with regards to the study. If they had concerns about naming UC Berkeley specifically in terms of potential threats to their anonymity as participants, I didn't want to jeopardize anything related to their participation. Based on the information shared with participants, it was deemed I would name UC Berkeley specifically for my research because it is considered a flagship campus where a sense of belonging for staff in relation to DEIB initiatives should be paramount. In addition, this research may highlight positive experiences for multiracial women administrators, as well as areas for growth.

I also asked each participant if they would be interested in an optional group *plática* conversation, in which all five participants expressed interest. As a wrap-up to the conversation,

I provided an invitation to reach out to me within a week of the conversation if participants had any additional information/insights or questions for me as the researcher. Given the rich stories and experiences participants shared and the various learning and engagement styles, I wanted to create the invitation to share any additional thoughts that might come up after the conversation that participants wanted to include.

Post-*Plática* Process. After each conversation, I sent a thank-you email to the participant within at least 2 hours of the conversation. I reiterated the option to share any additional information with me within the next week. I shared that I would be following up regarding a potential group *plática* based on participant interest and any other applicable information as I continued in my dissertation process. I also sent a $25 Amazon gift card to each participant as a token of my gratitude for their time and contributions to my dissertation research.

In order to keep the information fresh, I did an initial memo after each individual *plática* conversation to describe initial takeaways and potential themes from the conversation. These memos changed as I completed more *pláticas* because I developed cross-participant insights. I noticed themes that were briefly emerging based on similar information shared across each *plática.* I did member checks (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), in which I shared individual *plática* transcripts with the participants in order to ensure they were comfortable with the information shared and to ensure accuracy. I shared the full transcript via Google Docs and provided instructions for how participants could edit or remove information. I provided a 10-day window to complete this transcript edit/review process.

Group *Plática*

Pre-Group *Plática* Process. After each individual *plática* follow-up was complete, I focused on the group *plática* process. I sent a follow-up email to all research participants with

instructions to indicate their availability for a group *plática* via a Doodle poll (https://doodle.com/) by a certain date. I was able to confirm a group *plática* relatively easily through this platform. I sent a confirmation email to all participants with the date and time of the group *plática*, along with the Zoom link. I also reiterated the group *plática* was optional and participants could decide not to participate at any time.

Group *Plática* Process. The group *plática* occurred via the Zoom platform. All five participants chose to participate in the group *plática.* At the beginning of the group *plática* I reiterated the purpose of the conversation and discussed general housekeeping in terms of the conversation time frame. I also shared expectations for the conversation in terms of honoring confidentiality of participants' information sharing in the group *plática* space and reminded participants that they could choose to share what they felt most comfortable sharing in the space. I also asked participants if they had any additional expectations for the space or things they needed in order to participate fully. I reiterated information about confidentiality in general regarding pseudonym use in my dissertation and consent for recording. I also prompted participants with the option to provide their email address to other participants in order to stay connected after the group *plática*. This was optional, but I thought it was important to create this opportunity for connection considering the concepts of sense of belonging and community building within the space. All five participants provided their email addresses during the group *plática* conversation, and I offered to include these emails in my follow-up communication. Many of the participants shared gratitude for this conversation, and expressed interest in continuing the conversations beyond the scope of my dissertation research purposes.

Post-Group *Plática* Process. After the group *plática*, I wrote a memo to capture initial thoughts, takeaways, and potential themes. I sent a follow-up email reiterating my appreciation

for the conversation, general reflections, and participant email contact information that was shared in the group *plática*. I also included information about some of the preliminary themes that emerged from the group *plática*. While I was still in the process of transcript review, coding, and analysis, I wanted to share some of the general themes that emerged as a way to return the data to the community that shared it with me. This is a nod to the *plática* methodology in terms of reciprocal sharing, acknowledgement, and lifting up community knowledge directly back to participants first. I closed with an acknowledgement that I was wrapping up the conversations pertaining to my specific dissertation research, and included the open invitation to collaborate in any potential community spaces moving forward. I wanted to offer this opportunity because of our shared identities as multiracial women, the interconnected nature of our work at UC Berkeley, and the themes around connection and community that emerged in the conversation. The element of community and shared connection was prominent in conversations, and I wanted to be mindful of continued opportunities for community beyond my research. In contrast to traditional notions of Western research, I wanted to ensure I was not just taking what I needed from participants for research purposes and then moving on.

With this sense of responsibility for participant stories and community in mind, I took measures throughout the data collection process to ensure confidentiality and protect the data. All collected data were stored securely in password-protected files on a password-protected laptop. All Zoom video recordings were deleted within 48 hours of the interview; audio files were maintained in a password-protected laptop. Participants were given pseudonyms of their choice, which were noted on memos, notes, and formal reports. Any data collected on paper were scanned and uploaded to the secure password-protected laptop and then shredded and immediately discarded.

Data Analysis

This study infused personal storytelling through *plática* interviews and a narrative analysis. I conducted an inductive analysis from data collected by the *plática* participants to generate themes that informed the research findings, as outlined further in this dissertation. More specifically, I conducted open coding, in vivo coding, and focused coding procedures to analyze *plática* transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). I completed the iterative process of coding (Saldaña, 2016) several times in order to elicit codes based on data produced with the *plática* participants. I have outlined the specific information below in order to better understand the specific data analysis processes.

To situate myself for the analysis process, I first prioritized memos in order to reflect on the information gathered from the *pláticas*. Following each *plática* conversation, I wrote a detailed analytical memo that captured my reflections and incorporated elements from my *plática* notes. Analytical memos are critical because they are notes written during the research process that reflect on the process or shape the development of certain codes or themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). These were important steps to consider after my data collection and were incorporated into the data analysis components.

The data were analyzed with the five aforementioned theoretical frameworks in mind: MultiCrit (Harris, 2016), the multiracial cultural attunement model (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), validation theory (Rendón, 1994), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and multidimensionality (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). MultiCrit (Harris, 2016) created an avenue to focus on expanding the multiracial paradigm beyond a single binary, and uplifted examples pertaining to a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators. The multiracial cultural attunement model (Jackson & Samuels, 2019) encouraged particular attention on the experiences and narratives of

multiracial women in terms of sense of belonging. MultiCrit and the multiracial cultural attunement model emphasized the importance of disrupting the oppressive systems of monocentricity and monoracism. MultiCrit (Harris, 2016) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) created space to identify experiences related to both gender and racial identity. These five theoretical frameworks were a driving force for the qualitative data analysis component, as they were a lens for how I reviewed the data and engaged in data analysis.

Qualitative data analysis is a sequential process involving steps that move from specific to general, and involves multiple levels of analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). First, I organized and prepared the data by reviewing transcripts and analytical memos, and arranged the data into different types (individual *pláticas* and group *plática*). I utilized ATLAS.ti (https://atlasti.com/) as a resource to code the data and store my codebook for reference throughout my data analysis process.

After reading the transcripts and reviewing the data, I began the first cycle of coding. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), coding involves "taking text data…segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term" (p. 193). For this initial process, I conducted open coding through inductive analysis to see what emergent patterns and themes were revealed within the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I "assigned codes to pieces of data" in order to "construct categories" (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 206). I then began to group these open codes into axial codes (Merriam & Tisdell) with broader categories such as *belonging*, *DEIB*, and *identity*, which were drawn from the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, the research question, and frequency of data that aligned with these larger concepts. The purpose was to capture information participants shared into larger umbrella categories first to organize the data more clearly, then begin the next cycle of coding.

It is important to let the data speak and see what information is revealed. I wanted to capture the essence of the *pláticas* and make meaning from the participants' own words. With this in mind, I delved deeper and incorporated the in vivo coding technique for the second cycle of coding to capture participants' specific language and terminology from the *pláticas*. Themes and codes should highlight multiple perspectives from participants and be supported by quotations and specific evidence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specific language from participants such as, *being a bridge* and *shared lostness* were captured through in vivo because they were words shared directly from the participants, and built upon the open coding and axial coding processes. I uplifted these in vivo codes by using the terms or statements to organize the subheadings in this chapter. Furthermore, I differentiated what themes were applicable across the full research participant group, compared to themes on an individual participant basis. I looked for patterns, frequencies, and commonalities across *plática* conversations and within the codes to develop potential themes.

In the next cycle of the coding process, I employed focused coding techniques to organize the codes based on "thematic similarity" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 235) and to build meaning. The focused analytic coding process helped to identify the ways multiracial women administrators experience belonging via DEIB practices at UC Berkeley and solidify the initial themes that were generated from the rounds of coding. The themes were clustered together to inform the research findings. I utilized a narrative analysis approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to highlight the findings through use of quotes and stories from participants. Data were shared through this narrative approach to highlight the ways multiracial women administrators experienced belonging via DEIB practices at UC Berkeley.

To circle back to my research focus, this study was guided by the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? I utilized the themes and narratives to produce findings that aligned across participant *pláticas* and within the group *plática*. The data analysis of the individual participants' perspectives yielded new understandings that I have synthesized to produce an analysis of the sense of belonging experiences of multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

I employed several processes to ensure trustworthiness of the data analysis. First, I utilized an audit trail to keep track of the different processes of my research. An audit trail describes the details of how data were collected and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a multiracial woman administrator, I understand that my experiences may influence my interpretation of the data. Therefore, experimenter expectancy is strong. I worked to mitigate this concern and establish trustworthiness by engaging in member checks with all five of the research participants to ensure transcript information was accurate and to solicit feedback on emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A peer review with my dissertation committee and select other individuals provided me with essential feedback on emerging findings and the initial analysis. These outsider perspectives from the peer review process helped to address researcher bias. I also engaged with my faculty advisor along the process for review and discussion, using memos as one form of communication. This triangulation helped to build the context of my research and ensure validity of the themes that emerged from the *pláticas.*

Positionality

According to Milner (2007), "positionality involves a nonlinear framework that focuses on several interrelated qualities: researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaged reflection and representation, and shifting from the self to system" (p. 388). It is critical to acknowledge the various factors and impacts of positionality within my research. There truly are interrelated qualities that should be acknowledged regarding my connections to this research.

I brought all parts of me as I entered this work as a researcher and learner. I identify as a multiracial Woman of Color. Specifically, my racial identity is Black and white, with Native American ancestry. I am often feeling in-between spaces because of my multiracial identity. I acknowledge that I may present as white due to my skin color and features, which often leads to folks making assumptions about how I identify. I recognize the privilege I have in terms of passing for white in a majority of spaces I enter. With this in mind, I am often quick to disclose my racial identity in spaces because I want to establish who I am and acknowledge the multiplicity. I am often feeling in-between and never feel fully connected to one space in particular. Multiracial affinity spaces and opportunities to connect with other folks who identify as multiracial have enhanced my own sense of belonging on campus. Multiracial affinity spaces have been a place where I don't have to explain the "in-between" that I feel because other participants may have the same experience.

In addition to the various identities I embrace, it is also important to discuss the experiences, beliefs, and values that have shaped who I am. As a leader within higher education, I believe it is important for people to be seen, heard, and included in their environments. The experiences of administrators and students is important to consider because everyone functions together in the university community. Although the university setting is often framed on the

student experience, the faculty and staff are the foundation and create the structure for the environment.

I specifically focused my research on UC Berkeley because I have been an administrator there for almost 10 years. However, my journey with the UC community began three generations ago. My great-grandfather attended UC Berkeley School of Law and worked as a school superintendent for 40 years. His daughter, my grandmother, also attended UC Berkeley. I completed my undergraduate degree and worked professionally at UC Santa Barbara, attended the UC Sacramento program, am a doctoral student at UC Davis, and have been a staff member at UC Berkeley since 2013.

I am deeply committed to the UC's mission focused on teaching, research, and public service. I consistently mentor staff and students to help them navigate their journeys within the UC system. I have also inspired several family members to be UC graduates (UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, UC Merced, UCLA, and UC Berkeley). This is a testament to my investment in the UC system personally, professionally, and academically. I have been a trailblazer for myself, my family members, and my community. It hasn't been easy at times, especially as a Woman of Color.

Throughout my tenure with the UC, I've shaped programs that support students and staff. I have been involved in programs and networking to support the women-identified community at UC Berkeley. I have also been active in creating departmental affinity spaces for staff to connect across shared identities. Despite the Great Recession, the COVID pandemic, and everything in between, I've been a solid contributor to the UC system. There have been limited opportunities for support and connection, not only as a leader, but as a Woman of Color leader.

There are structural aspects of the staff experience that often cause me to feel invisible and unrecognized as a multiracial women leader. There are staff organizations to foster community and connection at UC Berkeley, but they seem to operate from a monoracial lens. There isn't a formalized staff organization for multiracial folks to have a sense of community together. I often feel isolated in my experiences as a multiracial woman because I'm constantly navigating spaces and trying to find language to talk about my experiences. When I do find connection with another multiracial woman administrator on campus, it is an exciting convergence point that helps me feel affirmed and seen. These are some reasons why I want to shed light on the experiences of multiracial women administrators and sense of belonging.

It is critical to address my dual role as an insider/outsider and the potential tensions I may face as a researcher in my educational setting. Through my research, I engaged with some individuals whom I have shared space with in community as a multiracial woman leader. With some other participants, the *pláticas* were the starting points for conversations about our identities as multiracial women. With this in mind, I navigated an insider/outsider role. I was considered an insider because of my identity as a multiracial woman, my connection to UC Berkeley, and my previous connections with research participants. The unique nature of the *plática* methodology allowed me to actively engage as a participant by sharing my own stories and experiences as part of the conversation. Although I was a researcher in the setting, the reciprocal story sharing helped to address the insider/outsider component that may be challenging with more Western forms of research that create a clear separation between the researcher and participants.

I engaged in reflexive memos as part of the research process to acknowledge these aspects of my dual involvement as researcher and participant. I also utilized member checks to

cross-reference the data and reduce my own biases throughout the research process. It is impossible to completely eliminate bias in research, especially considering my close connection to this dissertation topic. This acknowledgement is important because it is aligned with the *plática* methodology, which argues one's lived experience is connected to the process of research (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). The emphasis on shared vulnerability created through *pláticas* challenges the power of the researcher–participant relationship (Huber, 2019) and encourages collaboration and relationship building as a critical part of the research process (Delgado Bernal, 1998). With this in mind, there was not a clear separation from the researcher and the research process by design, which created the invitation to engage with the research differently and more holistically.

Despite the *plática* methodology and the value of researcher–participant relationship, it is important to consider positionality and power dynamics of the researcher, as this has an influence on what is being studied and impacts of the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My participants and I have a shared identity as multiracial women; however, we identify with various different racial backgrounds. We also have different campus roles and insights that are brought into conversations. I am bringing my perspective and lived experiences as a multiracial woman leader and researcher, but it is not the only experience. It is important to uplift multiple voices and share the variety of experiences of multiracial women administrators.

Limitations

Despite the intentional efforts to establish trustworthiness and consider positionality, limitations are important to address as part of the research process. I have outlined two limitations below and discussed considerations for each component as it pertains to my research.

Due to the COVID context and predominantly virtual work, many staff members haven't been physically present on campus consistently. This may have impacted participants' sense of belonging to the campus because of the physical separation from the campus setting and virtual work. In addition, some individuals may not be interested in engaging with these *pláticas* due to increased work demands or emotional trauma due to the pandemic. To mitigate this limitation, I was transparent with research participants about the process, timelines, and requirements. I was also mindful of the *plática* time lengths, and allowed participants to sign up for a *plática* based on their preferred date and time. I also reiterated that the group *plática* was optional in order to be considerate of participants' time and energy in this dissertation process. I was pleasantly surprised, and very grateful, that all five participants chose to participate in this optional group *plática*. I also compensated research participants with a $25 Amazon gift card as an appreciation for their research participation. From my experience, People of Color are often asked to do more with less, or not acknowledged for the additional spaces they are part of or requests to take on projects. I kept this in mind in terms of my request to participate in my research, and wanted to ensure people were honored for their time and energy.

An additional limitation important to note relates to the *plática* participants' racial backgrounds and the shared elements that informed specific themes and findings. All participants had racial identities that were both minoritized and white. It is possible that having another group of participants whose racial identities are all minoritized may have rendered different stances about elements presented in this dissertation, such as invisible labor that would have been distinct from the burdens placed on my participants. Having a combination of marginalized/minoritized identities as a multiracial experience could yield other nuances and added navigational burdens that could not be explored with my current participants. While this is

not a limitation in terms of contributions, it was something beyond my control that may have impacted this study. While this limitation is important to note, there was richness and great value in the perspectives shared that will enhance research pertaining to multiracial women administrators and sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

As reflected throughout this dissertation, this research was very personal because of my shared identities with the participants and connection to the campus. I was driven to conduct this study based on my own specific experiences as a multiracial woman administrator at the University of California (UC) Berkeley. What I set out to learn through this study was how (and whether) multiracial women administrators experience belonging via diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) practices at UC Berkeley. These intentions for the research were fueled by the challenges I have experienced with belonging, including feelings of isolation because of monoracial paradigms deeply rooted in systems, which are therefore embedded within DEIB practices at the institution. I intentionally choose UC Berkeley not only because of my decade of work at the institution and the campus reputation for inclusion and social justice, but because I wanted to connect with other multiracial women in ways that had not been created yet. I have craved connection with other multiracial women administrators in order to reflect, build solidarity, and affirm that my experiences have not been unique to me. I knew there were important stories and experiences to elevate, including my own.

It was an amazingly humbling and affirming experience to be in conversation with the five other *plática* participants. The *plática* methodology created the space and opportunity to verbalize stories and experiences that were deeply embedded and unspoken for many of us. Through vulnerable conversations, including situations where we experienced pain, exclusion, and loneliness, or elements of joy, affirmation, and connection, we engaged in meaning making that helped us better understand and validate our experiences as multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. Essential to the *plática* methodology, knowledge production was the purview, the space, and the right of all of us in this collaborative response. We came to

discover that we were experiencing the same internal and external struggles despite shared commitments with the campus' efforts with DEIB. The overwhelming amount of validation this revelation provided was a breath of fresh air. It affirmed so many of my experiences, and the experiences of other participants, in ways that we needed in order to feel seen and heard.

I tried to set aside my expectations of what I would find through conducting this research in terms of purely validating my own experiences pertaining to experiences of exclusion couched within DEIB frameworks. The data revealed so much more than that, and helped me better understand the value of disrupting traditional forms of research and intentionally bringing multiracial women together as an invitation to enhance a sense of belonging. What was revealed through the research caused me to understand the critical value of connections, community, and sense of belonging for multiracial administrators. This is not unique to my own individual experiences; it is reflected across all of the *plática* participants.

The response to my research pertaining to a sense of belonging with a focus on DEIB practices at UC Berkeley is multilayered and multidimensional as revealed through the participants' words. There is a window of complexity as this research seeks to address multiracial women administrators' sense of belonging within the workplace by connecting to intersectionality in terms of race, gender, administrator identity, and diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) practices. As indicated through participants' stories and experiences, this research interrogates what we mean by DEIB practices. It showcases how traditional concepts of DEIB have created tensions and contradictions, which involved some elements of inclusion as well as isolation and alienation. The binaried natures of educational institutions, policies, and practices continued to reveal themselves, which was front and center for research participants.

Summary of Key Findings

In this chapter, I present three broader themes in relation to my research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? As I present these findings, readers are cautioned to understand that there is a complex and iterative process through which all participants have had to reveal, assert, and reassert their multiracial identity while also navigating intersections with other identities, such as gender. This compilation of complex dynamics intensifies the frustration of not feeling seen, heard, and included within the institution from a belonging lens. Through the research themes and *plática* excerpts, I have tried to capture the elements of self-reflection, personal agency, and steadfast spirit participants have channeled in relation to their sense of belonging as multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley.

The layering of the research themes relates to the individual experiences of (a) participants in relation to their self-identity and connection to the workplace, (b) impacts of DEIB policies and practices on participants, and (c) being *part* of the institution from a DEIB perspective. The themes relate to three various levels in terms of multiracial women administrators' sense of belonging: the individual, the departmental/organizational, and the broader campus. Three overall themes emerged as briefly outlined below, and are further discussed throughout this chapter:

1. **Multiracial Self-Identity, Perceptions, and Self-Reflection.** The *pláticas* illuminated participants' choices for self-identifiers regarding their race, which was often connected to family dynamics and lived experiences. Participants bravely discussed challenging perceptions from others in regards to their racial identity and how this has impacted them. As a result, there was a constant iterative loop of self-reflection based on experiences or

behaviors from others, and mindfulness for how to navigate the work environment with intersectional identities pertaining to race and gender.

2. **DEIB: Inherent Challenges, Invisibility, and Offensive Demands to be a "Bridge.**" Participants reflected on the impacts of DEIB practices in the work environment. Despite the pervasive lack of acknowledgement of their identities, multiracial women administrators silently managed the provision of invisible labor in which they were charged with the responsibility to use their multiple identities as the means to create a "bridge" between People of Color and white people. This expectation to be a bridge added additional weight on multiracial women administrators while they were already grappling with harm due to painful experiences and multiracial microaggressions of being silenced, overlooked, or dismissed as not "enough" of a Person of Color to inhabit certain monoracial spaces.
3. **Sense of Belonging**: **Seeking Belonging in Community.** The concept of sense of belonging was unpacked into different levels, from individual to institutional belonging. Participants candidly shared about their challenges with "lostness," which was a shared reaction to the many forms of exclusion, invisibility, and silencing they constantly navigated and critically analyzed together via the *plática* space. Participants emphasized institutionally supported multiracial affinity group spaces as a way to build connection and community, and therefore positively facilitate a sense of belonging, for multiracial women administrators.

Themes Emerging in the Data

Theme 1: Multiracial Self-Identity, Perceptions, and Self-Reflection

> And I think as a mixed-race person, oftentimes I have to choose one or the other.
>
> —Maya

Participants reflected on intentional decisions for their racial self-identification, perceptions of others based on their race and the impacts this causes, and the ongoing nature of self-reflection related to their identities as multiracial women. The idea of having to "choose" which part of their identities they most aligned with was something they experienced in many components of life, often stemming from childhood or family dynamics, and were also challenged with the work setting. In turn, this caused tension because it seemed as if they were leaving parts of themselves behind in order to fit into specific monoracial categories.

Family Dynamics and Connection to the Work Environment

Who we are at work is often informed and influenced by our personal backgrounds and experiences. Participants drew connections between their family dynamics in terms of their multiracial identity and how this translated to the workplace. These parallels were established through initial conversations about family and childhood experiences. Paige provided a vivid example about family dynamics, identity development, and navigating environments:

> Assimilation…is the one [word] that I heard all the time growing up. My mom is an immigrant of South Korea and my dad is white. So her whole thing was they didn't fit in. And assimilate is the word. And…when I think about me, that's not belonging because it means I have to remove [parts of myself], I can't just be my whole self.

Although this was long before work life happened, Paige drew a clear connection between these childhood moments and belonging in the workplace. Assimilation is something she learned from her mom at a young age. Paige was able to understand the difference between assimilation and actual belonging in terms of being her "whole" self.

Ellie shed light on the complex dynamic of family origins and how she tried to unpack it for herself. Ellie identifies as mixed, specifically Korean and white. Ellie shared that her mom was Korean and adopted by a white family. At the time of our group *plática*, Ellie was taking a sign language course for professional development. The assignment was focused on family history in relation to linguistics and language. Ellie provided a glimpse of the situation she was navigating for the assignment:

> I feel like I'm working so much harder on this assignment. It's trying to capture adoptions and immigration and all of these different complex student visas. So many things of that family history…we open our stories with way back in history, the beginning of my family, like is our origins. I'm sure other students feel the same way, but it's just so clear-cut as the template wants you to present. I find a lot of comfort in talking to others who maybe share that same "Wow, I do not fit into these specific templates or labels or boxes." This project that I'm working on and trying to explain my Korean roots are very important to me. And my mom is adopted and it's very confusing and both sides of my family are very white.

Ellie's assignment and the challenges it raises captures the elements of complexity pertaining to family background and identity. The family origins, whether known or unknown, can bring more questions than answers. One class assignment sparked intense questioning and deep reflection that challenged identity and belonging, even within the family unit.

Ellie's assignment example demonstrated the iterative nature of meaning making for the multiracial women administrators. The business-as-usual things, such as a class assignment, translated to situational experiences where multiracial women traversed experiences from childhood to the present. While going along the trajectory in the work setting, certain experiences triggered childhood or familiar experiences. They were forced to readdress family dynamics or their racial identity development while simultaneously at work in various roles that required them to create space and belonging for others. As described by participants, this was often done in elusive and discreet ways because of personal assumptions that they were the only

ones managing this personal element of reflection while at work. They internalized certain experiences as singular to their own situation. This perpetuates exhaustion and isolation and negatively impacts a sense of belonging. The benefit of the *pláticas* helped participants understand they were not alone, as they were able to connect across similar experiences.

The frequent demand to readdress family dynamics and racial background emphasizes the complex mechanisms of identity construction, as well as participants' personal agency to assert who they are despite barriers that often reduce them to one monoracial component. The element of choice is often an illusion. Even something as routine as a demographic form can be set up in a way that triggers the iterative identity navigation process and results in a spiral of identity questioning. Institutional demographic forms are common in educational work environments and prompt individuals to indicate their racial identity for data collection purposes. These forms tend to be structurally monoracial in nature, and often provide only a single option to indicate one race. If there wasn't an option for a "two or more races" category on required forms, participants felt they had to choose one part of their racial identity over the other. When there was an option to include multiple races on institutional forms, it created more space to indicate their complete racial background.

One *plática* participant, who chose the pseudonym MRS, shared more about how this felt for her:

> And I remember I would be stuck in this position. Like, do I choose white? Do I choose Black? I'm choosing my mom. I'm choosing my dad. And so that really triggered me as a kid. If I choose just one, I'm choosing one parent over the other. And then I remember when I started to see the two or more races or like multiple choice options instead of just choosing one. And I just remember feeling like, wow, okay, now I don't have to choose one or the other.

Although some institutional forms may now provide the option to include "two or more race" categories, the actual day-to-day experience on campus may not yield as much openness.

This is especially heightened if multiracial people aren't easily categorized into one racial group. MRS described her experience with fitting into certain groups or categories:

> And you know that's been something as I've gotten older trying to discover more. Which in turn makes it difficult to fit in you know per se at work because it's like, okay, well, do I fit in here? But then again, am I denying my dad's heritage by not fitting in with the Black staff and stuff like that? So it gets very tricky and you know I'm trying to figure out who I am before I try and fit into other groups or other categories.

This idea of "figuring out who one is" in the workplace setting was often linked to experiences and messages from family. I contributed to this idea in one of the *pláticas* as I reflected on what family members have said to me growing up in terms of my multiracial identity: "Family members have said, 'You don't have Black friends, or you eat too much salad, you're a white girl'...if I don't even fit in with my family dynamic, where am I gonna fit in outside of that?"

These messages from family, whether intentional or not, have shaped how I've navigated spaces on campus and found belonging with other people. I've often questioned if I'm trying too hard to "prove" that I'm one racial identity over the other. Through my own personal work and self-reflection, I'm comfortable embracing the fact that I am multiracial and have many different racial identities that make up who I am. It's not about choosing one or the other; it's welcoming all parts of me.

Another participant, Maya, also reflected on this notion of loving all parts of herself despite messages about assimilation:

> …Even being Filipino, there's a layer of my father not wanting to teach my own cultural background or our own language and our customs because it's like, no, he was taught to assimilate into the U.S. So it's like, no, be more white, be more American. And sometimes like I think for the longest time growing up, it was like, oh, I'm not Filipino, I'm white. But it's like, no, I am Filipino, and I've spent a lot of my adult life relearning and loving that part of me.

Maya gave voice to the constant questioning of identity and how this has impacted her experience. Participants described this idea of relearning who they are and self-reflection regarding their racial identities and backgrounds. It seemed very personal and reflective, while also considering external forces and perceptions by others. In this example from Paige, and as reflected through the *pláticas*, there is a sense of agency that participants tapped into when they talked about this element of "choosing" how they identify. It appears that participants were trying to be who they are, yet were thwarted by systems and assumptions from others.

How Seen by Others (Perceptions)

> And so many things are coming up for me in don't you hate it when people just assume something about your identities? Based on the ways that we look.
>
> —Maya

Participants expressed how they were often (mis)perceived by others or questioned about their identity, which impacted their sense of belonging within the workplace setting. This related to assumptions people made about them in terms of appearance, or even second-guessing themselves based on assumptions of how they were perceived by others. MRS provided information about how she wore her hair, and how this related to perceptions of her in terms of identity:

> It's like, okay, if I straighten it [my hair], I look more white maybe or not so like Latina or you know, so that was kind of how I would fit in, and then I was like, why? Why am I changing who I am to fit into what everyone else you know wants me to. So yeah, so I started wearing my hair more natural and curly. And I feel like that kind of also helps when I do wear my hair down or curly, like, oh, okay, she's not, maybe she's not all Latina.

MRS didn't identify as Latina, but often received questions or assumptions that she was Latina based on misperceptions related to her appearance. Because people assumed she was Latina, they spoke Spanish to her or invited her into Latinx-related staff spaces. She often had to clarify she is not Latina, and described her actual racial background, in which she identified as

mixed Black and white. MRS shared that people responded differently to her when she shared her racial identity. This has impacted her ability to "fit in" and feel a sense of belonging.

Similar to the idea of institutional forms requiring one response for racial background, Maya emphasized how perceptions related to her identity felt in terms of expecting her to fit into one box or racial category. Maya said, "They're like trying to put me into a box when I know I can't fit into one, whether it be my name or how I look. They'll be like, where are you from or what are you?" Maya connected this to a feeling of misperceptions from others, especially those who questioned her about her racial identity. She referenced questions she received from others in terms of questioning her about her race. This elicited feelings of frustration and exhaustion. As a result, Maya only talked about one component of her racial identity in certain situations in order to fit in or eliminate confusion about her identity.

This question of "what are you?" was a common experience for many participants, myself included. It tended to create distance and enhance a feeling of isolation and "otherness." as if a multiracial individual isn't an actual person. This feeling of "otherness" closely aligns with the idea of "enoughness," which is discussed as a subtheme below.

"Enoughness"

> So I guess, yeah…that's kind of me growing up. I think my natural inclination was, I'm not Korean enough to be Korean.
>
> —Ellie

This idea of "enoughness" was a common theme in relation to participants' self-identity and perceptions of others. Participants used this term "enoughness" to reference the constant questioning, either internally or from others, about whether they were "enough" of a certain racial background to claim that identity. As the quote above from Ellie signifies, this idea of enoughness stemmed from childhood experiences and was something that many participants

referenced in relation to their experience as administrators at UC Berkeley. MRS described how this played out for her own personal experience:

> I've kind of been afraid of being not enough. I think that's huge for me. I identify [as] Black and white. And so I grew up white with my mom and so I just knew kind of that whole side of things. And so you know that's always my thought is I'm not Black enough for that or I'm not Black enough to join that group.

Collectively through the *pláticas*, we reached a new understanding about the strong connection between this idea of "enoughness" and a sense of belonging in the work environment. Whether it related to which groups participants joined for social connection or alignment with staff who have shared identities, there was a constant tension about having to prove themselves and that they were "enough" to legitimize their racial identity. This may sometimes come at a cost, where participants expressed the need to maneuver space between multiple identities and accommodate in order to fit in. Ellie described this experience: "...Being mixed, but like being between these various worlds, needing to bridge a lot of that, code switch. You're not enough of this or that, but you're going to try to…accommodate, so you can fit in somewhat."

This craving for a shared connection with others based on identity, combined with personal anxiety about "enoughness," resulted in some precarious situations that left participants feeling ostracized. In the *plática* I held with MRS, I shared a vulnerable situation in which I was speaking with other Women of Color in the workplace setting. I had referenced something about all of us being Women of Color while in the meeting space, as it pertained to the information we were discussing. I could see one staff member quickly looking around the room at others, which I perceived was questioning my identity as a Woman of Color. I shared my reaction with MRS about how this felt:

> And I instantly got really self-conscious and was like, okay, maybe I'm not like enough to be seen as a Woman of Color. And so it kind of hurt because…I've been very clear

about how I identify and that's not the first time that person has heard me talk about my identity.

The constant feeling of having to prove my racial identity, or to get approval from others that I am enough to be part of a certain racial category, has been exhausting. The internal self-questioning about "enoughness" elicited shared feelings of harm echoed by many of the research participants. Maya and I discussed this idea of enoughness in our *plática* conversation, which helped to affirm our shared experiences and provide a space to engage in vulnerable dialogue with each other:

> Maya: I actually equate it to feeling like I'm not Filipino enough. There's layers to it because in Filipino American history, it's like, do you speak the language? Do you know the food? What customs do you know? And that has to do with colonialism and colonial mentality and other things.
>
> Marney: I can definitely resonate with that in this idea about enoughness that comes up in so many conversations I have with other folks who identify as mixed or multiracial biracial and I don't know, I've definitely experienced that myself all the time. And I think what I always try to ask myself is like, "enough" for who?

Later in our *plática* conversation, Maya shared more about her experience joining a race-based staff organization on campus at UC Berkeley. Although she had questioned herself if she is Filipino "enough," she had felt comfortable and welcomed in this race-based staff organization. There had not been questions about her identity in ways she was questioned before; hence, this feeling of "enoughness" had not yet been inflicted by other staff in the organization. As a result, Maya shared she had been affirmed about her presence and active involvement in this staff organization.

However, this idea of "enoughness" lingered for Maya with regards to involvement in previous Filipino-specific spaces. Although her presence and involvement in this current Filipino staff space had been affirmed by other members, Maya still brought these concerns and previous negative situations with her. Maya highlighted more about her perspective on this below:

> I try to be mindful when I show up in Filipino spaces. I'm part white. I'm part Filipino. I need to recognize my privilege…there may be leadership opportunities in Filipino spaces, but I'm scared. I admit I'm scared to take them on because it's like, oh, but am I Filipino enough for [it]. I'm also white. It looks kind of interesting…to have a white leader in a Filipino space. But then it's like, I shouldn't deny that part of my identity of being Filipino as well.

Maya's fear of running for a leadership role in a Filipino space stemmed from perceptions of "enoughness" from others, combined with the privilege Maya had because of being white and Filipino. The elements of privilege that many participants have wrestled with are addressed later in this chapter. However, it is important to acknowledge how Maya pushed her personal interest for a leadership role in a Filipino group aside due to the challenges of "enoughness." Clearly, the impacts of "enoughness" have a direct cost to multiracial women administrators. Some of these costs directly relate to impacts on sense of belonging and a feeling of being silenced. I shared how this felt for me during the group *plática*:

> I don't want to take away a platform or a space for someone else who has more of an experience that is important for them to talk through or process through…as a result, it's kind of created some silence from me in a way that's been harmful to myself, harmful, maybe to others. Meaning if I'm not talking about race, and I'm not talking about me being multiracial, who else is talking about it, and how is that creating space for people like me?

This idea of invisibility and silence was a common connection in terms of participants' experiences as multiracial administrators. It is important to disrupt the notion that multiracial people should have to constantly prove themselves to others. This journey of self-reflection and discovery was evident from all participants in the way they affirmed their own identity. Challenging the question of "enoughness" was daunting. It appeared in the work setting in various forms, such as questions from peers, the looks from others when one disclosed their multiracial identity, or other forms of multiracial microaggressions.

Proximity to Whiteness and Privilege

The idea of "enoughness" and questioning one's identity paralleled conversations regarding proximity to whiteness and privilege. When I set out to begin this research, I was not sure who the participants would be, much less the specific racial backgrounds of each participant. It is important to acknowledge that all five research participants, and myself as the researcher and *plática* participant, shared identities that were both white and minoritized racial identities. Through the pandemic when there was increased talk about racial reckoning and the realizations of extremes of disparity and disenfranchisement in our society that included racial divides, multiracial people were also navigating both of those waters. It is very difficult to contend with whiteness, yet important to explicitly discuss as part of this research.

In our individual *pláticas* and group *plática*, we had direct conversations about our proximity to whiteness, privilege, and how we navigate this in terms of our multiracial/biracial identities. There is a practice of critical consciousness among the participants in terms of addressing the duality of privilege and oppressed identities. Participants had a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics and the layers associated with this element of multidimensionality, specifically that we shared proximity to whiteness because of how we visibly presented and our specific racial backgrounds of white and People of Color.

Ellie vulnerably dove into the conversation about whiteness, especially as it related to not only her identity, but experiences related to her Korean mother being adopted by a white family. Ellie said, "My mom is adopted and it's very confusing because both sides of my family are white. I want to talk about not being seen as white, how people read you, all the perceptions." Ellie expressed an openness to engage in these conversations, which demonstrated a high level of self-awareness regarding the duality of being white and a minoritized identity.

With this in mind, combined with the challenging notion of "enoughness" and having to constantly choose how they identify, Lily reflected on a sense of guilt in relation to claiming certain parts of her racial identity. While she recognized her privilege, she was often consumed about what others were thinking of her in regards to her identity. This connects to the earlier discussion regarding perceptions of others, and how this impacted participants. Lily was focused on how she was perceived by others; therefore, her ability to actively engage in conversations related to DEIB was clouded because of this dissonance she experienced. Lily shared more about this:

> And so knowing that I have a lot of privilege and that a lot of the ways that I am, my ways of being, are influenced by privilege, I almost feel a lot of guilt trying to hold on to or identify with the side that is Mexican. And that is a really important part of who I am. And so it puts me in a weird place and I probably spend more time thinking about that and what other people are thinking of me when I'm trying to engage in these [DEIB] conversations to learn something.

It is clear that so many factors were competing for Lily's attention: recognizing privilege, experiencing guilt while trying to hold on to aspects of her identity, and distractions in DEIB conversations because of this back-and-forth inner dialogue.

Maya referenced a similar sentiment in terms of connection with elements of whiteness while simultaneously holding on to her Filipino identity. Maya shared about her experiences growing up and people telling her she was just white, rather than also Filipino:

> Growing up, I never learned the language. My dad didn't cook the food for me, so it's like I'm Filipino in my name, but oftentimes, Filipinos would still be like, 'Oh, but you're American, like you're white. You're not Filipino. You don't know the language.' So that is harmful and hurtful. And then at the same time, I tried to be mindful knowing that my experience sometimes feels very white.

Situations such as those described by Lily and Maya above have caused hurt and harm that participants have carried with them into the work environment. There was simultaneous acknowledgment of their own privilege and proximity to whiteness alongside experiences with

family members' and workplace dismissiveness of their multiple racial identities. The dual nature of being part white and being a Person of Color perpetually defied the binaried racial categories that are institutionalized in society and the university environment.

Acknowledging our privilege was important within the *pláticas*, because being perceived as white had produced certain benefits for us. Ellie reflected on her own growth and learning pertaining to her own privilege:

> I am afforded a lot of privilege within that…. But being mixed came with a lot of praise in terms of, wow, like you're really pretty, or that's so cool. That's so unique. There was so much praise attached to it. Growing up, I never really stopped to think critically about it.

Working at UC Berkeley where there is training and language about DEIB and privilege has helped to shed light on these concepts. Ellie highlighted how these topics show up for her in the work setting, with a particular lens on both race and gender:

> I think race, also gender, sexuality…these are the things that I think about all the time and I see a lot of my work and also my personal life through these lenses…and I want to constantly process and question and think about my racial privilege, like the ways that my racial identities [are] marginalized…my privilege when it comes to gender. I think being cisgender…what that means, being straight and what that means, and then also thinking about being a woman and how hard that can be in higher education…and there's so many layers.

Ellie raised many layered elements in this *plática* excerpt. She used her formal training to evaluate her intersecting identities in terms of both privilege and marginalization. In doing so, Ellie engaged her lived experiences navigating social and personal identities as a multiracial woman and higher education administrator. These reflections from Ellie were a vivid example of the iterative, nonlinear nature of the processing and navigation she felt compelled to do. Ellie was actively engaged in intentional learning and growth. The unique and heightened intersectional nature of Ellie's reflections is stunted by the limited DEIB practices and structure that currently exist at the institution.

Although UC Berkeley has been a place of learning and growth, there have simultaneously been situations at the institution that have perpetuated monoracial paradigms. As an administrator at the institution, I am very aware of how I may visibly present as a white woman, when in fact I'm multiracial. I've done a lot of work and reflection around my own privilege and how I may visibly present, and have had conversations with many of my peers about these topics. For a specific DEIB training for my department, I requested a space for multiracial people to connect but was denied and told I had to join either the space for white people or the space for People of Color. There was a Black-identified space, but I didn't feel comfortable or particularly welcomed to join that space. In the group *plática* space, I reflected on how this felt and my choice not to participate in the training session while also considering my own privilege:

> Even after having conversations with peers that were planning the training [there wasn't a change to the training process]. So it's hard. But there's also a lot of that privilege that I wrestled with too. I was like, that's so privileged of me to say like, I'm not going to participate. Who am I to say I'm not going to participate? But at the same time, I was like, no, people know how I identify and this feels like some erasure going on in some way. "I hear you, but you're not X enough for us to make changes to accommodate you."

This quote above shows the multidimensionality of balancing harm, self-advocacy, and departmental training norms rooted in monoracial systems. My attempt at disrupting the binaried racial category was dismissed, which left me with limited choices about engagement in this mandatory training session. I removed myself from the training as a form of self-protection given the impact these impossible choices had on me and the level of exclusion I had experienced. The *plática* excerpts aligned with this subtheme regarding privilege and proximity to whiteness provide a glimpse of the internal dialogue, and external actions, multiracial women administrators engaged in to address the duality of holding identities in both privileged and marginalized racial groups.

These realities of managing challenging expectations are connected to the larger umbrella theme of Multiracial Self-Identity, Perceptions, and Self-Reflection because of the intentional decisions participants had to make about their racial self-identification, often linked to having to "choose" stemming from childhood experiences and currently in the work setting. These pressures of having to "choose" caused tension in order to fit into monoracial categories and align with the perceptions of others based on monoracial assumptions. Participants engaged in vulnerable *pláticas* about the idea of "enoughness"—a manifestation of monoracial paradigms, which caused participants to question their legitimacy and feel like they weren't "enough" of one race to claim that identity. This idea of "enoughness" then led to important acknowledgements related to privilege and proximity to whiteness that participants navigated.

We now better understand the individual elements that emerged for participants in regards to their multiracial self-identity, perceptions of others and the impacts these caused, and the iterative nature of self-reflection that was inherent to their experiences as multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. These revelations combine to address the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? because they demonstrate the impacts to multiracial women administrators on an individual level, which is connected to their personal sense of belonging on campus. We need to first understand the individual level to ensure we are honoring specific experiences and hearing directly from participants, rather than operating on assumptions or always centering and prioritizing the needs of the institution. This is an entry point to then better understand how these individual experiences inform their sense of belonging with regards to campus policies meant to address diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

(DEIB) at a campus level. Next I will proceed with a discussion of the participants' experiences with campus DEIB policies and practices.

Theme 2: DEIB: Inherent Challenges, Invisibility, and Offensive Demands to Be a "Bridge"

> And then still, in the midst of it all, still feeling totally unseen.
>
> —Paige

Participants shed light on their experiences at UC Berkeley with regards to the institution's reputation related to DEIB and their actual sense of belonging considering recent DEIB practices. This led to the development of this second theme, which revealed specific challenges participants experienced at the institution, particularly with regards to DEIB. For participants, the lure of working at a campus known for DEIB was initially enticing, but inherent challenges surfaced in relation to patriarchal leadership systems, binaried options for DEIB practices, and invisibility for multiracial women administrators at the institution. Participants reflected on their work experience at UC Berkeley, the impact of DEIB practices and policies, and the unjust provision of invisible labor placed upon them as multiracial women administrators to be a "bridge" to connect People of Color and white people.

Being called upon to be a bridge was a tactic used by monoracial-identifying people to capitalize on participants' mixed-race status, without regard for the agency participants deserved. Rather than allowing participants to determine how or if they wanted to serve as a bridge in order to connect others, the unjust responsibility was placed upon participants like a weight. This expectation to be a bridge was a painful and taxing demand that participants continually navigated due to monoracial paradigms and multiracial microaggressions. In order to more fully understand these challenges and impacts, subthemes are described below regarding (a) illusions of working at UC Berkeley and the dissonance related to actual experiences, (b) specific DEIB

practices and the invisibility and harm this created, and (c) provisions of invisible labor and the offensive expectation to be a bridge at the expense of multiracial women administrators' own sense of belonging.

Illusions of Working at UC Berkeley

> ...There's something about Berkeley, like we talked about from the outside coming in…when I thought about working at Berkeley before I started, I was like, am I…social justice enough to work there?"
>
> —Marney

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, UC Berkeley is an institution known for leading the nation in progressive higher education. It is a flagship research university highly regarded for the infusion of DEIB practices. UC Berkeley is well known for activism, including the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s in which students protested against the administration for attempted censorship of speech (Settles-Tidwell, 2021). This history of the campus and ideology surrounding leading DEIB efforts often make UC Berkeley a beacon for administrators who are striving to work in an environment that values social justice, equity, and inclusion.

Participants reflected on their assumptions and illusions about working at Berkeley versus their actual experiences as administrators at the institution. In the *plática* I had with Lily, we talked about the perception that UC Berkeley was a place that had everything figured out, and the pressure we put on ourselves as we entered the institution. As administrators in roles with a significant amount of leadership and decision-making responsibilities, our experiences as multiracial/biracial Women of Color have caused us to question how we lead. Many of these questions and self-critiques stem from the fact that UC Berkeley is still a historically white institution with systems that were built for dominant groups, typically white men:

> Lily: I feel like a lot of the ways that we are expected to perform, particularly in leadership positions…are so much predicated on how white men have navigated the workplace. And so coming in, I'm not going to come in and be confident…but I think it

just lacks…a holistic understanding of individual experience and how that plays into how comfortable you are in the workplace and oriented to your work.

Marney: I would love for us to stay on this because this leadership element is something I'm really interested in and trying to put some words to, and tying it all with my experience at UC Berkeley. There's already some imposter syndrome going on. There's already this idea of like, oh, am I doing this right? …How I really channel my leadership is, I'm going to go in and connect with people, see what's going on, try to build bridges and connections…And I feel like my style is not really aligned with all that my department needs. And I thought, okay, maybe what if a man was in this role?...I've been doing some reading and this article came up about this idea of the glass cliff. This idea of the glass cliff is for women in leadership, where women will often be brought into a department that needs work, needs love, etc. If the department or organization isn't thriving by a certain amount of time, it's so quick to bring someone else with more "stronger" skill sets. So this idea of like, oh yeah, the woman is on the glass cliff. She's up there. She's doing the things, and at some point, it's just going to kind of fall. What resources are there, to where it's not a cliff?

Lily: …We've created these workplaces that are so reliant on these ways of functioning. Then when you bring somebody in who cares and has a heart and who really focuses on those things, but it's kind of like we're setting them up, right? Because we know we need that, but that's not the situation that we've created. And the people who are in those positions are looking for what they think and what we have been socialized to see as leadership….and so I think folks like you and me and others are going to continue…to be challenged with a sense of belonging, particularly in leadership roles.

Marney: Yes!

Lily: And I will tell you just to kind of resonate…I have so much imposter syndrome. So much…I feel like I don't make definitive decisions. I need as much information. I want to hear everybody's perspectives. And then I feel like I can make a decision. But I will often go into conversations or discussions about things. And I don't know where I'm going to land. And I feel like in some spaces, particularly with male colleagues, that puts me, it's a detriment, because they come in already having had made up their mind…So it's just very unstabilizing to be in a space where I'm like, I'm open to hearing all of these perspectives. And then you've got somebody who's pushing an agenda so hard. That it's like, wait a minute, why am I not as resolute as this person is? Or maybe they're so confident in their decision, maybe that's the right one, right? And I don't think that that's actually the case.

This *plática* snapshot highlights a candid conversation about intersectionality and navigating leadership styles within a historically white institution such as UC Berkeley. There were many multidirectional elements associated with these levels of intersectionality. The sentiments surrounding imposter syndrome and self-criticism wrapped up in gender and racial

experiences are examples of intersectionality while operating within patriarchy. This is then manifested through doubts associated with our leadership capacity, considering we engaged in decision-making rooted in our values of collective input and communication. Lily said she did not make definitive decisions, yet her practices of seeking and comprehensively gathering input to inform her decisions would otherwise be construed as transparent leadership and inclusive decision-making. However, the recognition of this valuable form of leadership appeared to be hidden beneath the imposter syndrome and more traditional, dominant forms of leadership. We were bringing our holistic selves in terms of leadership based on our values, but experienced challenges due to the systems that reward more dominant styles of leadership and decision-making. The *plática* solidified our common experiences that helped us understand that the institution tends to place high value on leadership rooted in dominant frameworks built for white men. We had both individually felt the message that we did not have what is valued at the institution. This feeling of lacking value, and potentially having less social capital, caused us to question our leadership skills with our race and gender as prominent factors for this dissonance we experienced. These experiences demonstrate the complexity of our roles as multiracial women administrators and align with the concepts of "politics of patriarchal power" (hooks, 1994, p. 29) associated with white male versions of leadership. As discussed by hooks (1994), there are biases that maintain white supremacy, sexism, and racism within education. White

hegemonic ways of leadership are embedded into structures and systems; it can be a challenge to unlearn these specific behaviors or reward other various leadership styles.[4]

DEIB Practices and Trainings: Managing Invisibility and Harm

Participants acknowledged the institution's efforts to create opportunities and conversations about DEIB. Participants described how specific practices, including mandatory departmental DEIB training, actually had negative impacts due to binaried conversations pertaining to race and assumptions about identity. These trainings were often held at a departmental level, such as topics focused on anti-Blackness or implicit bias. Some of the training involved the department inviting a speaker or workshop facilitator to present topics and lead affinity group conversations. Many of these conversations were monoracial in nature and did not create space for multiracial identity categories. This caused harm and perpetuated a shared feeling of "lostness" and invisibility, in which participants felt like they were alone in their experiences and did not have a community or group to connect with.

In attempts to create space to engage in DEIB topics, there is often energy that exists about doing it "right" and building the momentum to actually engage in active efforts focused on diversity, social justice, inclusion, and belonging. Some of this starts with language that is inclusive of multiracial women, hence creating an environment where participants feel welcomed to participate and engage. Unfortunately, there had been situations where participants did experience a welcoming environment related to the structure for DEIB training and

[4] One may assume that DEIB practices are infused within the institution where different leadership styles and ways of thinking are valued. The full exchanges in this *plática* also illuminated other areas of complexity because UC Berkeley continues to assert itself as the authority for DEIB, yet it is steeped in elements of patriarchy. A full elaboration of the campus's reliance on patriarchy, including within its application of DEIB, is beyond the scope of this study. However, my focus on the experiences of multiracial women administrators at this campus necessitated my efforts to address some of these specifics in order to better understand and draw connections with the analysis for this particular dissertation.

conversations. This not only impacted their engagement in DEIB conversations, but signaled—whether intentionally or unintentionally—that multiracial women administrators were invisible.

Lily highlighted this distinction regarding language and terminology, and the binary that often exists during conversations about social justice:

> I think that there are ways that the conversation, particularly on campus and even bigger than that…within society, that we try to simplify or reduce down what racism or what anti-racism is. And I don't think it really understands or takes into consideration the nuances of biracial or multiracial folks. And so I've talked about…in some of these spaces where we've had conversations. It feels like a binary, right? We're talking about either People of Color or white people. And I never know where to go or how to feel.

Through this quote, Lily provided a specific example about how binaries revealed themselves despite institutional efforts to create more inclusive environments. Lily was not alone; all participants experienced situations where there was a binary of People of Color versus white people in regards to conversations and training pertaining to social justice and DEIB topics at UC Berkeley. These experiences triggered the iterative meaning-making processes related to childhood experiences pertaining to choosing a side, and connected to the idea of "enoughness" many participants battled. As Lily expressed, "I never know where to go or how to feel," which demonstrates the confusion and sense of "lostness" she felt regarding which binaried group to join as part of these DEIB conversations. Lily belonged to both groups—People of Color and white. This forced-choice option did not allow for the space to engage in these anti-racism conversations based on her intersectional identities. Due to the harm that was elicited from being invisibilized or the lostness experienced because of feeling isolated, this forced choice option has kept participants from engaging authentically in relation to their multiple racial identities and/or led to complete disengagement from the conversations.

During the group *plática*, I shared an experience I had with a mandatory departmental training focused on anti-Blackness where I was forced to choose an affinity group—either

People of Color or white. These two options for spaces continued to exist, despite my request for a multiracial affinity group and the feedback I provided about the impacts of forcing me to choose:

> I've definitely had those situations before too in terms of training conversations or spaces around anti-racism where I'm being prompted to pick either a POC space or a white space. And I've had situations where I'm just not going to participate because if there's not an option to create that space for me, just no…And I thought long and hard about it and cried about it, had all these feelings and emotions about being in this training space where I was like, this is actually a lot more painful for me to participate because of these binary options that I need to remove myself from the situation.

The participants and I were able to have honest and vulnerable conversations about how this has felt for us to not be recognized or to be forced to choose one side of who we are for these training sessions. It seems counterintuitive and challenges the notion of inclusivity for DEIB training. Implementing only two affinity group options, for People of Color and white people, contributed to the sense of invisibility and challenged the sense of "enoughness" that participants had discussed. Paige described how this felt for her during departmental trainings pertaining to anti-racism:

> At Berkeley during those times that were referenced in conversation [during 2020 anti-racism conversations and training]...sort of the difficulty and how painful being in those spaces were. And also recognizing this is the work, this is engaging in anti-Blackness. You know, figuring out what antiracist framework is going to be best…[I] totally get it, [I'm] on that…self-education journey as well. And then still, in the midst of all of it, still feeling totally unseen…until [biracial/multiracial] affinity spaces came up…then it was like, "Oh, thank goodness."

The irony of engaging in conversations about DEIB while feeling unseen is challenging, to say the least. It seems to further perpetuate the binary that someone is "either/or"—either a Person of Color or white—rather than creating a space to be "both/and." The monoracial systems embedded in educational institutions are premised on the assumption that each person has a single racial identity, which does not leave room for anyone to be other than a member of one

racial category. Perspectives from participants highlighted that racial identity was more fluid and complex than singular racial categories allow. The responsibility and advocacy to shift to "both/and" in terms of racial identity has often fallen on the participants, because they were often the targets of the monoracial approaches that forced them into single-category boxes.

Participants vulnerably shared feeling lost or invisible during critical conversations pertaining to DEIB and the harm this caused. The heightened nature of feeling unseen seems to diminish the experience and existence of multiracial administrators, especially when inclusivity and belonging is a critical component in university settings. For these leaders responsible for others' inclusion and belonging, it created tensions and contradictions in terms of their own sense of belonging. These contradictions elicited constant feelings of isolation and invisibility that impacted multiracial women administrators' engagement in DEIB efforts. If there is truly a focus on DEIB, participants emphasized the need to include multiracial women administrators in the articulation of policies and development of practices that incorporate multiracial perspectives. The constant reminders to incorporate multiracial women administrators in DEIB conversations and training was exhausting and difficult. At the same time, participants managed undue pressure to use their multiple identities as the means to create a "bridge" between People of Color and white people. This offensive expectation from monoracial colleagues placed pressure on participants to provide invisible labor that caused frustration and increased emotional fatigue.

Provision of Invisible Labor: Offensive Expectation to Be a "Bridge"

> We do have a valid experience. And we're also holding a lot of labor. And we may even be holding more invisible labor because we're so unseen."
>
> —Paige

Despite the experience of feeling unseen or invisible, participants reflected on the idea that they were expected to be a bridge between People of Color and white people. They had been invisibilized during workshops or training pertaining to DEIB, yet simultaneously had the burden of connecting different groups together. The demand to be a bridge was a tactic used by monoracial people to capitalize on participants' mixed-race background and assigned a provision of invisible labor that was uncalled for and assumed based on multiracial identity. As emphasized through the quote above by Paige, this expectation to connect people together and collectively hold space for both People of Color and white people added a burden to multiracial women administrators who were already feeling undervalued and invisible.

Ellie described more about how this felt for her:

> People who are not mixed…they just tried to paint this very positive picture of like, oh, wow, like multiracial or biracial…It's like a symbol of unity or coming together between different groups or it's like a bridge or it's this positive [idea of] look how far we've come. It's like progress. It's all these things that I've found to not mean anything. And it's especially when it comes down to the training or when we have to pick a group or pick a box. And I'm like, what? Y'all told me I was the bridge and I don't even have a place here. Like anywhere. So I'm lost. I'm lost. …And yet, I'm supposed to be a bridge.

This quote shows the dichotomy between assumptions that multiracial people are bridges or connectors representing unity, yet, as Ellie described, "Y'all told me I was the bridge and I don't even have a place here." This quote from Ellie explicitly addresses not having a place at the institution, and exudes an element of "lostness," in which she felt alone and excluded. Other participants identified with Ellie's analogy about being a bridge with the lack of support that exists. Maya said, "We're supposed to be the bridge, but, what are we connecting? There's

nothing. Or, I mean, we know what we're trying to connect, but there's not the infrastructure in place for us to connect things….it's still very objectifying." This objectification often exists in the form of multiracial microaggressions. These multiracial microaggressions may include assumptions that multiracial people have the best of both worlds and can identify with multiple racial groups at one time. Hence, they can be a bridge to connect others together. Yet, there isn't support or infrastructure for multiracial women administrators to feel seen or connected to others. This idea of lostness contributed to an enhanced feeling of exclusion, given that participants were pushed to the margins and forced to occupy binaried spaces while also being objectified and exploited for offensive invisible labor that disregarded their own personal agency and multiracial background.

Multiracial microaggressions are also perpetuated by not acknowledging participants as "real" People of Color, delegitimizing their experiences, or saying comments that may be offensive. Lily described her experience:

> There have been spaces, particularly within the workplace, where I feel like because I'm biracial, I feel safe to white people, like there's this, oh, "But you're not like a real Person of Color, but I can still count you as a Person of Color….And I can still say things that are a little bit racist. Because you're not really a Person of Color." And so I have found myself being like, why are you coming to me with this thing, or why am I being tapped for this particular [thing] or, why do you feel comfortable saying these things to me? And I think it's because that's the bridge, right…I don't know, they just view you as somebody who's…a safe Person of Color.

Being seen as a "safe" or "not real" Person of Color is layered and deeply rooted in racism, anti-Blackness, and elements of colorism. Colorism "perpetuates a system of white over color dominance and maintains a racial/skin color hierarchy that stifles coalition building between racial communities" (Harris, 2016, p. 806). These labels of being "safe" and "not a real Person of Color" highlight participants' proximity to whiteness in terms of appearing palatable enough to be welcomed into some conversations and tapped for specific opportunities. As

research by Harris (2017) describes, participants experienced multiracial microaggressions considering they were labeled as "not a real" Person of Color, which denied their multiracial reality and lived experiences. That others label participants as "not a real Person of Color" is a multiracial microaggression that seems to diminish their existence and minimize their experiences. These multiracial microaggressions can be particularly harmful and painful. Colleagues, institutional and organizational structures, and students can all be perpetrators of multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2017), as participants emphasized through the *pláticas*. Considering these experiences, the need for participants to have a strong community and sense of belonging was especially important, but systems were not in place to support this.

This overarching theme of DEIB: Inherent Challenges, Invisibility, and Offensive Demands to be a "Bridge" demonstrated the challenges of patriarchal leadership systems that caused participants to diminish their own valuable leadership skills. The painful impacts of binaried DEIB practices heightened the invisibility and isolation multiracial women administrators experienced on campus. Despite feeling unseen, especially in relation to DEIB practices and policies, multiracial women battled the unjust provision of invisible labor placed upon them to be a bridge to connect People of Color and white people. This demand to be a bridge was offensive and demeaning, especially considering the exclusion participants experienced as multiracial women administrators. These painful stories participants shared directly addressed the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? because they revealed the actual challenges, harm, and isolation these DEIB practices have caused. These *pláticas* provided a platform to share these harsh realities, which resulted in shared connection and community for the participants. As a result, participants were able to close out

the *pláticas* with greater clarity about ideas for increased sense of belonging and the value of community with other multiracial women administrators.

Theme 3: Sense of Belonging—Seeking Belonging in Community

> Why I stayed [at UC Berkeley] for as long as I stayed is I think I was hoping it would be my place. And hoping it would be the place that would want me to also stay.
>
> —Paige

Participants shared rich information about their perspectives and experiences with regards to their sense of belonging as a multiracial woman administrator at UC Berkeley. Belonging was a broad topic to unpack, and had multiple subthemes that emerged in order to fully capture the complexity and uniqueness of participants' experiences. In this section, I take up a discussion of how a sense of belonging for the participants revolved around their *seeking* belonging in the campus community. What emerged were various components related to the idea of belonging. Subthemes were then developed as a way to uplift these elements. Subthemes included (a) belonging vs. fitting in, (b) finding belonging in community, solidarity, and shared "lostness," and (c) institutional belonging.

Belonging vs. Fitting In

Participants had differing perspectives with regards to the idea of belonging and "fitting in." For some, the terms were synonymous and both connected to the idea of being included and welcomed in the workplace environment. Others described how it felt when they did not fit in, and the impact this had on their sense of belonging. MRS reflected on her experience when people assumed she was Latina, and how she struggled to fit in when she clarified her actual racial identity:

> And then when they find out that I'm not [Latina], I get, I don't know, not necessarily different vibe, but like, "Oh, okay, she's not Latina"….I don't fit into that category or, you know, even the other way around where, you know, because I grew up with my, you know, white mom. I'm more, you know, the white side and I don't necessarily fit into the

> Black side of things. And so, and, yeah, it's very hard to, like, fit in and, like, when people find out what, you know, you identify as, and it's not what they think.

MRS described how fitting in also tied into the "enoughness" she often experienced:

> You're not Black enough to hang out with Black people…I'm not enough to fit into that group, but then I'm not enough of this other group…fitting in…has a big effect where…you do say, oh, don't worry about fitting in, but it really does when you put it into you know just two categories…the effect it has.

Paige shared a unique perspective about the idea of belonging versus fitting in that differentiated the two terms:

> I think [belonging and fitting in are] opposites because…when I think back on all the endeavors I had to fit in or assimilate…it meant I had to change something about myself because my identity was not part of the dominant culture…so to fit in, meant that I had to become something else…which meant erasing, or trying to erase who I was…to belong means the community has accepted me wholly. I don't have to change. I am welcomed. My whole self is welcomed.

Paige's description helped to uplift the essence of belonging in terms of "whole self is welcomed" and "community has accepted me wholly," rather than multiracial women administrators only bringing parts of themselves or trying to erase some components. Paige's assertion in terms of bringing one's whole self is in direct alignment with the aim towards DEIB. Participants identified the uniqueness of feeling like they didn't "fit in" to certain spaces, or might not always feel like they belonged. They did provide a shared connection around the sense of community they have experienced with other multiracial women administrators, and expressed a desire to seek more of these spaces in the future.

Finding Belonging in Community, Solidarity, and "Shared Lostness"

> You might find other people who have a similar "lostness," and then you feel like you belong with them, which is kind of the paradox of "Oh, you don't belong." I don't either. So…we belong with each other.
>
> —Ellie

During our individual *plática*, Ellie and I closed the conversation with this idea of a "shared lostness" and connecting with others through the commonality of not belonging. This

term of "lostness" was coined by participants as a shared reaction to the many forms of exclusion, invisibility, exploitation, and silencing they constantly navigated and critically analyzed together via the *plática* space. In the quote above from Ellie, she described how she bonded and experienced belonging with other multiracial administrators through a shared sense of "lostness."

> Ellie: All the different ways I have these privileged identities, also made it challenging for me to eventually get to the place where I'm able to critically look at my different identities, and it is hard to be in-between.
>
> Marney: Yeah.
>
> Ellie: It is difficult and tiring. There is some lostness. You might find other people who have a similar lostness, and then you feel like you belong with them, which is kind of the paradox of, "Oh, you don't belong. I don't either. So…we belong with each other." I'll end with that, Marney.
>
> Marney: That is so good. I'm writing this idea of lostness because I definitely resonate with that.

This idea of "lostness" was heavy as we wrapped up the *plática*, and together we affirmed the "lostness" each of us had experienced on an individual level. There was a shared understanding of the huge impacts of this "lostness" feeling, and the need to find connection with others who may have had a similar experience. This idea of "lostness" resonated again in a separate *plática* I had with Lily.

Lily spoke to this idea of constantly being in-between or not having a "home" in the workplace, which drew the connection to a "shared lostness" between us:

> And so it's that weird in-between, and we just don't always have a home, it's like, I feel like my home isn't with white folks, my home isn't with other Latinx folks, but it's with the people who also have multiple identities that makes it really difficult to anchor on to one or the other.

As described previously, participants expressed feeling a "shared lostness" with other multiracial women administrators, particularly during DEIB specific training or conversations

where they are forced to choose between white or People of Color spaces. This idea of "shared lostness" often connected multiracial administrators, as they often felt alone or isolated otherwise. Connecting with other biracial/multiracial administrators despite a "shared lostness" appeared to enhance this sense of belonging.

Lily emphasized this connection that she felt with other biracial/multiracial administrators: "I think it's meaningful that I resonate so much with the experience of biracial or multiracial folks no matter what their background is. More so than the identities that I hold themselves." These connections developed despite specific racial categories and were related to the umbrella identity of being multiracial. MRS also described how she connected due to a sense of solidarity and shared experiences: "[I] appreciate folks around me. And…I'm not alone. I'm not alone in this. And there's other folks on campus that are going through the same exact experiences. And so I think that has helped me grow personally." This idea of not being alone emphasized how loneliness can manifest for a multiracial women administrator and opportunities to build connections based on similar experiences.

The group *plática* emphasized this sense of solidarity, shared connection, and belonging amongst the participants. Many expressed gratitude for the space to connect based on their multiracial identities. For some participants, these *pláticas* were the first opportunity to share intentional space with other biracial/multiracial administrators while at UC Berkeley or at any workplace in general. The *plática* excerpt below shows a snapshot of this conversation and appreciation for the group *plática* space.

> Maya: There's not a lot of opportunity to talk about our biracial or mixed-race identities….it was so nice to have a formal or even this academic space to be able to talk about our identities.
>
> MRS: Yeah, we don't get the chance a lot of times to talk about [our identities]. Maya shared how she identified and you don't get that opportunity up front to find that

> information out. [I'm] just really appreciative of this space with all of you to discuss this important topic.
>
> Marney: Love that!

Most participants affirmed Maya and MRS regarding the opportunity for shared conversation related to their identities as multiracial women administrators, whether it was through visual cues such as head nods or claps or writing comments in the chat box that affirmed their perspectives.

Institutional Belonging

As we wound down to the end of the *pláticas*, I intentionally gathered participants' advice on how to address areas in need of greatest improvement and change regarding sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators in light of DEIB efforts at UC Berkeley. One recommendation that came through from all participants was the establishment and institutional support of multiracial affinity groups to build community, which directly connected to a sense of belonging. These efforts for affinity groups have been developed at a department or divisional level, with varying levels of consistency over time.

Multiracial Affinity Groups. In our *plática*, Maya and I discussed the value of multiracial affinity spaces, and the ability to connect across racial identity groups in relation to the shared identity of being multiracial:

> Maya: I had a question about the connection that you have in those [biracial/multiracial affinity] spaces. How is it connecting with other multiracial folks, even if they are not the same identifiers as you as being Black, white, Native American, but someone else who's biracial, but of completely different background. What does that connection look like with those folks?
>
> Marney: To me, that connection has been very strong…it's more about being in community with people who are mixed or biracial/multiracial to see these common themes that come up about enoughness, multiracial microaggressions, or fitting in.

Maya had not participated in affinity spaces specifically for biracial/multiracial people, and expressed an interest in doing so in the future. The biracial/multiracial groups that were briefly offered divisionally at UC Berkeley were led from grassroots efforts without sustainable group leadership to keep the momentum going despite staff turnover or shifts in divisional priorities.[5] However, participants who had previously engaged in these spaces had positive things to share.

Paige emphasized how biracial/multiracial-specific affinity groups helped her to feel more seen in terms of her identities as a biracial administrator at UC Berkeley: "It's like still being completely unseen until these affinity spaces came up…and it was just like, oh, thank goodness… it goes back to what Lily said. It's like, my lived experience is everyone's lived experience on this call." This quote from Paige parallels what other *plática* participants mentioned in terms of a shared connection beyond specific racial identities: it is more about building community as biracial/multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. Those who had participated in these biracial/multiracial affinity groups expressed their gratitude for participation in those spaces. There was also a distinction about why the biracial/multiracial spaces were an important element to offer beyond monoracial affinity group spaces. Although some participants have found a connection in monoracial race-based organizations, the stronger sense of community established through specific multiracial spaces resonated with most *plática* participants. The desire for these spaces for multiracial women is directly related to many of the themes discussed in this findings section, including how participants have chosen to self-identify,

[5] Many of these affinity groups were initiated within some departments, and the Dean of Students portfolio at UC Berkeley, in 2020 as a response to the racial reckoning and continued national violence against Black individuals and People of Color. The purpose of the groups was to build community and solidarity for folks with shared identities. These groups were optional to attend. According to *plática* participants who engaged in the divisional multiracial affinity group, it was most active during the 2020-2021 academic year.

perceptions of others, battling with enoughness, and expectations to provide the invisible and imposed added labor of being a bridge.

This theme, "Sense of Belonging: Seeking Belonging in Community," elevates the importance of community and connection for multiracial women administrators, which directly links to elements of belonging. Participants strongly advocated for multiracial affinity spaces as an entry point to meet the urgent need for camaraderie and support as multiracial women. This recommendation for institutional support of a multiracial affinity group space is directly connected to the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? Given the exclusion, invisibility, and provision of labor multiracial women administrators have experienced, especially due to monoracial DEIB policies and practices, this space is crucial for the retention and engagement of multiracial women administrators. The *pláticas* and powerful participant narratives affirm that *institutional* support of multiracial women administrators can't wait, and should be prioritized along with other DEIB policies and practices that strive to create an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere for individuals in the campus community to thrive.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I explored three overall emergent themes, with specific subsections that further detailed the findings based on the candid participant narratives and vulnerability in the *pláticas*. First, on an individual level, participants reflected on their self-identification in terms of their biracial/multiracial identity, how they were perceived by others, and the ongoing nature of self-reflection related to their identity. The iterative meaning making that participants experienced regarding identity development, childhood experiences, and how these elements manifested in the work environment was powerful to witness. Second, DEIB practices were

explored in relation to advocacy for space for multiracial women and the emphasis on "being a bridge" for People of Color and white people. Participants demonstrated a deep level of vulnerability as they shared painful experiences associated with identity labeling, multiracial microaggressions, and isolation. These experiences resulted in feelings of invisibility and lostness, which negatively impacted their sense of belonging. Third, the theme of belonging was explored in relation to the idea of belonging versus fitting in, finding belonging in community and a sense of "shared lostness." The final element of the *pláticas* prompted participants to suggest considerations to enhance a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators, given their unique lived experiences at UC Berkeley. The importance of multiracial affinity space groups was uplifted as a critical engagement opportunity that may increase institutional belonging. In the upcoming chapter I will engage in a discussion of the findings as connected to the research question and address implications for policy and practices.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 6 is organized into five parts: summary of the study; discussion of the findings; implications for policy, practice, and future research; a conclusion of the study; and researcher's reflection. The purpose of this chapter is to translate the rich data gleaned from participant *pláticas* and apply these findings to better understand experiences pertaining to a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators at the University of California (UC) Berkeley. In the discussion of the findings section, I connect the themes developed from participant *pláticas* to the research question that guided the study: In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? In the implications section, I highlight implications for policy and practice. The recommendations section provides considerations for future research based on the findings and discussion from this study. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of this research in terms of the role of multiracial women administrators in the campus community at large. I conclude with a researcher's reflection in which I delve further into my thoughts going into my research, lessons learned, my role as researcher and participant, and takeaways as a scholar practitioner.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? Given my scholarly interest in examining how certain individuals experience university efforts at diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), I chose to focus on one single campus that is highly regarded for its DEIB practices and where I have been an administrator for almost a decade, UC Berkeley. I wanted to uplift the experiences of

multiracial women administrators in one context through a *plática* methodology. I engaged in five individual *pláticas* and facilitated a group *plática* with all five research participants together to better understand sources of belonging for participants, with emphasis on DEIB practices at UC Berkeley. This study infused storytelling through *pláticas* and narrative analysis. The data were analyzed with theoretical concepts in mind as part of an organizing framework that provided a lens on the participants' experiences within the context of their identities and institutional roles: multiracial critical race theory (MultiCrit; Harris, 2016), the multiracial cultural attunement model (Jackson & Samuels, 2019), validation theory (Rendón, 1994), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and multidimensionality (Jackson & Samuels, 2019). Three main themes were developed from the *plática* coding and analysis process: (a) Multiracial Self-Identity, Perceptions, and Self-Reflection; (b) DEIB: Inherent Challenges, Invisibility, and Offensive Demands to be a "Bridge"; and (c) Sense of Belonging: Seeking Belonging in Community. As indicated through participants' stories and experiences, this research elevates the importance of intersectionality in the workplace and encourages the expansion of DEIB practices to better encompass a holistic sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators.

Discussion of Findings

As a way to enter into this discussion, I will first provide a synopsis of what each theme captured in relation to the *pláticas* and data analysis. On the basis of the data gathered from the *pláticas*, three themes were generated from the coding and analysis process. The first theme, Multiracial Self-Identity, Perceptions, and Self-Reflection, emphasized participants' choices for self-identifiers regarding their race, which were often connected to family dynamics and lived experiences. Participants spoke about perceptions from others in regards to their racial identity and how this impacted them. As a result, there was a constant iterative loop of self-reflection

based on experiences or treatment from others and mindfulness for how to navigate the work environment with intersectional identities pertaining to race and gender.

The second theme, DEIB: Inherent Challenges, Invisibility, and Provision of Invisible Labor, revealed the painful impacts of exclusive practices that have existed under the guise of DEIB training. These experiences led to intensified multiracial microaggressions and feelings of invisibility. To compound the impact of these painful situations, multiracial women administrators had expectations placed upon them to be a bridge between People of Color and white people, which increased the provision of invisible labor they were forced to manage. Participants juggled these demands for being a bridge despite a pervasive lack of acknowledgement of their identities and lived experiences.

The last theme, Sense of Belonging: Seeking Belonging in Community, unpacks different levels of belonging, including participant recommendations for increased belonging at an institutional level. Participants advocated for the implementation of multiracial affinity groups in order to build community and provide a space for shared connection. There was a recommendation for these affinity groups to be led with institutional support in order to sustain the groups and fully actualize more enhanced DEIB practices at the institution.

The findings and analysis of this research affirm and expand upon previous research. The study contributes new knowledge pertaining to a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators at a predominantly white institution. This research takes on layered concepts pertaining to racial identity, gender, and institutional belonging. Previous studies helped to situate multiracial women within research, specifically in educational contexts, and helped us better understand the individual experiences of multiracial women at historically white institutions (Harris, 2019) and impacts of monoracial structures (Harris, 2017).

This particular study builds on this notion of complexity in regards to the various intersecting components multiracial women administrators are navigating within the workplace and impacts on sense of belonging. The connection to family dynamics and sense of belonging within the workplace was emphasized across all participants, particularly with regards to feeling seen and included. Although previous research began to explore multiracial women in higher education settings (Harris, 2016, 2017), there have not been direct connections between familial experiences and the work environment.

Furthermore, the idea of "enoughness" was something that many participants spoke to in an honest, vulnerable way that was unique to this research. These findings align with research by Harris (2016) that informed the development of MultiCrit, as participants perceived they were not "enough" compared to their monoracial student peers. As discussed by Harris (2016), this idea of enoughness was a manifestation of monoracism considering participants did not fit into one single category. With regards to my research, this idea of enoughness was connected to the importance of a sense of belonging, particularly for those who have not felt welcomed or included in certain spaces or conversations due to the belief they were not "enough" of one race to identify. These feelings of exclusion and invisibility have been heighted in DEIB training due to the binaried nature of the conversations. These findings parallel previous research associated with navigating monoracial paradigms of race (Harris, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020; Stohry & Aronson, 2021). The element of invisibility, "shared lostness," and expectation to be a bridge that participants conveyed in this dissertation is critical to uplift in research. Not only does it help to amplify experiences of multiracial women administrators, it also enhances concepts of sense of belonging that are critical to consider in institutional DEIB efforts. Specific discussion

considerations are further outlined below, followed by implications for policy and practice and future research.

The Cost of Choosing and Leaving Parts of Oneself Behind

Participants discussed the painful experiences of having to "choose" who they were in order to fit into the workplace. The element of choosing was linked to family dynamics, in terms of leaving specific family connections behind in order to fit in to the monoracial structures that exist in the work environment. These monoracial frameworks may operate through institutional demographic forms that only allow individuals to check one box for racial background, DEIB trainings that demand binaried conversations pertaining to race, or limited formalized connection opportunities for multiracial administrators.

The cost of having to choose for participants was linked to hurtful situations and constantly questioning if they were "enough." Furthermore, this tension required an exhaustive amount of energy that multiracial women administrators could possibly otherwise expend on other components of their work: supporting students, involvement in campus initiatives, and other endeavors. Instead, as participants discussed, there was pain and hurt associated with feeling invisible on campus and not welcomed into certain spaces based on how they identify. As demonstrated by Harris (2019) and affirmed through this research, multiracial women experience a hostile campus climate with limited institutional structures to support them and their intersectional identities.

Being a Bridge—Exploitation and Added Invisible Labor

This idea of "being a bridge" was an element gathered from the research that helps us better understand the nuanced expectations that cloud multiracial women administrators' experiences in the workplace. Many participants spoke to the complexities of their racial

identities, gender, and institutional roles in terms of being a bridge for others at the expense of their own personal belonging. Specifically, participants referenced the shared expectation they have experienced regarding being a bridge between People of Color and white people because they hold identities in both groups.

In actuality, participants experienced an element of invisibility in the work setting because they were often overlooked or their experiences were dismissed. The expectation regarding being a bridge also added a weight on multiracial women administrators while they were already grappling with harm due to these painful experiences. Serving as a bridge was painful and exhausting. However, being a bridge potentially also involved an element of power in terms of accessing multiple spaces and forming connections across racial groups.

With the idea of power and access in mind, participants delved into the complex nature of being a bridge with regards to their positionalities, privilege, and proximity to whiteness. It is clear from the *pláticas* that participants were hyperaware of this navigation of privileged and marginalized spaces they simultaneously occupied in terms of being white and a Person of Color. They were critically conscious about the institutional access afforded to them about being part white. Participants actively engaged in constant self-reflection and acknowledged elements of whiteness where they experienced privilege. This was a balancing act that many participants acknowledged, and involved confronting impossible choices. It was a matter of embracing their racial identities while acknowledging both the privileged and marginalized identities in the multiple spaces they occupied. Participants expressed the desire to make space for others who identified as People of Color considering their proximity to whiteness and the privilege afforded to them at the institution.

These findings parallel elements of MultiCrit in regards to proximity to whiteness and privilege, and the assumption of how multiracial people "traverse white communities" (Harris, 2016, p. 810). The microaggressions participants acknowledged in terms of not being a "real Person of Color" are directly aligned with former research regarding monoracism (Harris, 2017) and multiracial microaggressions, which impact how multiracial people feel seen, heard, and included (Harris, 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Johnston-Guerrero & Pecero, 2016; Nadal et al., 2011). Being the target of multiracial microaggressions further perpetuated expectations due to the assumption that multiracial people have the "best of both worlds" because of their proximity to whiteness. Participants provided a glimpse into their reality that rather than being part of multiple worlds, they often felt isolated and alone despite the bridge expectation.

It takes a significant amount of energy to meet the needs and expectations of others, and potentially results in a loss of self. The expectation to be a bridge puts the pressure on multiracial women administrators, rather than creating a buffer or infrastructure to best support them. Participants expressed the pain of feeling unseen, the invisible labor from being a bridge between People of Color and white people, and the lack of institutional support to address these dynamics.[6] The level of awareness and engagement around this idea of being a bridge despite not having support or connection themselves was very powerful. It highlights the awareness about unspoken expectations institutions and individuals place on multiracial women because of the monoracial systems that exist within higher education environments.

[6] It is possible that other barriers may be placed upon multicultural Women of Color who may not have proximity to whiteness due to combined minoritized identities, in which additional forms of invisible labor may exist.

Expanding the Concepts of Sense of Belonging and DEIB

Sense of belonging was uniquely situated as both a concept and theoretical framework pertinent to this research. Participants shared vulnerable experiences that highlighted how they have experienced belonging as multiracial women administrators and areas where this can be enhanced. Participants spoke to the psychological feeling of belonging and connectedness (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) through personal narratives and stories. *Plática* participants provided a glimpse into what sense of belonging looked like for them, especially in terms of how they felt seen, heard, and included within the campus community. They also shed light on situations when they experienced the opposite of belonging, particularly isolation and invisibility.

Despite existing efforts pertaining to DEIB at UC Berkeley, such as specific monoracial staff affinity groups or departmental trainings focused on DEIB discussed throughout this dissertation, participants conveyed a sense of invisibility and collective feeling of "shared lostness" within these efforts. The idea of a "shared lostness" helped to distinguish elements of isolation and loneliness that many participants had experienced but did not have the words to describe due to the silos they were in. As revealed through the *pláticas*, many participants were suffering in silence based on the lostness they were feeling individually.

The irony of the heightened nature of feeling unseen as leaders responsible for inclusion of others creates some tensions in terms of belonging and isolation experienced at an administrative level. Participants confirmed that additional institutional practices can be established to address a sense of belonging with longevity and administrator retention in mind. Although some participants, such as Maya, have found a sense of belonging within monoracial race-based staff organizations, all participants craved a specific space for multiracial staff to connect together. Participants recommended multiracial affinity groups as an opportunity for

enhanced sense of belonging where multiracial women administrators can connect with one another and build community in a collective space. This argument for intentional space and supportive networks is affirmed through previous research that identifies community building as a way to sustain Women of Color administrators on campus (Huang, 2012; Settles-Tidwell, 2021; Warren, 2019). The advocacy for multiracial affinity group space is also aligned with the multiracial cultural attunement model, in which Jackson and Samuels (2019) highlight the importance of counterspaces where multiracial people can establish authentic relationships and facilitate well-being. Directly connecting back to my study, multiracial affinity groups would provide an opportunity to build shared connections and solidarity and battle this idea of "shared lostness" many participants acknowledged.

A key distinction in my research was that participants strongly advocated for support of these spaces to be upheld at an institutional level. In the past, there have been expectations for individual grassroots efforts to keep these groups functioning. These groups typically have not had the institutional support or buy-in to continue for long periods of time. Relying on individuals to facilitate and uphold these multiracial groups gives the message that perhaps they are less important compared to the monoracial staff affinity groups that campus already supports. There needs to be a greater push to acknowledge the value of spaces for multiracial administrators and therefore provide support to sustain these groups, whether financially or through marketing and advertising, physical space for meetings, or other considerations.

The desire for these affinity groups is rooted in belonging at an individual and institutional level. The experiences and narratives of participants revealed that a sense of belonging is not just an individual consideration.

The greater sense of belonging allows people to feel like they matter to the larger campus community. This research contributes to the desire for being seen, heard, and included within the whole campus community. This suggests that sense of belonging is both a localized phenomenon, in terms of individual considerations for belonging, and a desire to feel part of the whole campus while in community with other multiracial women administrators. Previous research has primarily focused on a sense of belonging from an individual lens (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). This dissertation research has expanded the considerations of sense of belonging to include belonging within organizations and departments, connection with other administrators, and institutional belonging.

Intersectionality: Race, Gender, and Administrator Identity

A tension and complexity this research revealed is the need to expand notions of DEIB to further incorporate multiracial women administrators. The intersectionality of multiple races and gender was an interesting element to unpack due to the layered nature of these identity-related experiences that was revealed through the *pláticas*. Participants conveyed how these intersections manifested in terms of constant self-reflection and simultaneous acknowledgement of privilege and marginalization, all while battling feelings of invisibility and lostness. These intersections were further intensified by the constant demand to choose one race over another due to binaried systems and monoracial paradigms of race (Harris, 2016). The findings from my research support the arguments for intersectionality as demonstrated by Crenshaw (1989), hooks (1994), and current research previously discussed in this dissertation by Harris (2016), Settles-Tidwell (2021), Huang (2012), and Warren (2019).

With intersectionality in mind, my study builds upon the work of Crenshaw (1989), who emphasized the intersections of racism and sexism for Women of Color. In addition, hooks

(1984) elevated the experiences of Black women in scholarship, which helped to enhance the focus on intersectionality within academia. It is pertinent to address that some participants in my study identified as Black and others did not. As previously discussed in Chapter 4 and reiterated here, intersectionality is meant to address the combination of race and gender identities with regards to experiences as multiracial women administrators. It is building on the previous scholarship initially focused on Black women, but not meant to take away from the initial focus of the term intersectionality. Research by Harris (2016) has helped to set the tone for intersectional lenses to explore how race and gender impact multiracial women students at predominantly white institutions. Although this research was important to build from, my intentional focus on multiracial women administrators and sense of belonging created a new avenue of research to explore.

Specifically, my study contributes to research by Settles-Tidwell (2021) because of the shared concepts of sense of belonging and experiences of Women of Color administrators at a historically white institution. Settles-Tidwell (2021) demonstrated the effects of Women of Color administrators in terms of navigating white institutions, including participants' experiences with self-doubt and perceiving themselves as not smart enough or skilled. These findings were echoed in research by Huang (2012), and Warren (2019) regarding Women of Color who reported feeling isolated and a high level of imposter syndrome.

As discussed by hooks (1994), there are biases that maintain white supremacy, sexism, and racism within education. Research by Harris (2016) also exposed the critiques of patriarchy and whiteness with a particular focus on multiracial women students in higher education. The *plática* excerpt highlighted previously in this dissertation when Lily and I were vulnerably sharing our experiences regarding leadership, imposter syndrome, and self-doubt helped to uplift

the challenging situations associated with systems built for white men, including leadership and decision-making spaces. All of this is situated within our educational systems rooted in white patriarchy. These experiences demonstrate the complexity of our roles as multiracial women administrators and align with the concepts of "politics of patriarchal power" (hooks, 1994, p. 29) associated with white male versions of leadership. White hegemonic ways of leadership are embedded into structures and systems; it can be a challenge to unlearn these specific behaviors or reward other various leadership styles.

Within my research, there were intersections not only in terms of participants' racial and gender identities, but also with their roles as administrators at UC Berkeley. This research also suggests the need to expand intersectionality with a lens on multiracial individuals considering the negative impacts that monoracial systems may trigger in relation to their campus experience (Harris, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020). The complexity revealed by this study in terms of multiraciality and gender demonstrated the mix of privilege and marginalization that operates simultaneously for multiracial women administrators. They have navigated these forces while also being cognizant of their roles as administrators at UC Berkeley in which they are responsible for engaging in DEIB efforts to enhance a sense of belonging among campus constituents. Whether it was through mandatory DEIB departmental training with binaried conversation groups for only white or People of Color engagement or demographic institutional forms that lacked the option for more than one racial category, monoracial structures have haunted participants and impacted their experiences with belonging on campus. Despite these painful messages, multiracial women administrators have continued to show up, engage at work, and push down their needs for the common good of supporting DEIB efforts. All of this has come at a cost and negatively impacted participants in this multidirectional view of

intersectionality: as multiracial people, women, and administrators on campus. There is a greater need to acknowledge intersectional identities within DEIB efforts and institutional culture in order to enhance a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators.

The Power of *Pláticas*

These rich findings were produced through the application of the *plática* methodology, which created space for casual, authentic dialogue with participants. As the researcher who shared multiple identities with my participants, it was important to shift my stance to engage with participants in the spirit of the *plática* methodology. Rather than compartmentalizing my role as just the researcher, I engaged with participants as a multiracial woman administrator who worked at UC Berkeley along with them. As emphasized by hooks (1994), "bourgeois educational structures…denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization" (p. 16). I challenged this notion by incorporating the *plática* methodology and modeled vulnerability in the highest sense possible. I made a conscious attempt to be vulnerable and "wholly present in mind, body, spirit" (hooks, 1994, p. 21). Just as participants engaged their lived experiences all the time in order to be fully themselves in the workplace, I brought my lived experiences with me in this research process. This aligns with one of the five principles of the *plática* methodology, in which one's lived experiences are connected to the process of research (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

The *pláticas* provided a space for multiracial women administrators to candidly discuss their experiences on campus and recommendations related to sense of belonging. Participants acknowledged that the honest and engaging conversations, especially the group *plática*, provided a space for connection, reciprocal sharing, and healing. This reiterates the role of vulnerability and collective story sharing in knowledge production, as described by previous researchers who

theorized, developed, and utilized *plática* methodology (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Huber, 2019).

Participants affirmed that the *plática* methodology helped them feel seen and incorporated holistically into the research process in ways they had not previously experienced in research settings. Not only did the *plática* methodology uplift participants as co-constructors of knowledge production (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) it yielded findings that affirmed narratives and experiences and helped participants see themselves in the full research process. This allowed for an element of personal agency and a form of power, as participants chose to engage and share information as they wanted to within the *plática*. The absence of traditional interview questions and rigid structures that are common in Western forms of research created an invitation to engage through conversation and reciprocal story sharing that truly elevated participant narratives. The *pláticas* created the space to engage fully as ourselves—all parts of us—as multiracial woman administrators who have navigated identity development, childhood experiences, multiracial microaggressions, and monoracial systems that perpetually challenge the intersectional nature of our lived experiences. Despite these setbacks, we were able to connect in community through *pláticas*. As demonstrated through the *pláticas* for this research process, the recommendation for the continuation of multiracial affinity group spaces supported at an institutional level reiterates the value of shared connection and community that is pertinent for multiracial women administrators' sense of belonging on campus.

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are significant opportunities to expand on emerging research focused on multiracial women in higher education (Harris, 2017, 2019). My study takes this on in terms of the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging

via the DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? This study contributes new knowledge to the field in regards to concepts of sense of belonging, experiences of multiracial women administrators, and implications for expanded DEIB efforts. An element of intersectionality was particularly important to explore in terms of the multidirectional nature of the concept, due to the focus on race, gender, and administrator identity.

This research is critical because it uplifts the voices of multiracial women administrators and sheds light on their unique experiences in relation to sense of belonging and DEIB practices. The *pláticas* revealed the harsh reality that multiracial women administrators are actually excluded from DEIB policies and practices, invisibilized through binaried monoracial structures, and exploited with expectations to inexplicably be a "bridge" between People of Color and white people. With this in mind, institutions can no longer function "business as usual" under the guise of monoracial DEIB policies and practices. As argued by previous researchers (Harris, 2017; Jackson et al., 2020; Stohry & Aronson, 2021) and emphasized through this study, it is time for monoracial paradigms of race to be disrupted in order to actualize a greater sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators on campus.

This research expands on sense of belonging considerations for multiracial women administrators, specifically within the context of expanded DEIB policies and practices. Although UC Berkeley has highlighted its focus on DEIB-related policies, it is missing the mark. The lure of working at UC Berkeley is strong due to its reputation focused on DEIB, activism, and the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s. In actuality, the reputation for leading DEIB efforts has created dissonance based on the participants' actual experiences. Through these *pláticas*, participants revealed the inherent challenges with DEIB practices and policies at the institution.

As this research helps us understand, many DEIB practices and policies operate with a monoracial lens, which inherently excludes and isolates multiracial women administrators.

There is a need to dismantle the monoracial paradigms of higher education and the organizational ethos that pervades the campus environment. I do not mean to suggest that single-race affinity groups are instruments of monoracial inclinations. I believe single-race affinity groups can operate in tandem with an option for a multiracial affinity space in case administrators would like to attend multiple race-based spaces. As highlighted through the *pláticas*, and unpacked through this dissertation analysis and discussion, there is significant harm due to the many forms of exclusion, invisibility, exploitation, and silencing participants have navigated due to monoracial paradigms and perceptions from others. These are compelling arguments that challenge the business-as-usual minimal university DEIB efforts, which overlook the necessity of creating environments that push back against the dehumanizing practices of mislabeling and categorizing multiracial women administrators. Institutions of higher education can do better. There should be methods in place to frequently evaluate and assess the DEIB policies and practices to ensure they are incorporating intersectional identities and folks who identify beyond monoracial or binaried identity categories. As language and identities are constantly evolving, it is important to institute iterative feedback loops to ensure the holistic needs of the campus community are met.

Findings suggest there is a critical need for multiracial women to connect together through formalized multiracial affinity groups as a way to buffer from the negative experiences they have previously managed on their own in silos. Most importantly, this is a form of collective advocacy to institute more inclusive DEIB policy and practices intentionally designed to disrupt the monoracial paradigms that are so deeply embedded into institutions of higher

education. This research affirms the experiences of multiracial women administrators are valid, and they deserve to be seen, heard, and included in the campus community.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided a platform for multiracial women administrators to share more about their experiences related to sense of belonging via DEIB practices through candid *pláticas*. In order to maintain the scope of this research, the methods and analysis were closely connected to the research question, In what ways do multiracial women administrators experience belonging via DEIB practices undertaken at a historically white institution? The goal was to explore experiences in a manner that created space for their voices and helped to uplift their specific experiences and narratives. The *plática* methodology was intentionally chosen to better understand these unique experiences because it situated participants as co-constructors of knowledge and disrupted transition notions of Western research (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). These *pláticas* encouraged a sense of agency and provided an element of power for participants within the research process.

The *plática* methodology provided the space for both researcher and participants to engage in honest conversations with vulnerability and reciprocal dialogue in mind. The shared connections and experiences were powerful and unique to this research. As discussed by participants, it was a space of healing and connection in ways they had not experienced, especially from a research-based lens. This affirms the value of incorporating the *plática* methodology in future research. It will hopefully pave the way for future studies to create a space for shared knowledge production and continue to disrupt Western assumptions about what is considered research.

The *pláticas* yielded rich information pertaining to multiracial women administrators' painful experiences with exclusion, "shared lostness," invisibility, and silencing in light of DEIB practices and policies that have been historically deemed as progressive. The *pláticas* focused on critical analysis pertaining to these specific experiences, and the scope was intentionally focused on their roles as administrators. There are recommendations for future research that can build on the parameters of this dissertation. Specifically, although family dynamics were discussed in terms of Theme 1: Multiracial Self-Identity, Perceptions, and Self-Reflection, there is value in further examining the role that family/home cultural practices and identities play in the leadership practices of multiracial women administrators. My study revealed the iterative process of meaning making around multiracial identity that may have implications for how we understand the unique leadership contributions that multiracial women administrators bring to the work environment. More can be revealed from future studies that explore identity development and leadership practices for multiracial women administrators.

Furthermore, the concept of shared lostness is an important element to explore in future research. Participants described feelings of isolation and loneliness they experienced on an individual level in relation to their multiracial identities and sense of belonging on campus. These feelings were intensified due to the siloed nature of affinity groups and limited opportunities to connect with other multiracial people. Many initially felt alone, and struggled in silence, which ultimately caused them to question if they belonged. Participants vulnerably discussed these challenges within the *pláticas*, which illuminated this idea of a shared lostness. Through this concept of shared lostness, participants were able to connect across their similar experiences of feeling alone, isolated, and lost. There were attempts to fit in, but still feeling like they were on the outside and not fully recognized by individuals within the campus community,

and the institution at large. Despite feeling lost and unrecognized, participants were engaging bravely and critically about the lostness they were experiencing. Through their willingness to be vulnerable and articulate things that are often not visible to others, participants enhanced their sense of agency and collective consciousness to advocate for intentional space for multiracial women on campus. This collective advocacy helps to push institutions of higher education to challenge colonial practices that limit affinity groups that are not inclusive of intersectional identities. Future work may explore how shared lostness also cultivates a collective remembering and honoring of participants' intersecting identities, while advocating for continued spaces to engage together.

As this research highlights, there is value in institutionally supported affinity groups, specifically from an intersectional lens. Future research studies should include more assessment data regarding multiracial women's involvement in specific DEIB initiatives, such as affinity groups. It may also lead to further resources that can be distributed to sustain these affinity groups and spaces at an institutional level, as the participants emphasized. Future research may also consider the connection between shared lostness and retention at campus institutions for multiracial women administrators.

In addition, there should be alternative considerations for community building and connection that can be supported at an institutional level—for example, solidarity and community building opportunities for Women of Color. Overall, it is important to consider sustainable DEIB practices with intersectionality in mind. This is helpful not only for multiracial women administrators, but for others with intersecting identities. Disrupting monoracial and/or binaried systems in general is an important consideration for future research.

Conclusion

This research is uniquely focused on multiracial women administrators' sense of belonging via DEIB practices at a historically white institution. Five participants shared their experiences and personal narratives through the *plática* methodology, which allowed for reciprocal story sharing that disrupts traditional forms of Western research (Delgado Bernal, 2020; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). This study uplifts the importance of recognizing administrators who may be feeling invisible and experience "shared lostness" while craving increased connection and community across racial and gender lines. Through this research, participants unveiled a rationale for expanded concepts pertaining to a sense of belonging, the urgency for incorporating intersectional frames within DEIB policies and practices, and the need for increased institutional support for elements of belonging and DEIB. It is important to make intentional strides to make educational institutions a welcoming environment for multiracial women administrators, rather than forcing individuals to choose one part of themselves over the other. Organizationally, there are sources of support that can be tapped into in order to create more opportunities for belonging within educational institutions that challenge the dominant hegemonic frameworks. As emphasized by Hanisch (1970/2006), in regards to the women's liberation movement during the 1970s, "there is only collective action for a collective solution" (p. 4)." When applied to this research context, collective action regarding urgency for acknowledgement of multiracial women administrators within DEIB practices will hopefully yield a collective solution to enhance a sense of belonging on campus. A focus on these efforts will benefit not only multiracial women administrators, but the broader campus community.

Researcher Reflection

This reflection provides information about my thoughts going into my research, lessons learned, my role as researcher and participant, and takeaways as a scholar practitioner. This research has been instrumental in my own self-reflection as a multiracial woman administrator, and helped create a platform for me to connect with others who share my same identities and institutional connection. There was immense value in leading this research and dissertation process. I am humbled and grateful to have engaged in a pivotal experience that helped shape me personally and professionally.

Thoughts Going Into the Research Process

My mindset going into this research was to better understand how other multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley experienced a sense of belonging on campus, especially in relation to specific DEIB practices on campus. I have my own experiences as a multiracial woman administrator at UC Berkeley, and I wasn't sure if they were unique to me. As someone who often grapples with imposter syndrome and challenges pertaining to my own sense of belonging in terms of my racial background, I have often wondered if I'm the only one who feels like an outsider. My research revealed I'm not the only one. Many of the research participants shared similar sentiments regarding their sense of belonging on campus, DEIB practices that have caused them to feel isolated or invisible, and the craving for connection with other multiracial women administrators.

Lessons Learned

There were many themes my research revealed that surprised me. One finding in particular was the through line between family dynamics and racial identity and how this manifests in the workplace. Once again, I thought I was the only one who experienced these

intersections between my family, how I self-identify racially, and my sense of belonging as an administrator on campus. The stories participants shared in our *pláticas* revealed how much multiracial women administrators are bringing with them to work: experiences related to the multiracial identity, family dynamics, the elements of having to "choose" which side of their family they connect with on institutional forms, and battling with the sense of "enoughness" often manifested through binaried racial conversations or trainings, all while negotiating an element of invisibility or lostness. As someone with shared identities, I resonate with all of this. I didn't realize how much would be unpacked from these *pláticas* and the connection to my core foundations of who I am as a person and administrator: family, self-reflection, creating space to talk about my racial identity, and infusing DEIB elements in authentic ways.

I credit the *plática* methodology and my connections with participants for eliciting the rich participant narratives and experiences. The *plática* methodology created the opportunity for candid conversations that felt natural and authentic in nature. There were so many experiences, pain points, positive reflections, and takeaways from the conversations; I'm humbled to have been privy to this information. It truly was a space for storytelling and reciprocal vulnerability. This was not something I've experienced in research settings previously, and helped to enhance my research in so many ways. It was equally important for the member check process to confirm each participant had an opportunity to review their individual *plática* transcript. I wanted to provide the opportunity for transcript review to ensure each participant was comfortable with the information shared, and confirm accuracy. Considering the free-flowing nature of the conversation, I didn't want participants to accidentally include information they didn't want to be shared.

I was mindful of the connections I had with participants before I began my study, and was intentional about creating a positive space for this research-based conversation. I had preestablished relationships with each of the research participants, considering we worked together in some capacity while at UC Berkeley. I had stronger relationships with some participants in which we had talked previously about our experiences as biracial/multiracial women administrators; with others, I had not had the opportunity to engage in specific conversations about identity. Nevertheless, I approached each of these *pláticas* as an opportunity to create a platform to listen and affirm. I also made sure to share more about myself and my experiences to balance the reciprocal information sharing that is an essential element of *pláticas*.

My Role as the Researcher and Participant

As discussed in my positionality statement, I brought all parts of me as I entered this work as a researcher and learner with various intersecting identities. I identify as a multiracial Woman of Color. Specifically, my racial identity is Black and white, with Native American ancestry. When I approached this research, I knew I would have a unique role as an insider/outsider. I am so closely aligned with my participants due to our shared identities as biracial/multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. I saw myself in this research process in many ways, as a researcher and potential participant. I wasn't sure how to approach this initially; traditional Western notions of research involving interviews felt too formal and detached from my connection to the research.

When I learned about the *plática* methodology, things began to take shape for how I wanted to do my research. *Pláticas* disrupt traditional forms of research because they create space for reciprocal sharing between participants and the researcher (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Their conversational nature allowed for me to engage in knowledge production along with

my participants. They allowed the opportunity to uplift my participants' stories, while also creating a space for me to be heard and affirmed as well. It was truly a powerful experience. As outlined in the five principles of the *plática* methodology (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016) and affirmed by participants and myself, the *pláticas* were spaces of healing.

Considering my role as a researcher and participant, I was especially mindful of the responsibility I carried during this entire research process. As outlined in Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods, I was intentional about doing pilot *pláticas* as a way to learn the process and gain insights about how participants may experience the process in advance. I also provided research participants with contextual information in advance about the *plática* methodology so they knew it wasn't a formal interview, but rather a conversation. I put myself in the shoes of a participant to think about what would be helpful in order to reduce the potential stress or anxiety leading up to the *plática*. Once the *pláticas* began, I built in time to do casual check-in and answer questions to help participants feel more relaxed. I also role modeled reciprocal information sharing by including my personal experiences as part of the conversations.

In order to honor participants' stories and our shared connections with UC Berkeley, I especially leaned into the *plática* methodology with my decision to name UC Berkeley specifically in my study rather than using a pseudonym. With the idea of co-constructors of knowledge in mind, I intentionally asked each participant in our individual *plática* about naming UC Berkeley specifically or using a pseudonym. We had great conversations in terms of using this dissertation as a platform for highlighting what's going well and learning opportunities for multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. The overwhelming majority response was to

name UC Berkeley specifically. This affirmed my decision. It gave me the gumption I needed to move forward and refrain from using a campus pseudonym.

Takeaways as a Scholar Practitioner

I am humbled and honored to contribute to research related to multiracial women administrators and their sense of belonging on campus. As a result of this study, the space was co-created for participants (myself included) to have an instance in which our voices and experiences were elevated. What started as an experience I thought was mine alone led to shared space and vulnerable conversations among women who I admire and respect.

As a result of this study, I am reminded about the importance of speaking my truth and creating space for others to be heard and included. Rather than assuming I am the only one who is having a particular experience, I can engage in vulnerable conversations that will possibly create opportunities for shared connection. If this space doesn't automatically exist, it is important to create it. My hope is these *pláticas* will not be singular conversations, but that they will be a spark for multiracial women administrators to continue to create space to be heard and included. It is not up to a single administrator; there needs to be institutional support for opportunities that support a sense of belonging, especially in alignment with campus DEIB policies and practices.

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APPENDIX A: Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
DEIB	A term that refers to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
Multiracial	When an individual identifies as two or more races. Some people prefer the term "biracial" or "mixed race". For the purposes of this research, I will use the term multiracial.
Monoracial	When a person identifies with one racial category.
Monoracism	"Social system of psychological inequality where individuals who do not fit monoracial categories may be oppressed on systemic and interpersonal levels because of underlying assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 125).
Multiracial women administrators	Participants who identify as multiracial/biracial and women, and work in professional staff roles within higher education.
Multiracial microaggressions	Multiracial microaggressions stem from research regarding microaggressions, which are the layered, cumulative, subtle, and unconscious forms of racism that target People of Color (Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). Multiracial microaggressions are "daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, where intentional or unintentional, enacted by monoracial persons that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights toward multiracial individuals or groups" (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 126).
Sense of belonging	For the purpose of this project, sense of belonging refers to the psychological feeling of belonging or connectedness, whether it is connection to cultural, professional, or other type of group or community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In the context of this study, a sense of belonging is operationalized as feeling seen, heard, and included in the campus community. It is also related to connections with other multiracial women administrators and the campus community at large.

APPENDIX B: *Plática* Protocol

Date/Time of *Plática*:_____

Plática participant pseudonym:_____

Section	Context & Questions
Welcome & Overview, *Plática* Information	Welcome, and thank you for meeting with me! As you may know, in addition to my work at UC Berkeley, I am also a graduate student at UC Davis working on my doctorate in Educational Leadership. My research project focuses on a sense of belonging for multiracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. I am particularly interested in understanding sources of sense of belonging, especially with regards to campus diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives at a historically white institution. This will be an interview through a *plática* format. A *plática* is an interactive conversation that involves mutual story and experience sharing between the two of us. I will be sharing from my experience, and welcome any information you would like to share as a participant. I have some prompting questions to get us started—the conversation may take us into different directions, which is completely fine and welcomed. This *plática* will be about 60 minutes with a 15 minute buffer period as we transition into the conversation.
Consent	Your participation in this *plática* is voluntary and there is no penalty for declining to participate. There is no anticipated risk or benefit if you choose to participate. You may choose to stop the interview at any time. I will keep the information you provide confidential. In order to protect your confidentiality, your comments will not be linked with personally identifying information. To protect your confidentiality, please use your first name only. I will also use a pseudonym instead of your real name. I will be recording our discussion so I can listen to your comments later.

	Your personally identifying information will not appear when I present this study or publish its results. Prior to this interview, you received an Information Sheet. I will be recording the interview for research purposes, I need your informed consent to do so before we begin. Video recordings will be deleted within 24–48 hours after this conversation. Do you consent to this interview and to the audio and/or video recording? [Wait for subject to answer] We will now start the interview. Do you have any questions before I begin the recording? [Wait for subject to answer] *****BEGIN RECORDING*****
Preinterview questionnaire	Are there any things you'd like to share regarding your responses on the preinterview questionnaire that may inform our conversation?
UC Berkeley Experiences	Would you be open to telling me your story about what brought you to your current role at UC Berkeley? What are some things that keep you working at UC Berkeley? (Or if you are no longer employed at UC Berkeley, what kept you there for the length of time you worked there?)
DEIB Initiatives/UC Berkeley context	There have been recent initiatives focused on diversity, equity, inclusion & belonging (DEIB) at many universities, including UC Berkeley… What has been your experience with DEIB initiatives at UC Berkeley for administrators? In what ways might these experiences pertaining to belonging connect to both your racial AND gender identity? (if applicable) How has your identity as a biracial/multiracial woman informed your involvement in DEIB initiatives (if applicable)? UC Berkeley references diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as important values for the institution. I'm wondering how this relates to your experience at UC Berkeley? I'm curious if there are areas where this can be enhanced in terms of the staff perspective?
Sense of Belonging	Let's dig in more to this idea of belonging or maybe it's helpful to consider the "B" in DEIB.

	What are some experiences you've had where it feels like you belong at UC Berkeley? What does it look like or feel like to you? Are there certain experiences that stand out where you have felt "seen, heard, and included" at UC Berkeley? How does that relate to your identity as a biracial/multiracial woman? (if applicable) On the other hand, have there been some experiences where you felt like you don't belong at UC Berkeley, that you would be open to sharing with me? What does it look like or feel like to you? a. How does that relate to your identity as a biracial/multiracial woman? (if applicable) I'm curious if there are certain sources of belonging that have stood out for you during your time at UC Berkeley?
Gender & Patriarchy	In what ways might these experiences pertaining to belonging connect to both your racial AND gender identity? What I mean by this is sometimes I'm sitting in spaces and wondering how I'm being perceived as a woman-identified leader, combined with my identity as a multiracial Woman of Color… What have been some situations or experiences where you feel like your identity as a biracial/multiracial woman has impacted your experience at UC Berkeley?
Wrap-up	Is there anything else you'd like to share with me, or would like me to know? One thing I'd like to share with participants in advance is whether to name UC Berkeley specifically in my study, or keep it anonymous. Wondering if you have any preference or insights about this? I'd potentially like to do a group *plática* with other participants, is this something you may be interested in?

APPENDIX C: Preinterview Questionnaire

Note: The following information was input into a Google Doc. Participants provided their responses to the information and questions below.

Thank you for participating in this research study.

The purpose of this study is to explore sources of belonging for multiracial/biracial women administrators at UC Berkeley. This is a time for us to talk together about identity and connection to a sense of belonging in the work setting.

I'd like to gather some brief information in order to best prepare for our time together. Please answer the 5 preinterview questions below, which should take only about 15 minutes.

Your responses to these questions may inform other follow-up questions during the interview. Questionnaire data will be analyzed to identify themes and report findings. All answers will be kept in a secured, locked location or on an encrypted and password protected computer for the duration of this project and securely archived upon the completion of the dissertation. I will be recording the interview for research purposes. Any video recordings (if applicable) will be deleted within 24–48 hours after the interview conversation.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue at any time.

Your answers to the questionnaire will remain confidential.

If you have any questions before completing the questionnaire, you may contact the person conducting this study, Marney Randle, by emailing merandle@ucdavis.edu.

First Name _____

Preferred pseudonym to use for this research study (if no preference, a random pseudonym will be used) _____

Background Information
The following questions are asked so I may better understand brief demographic information, such as how you describe your own identity and background. I would also like to capture information pertaining to your work at UC Berkeley before the *plática* (informal conversation) interview.

1. How do you identify racially?
2. Do you identify with a certain descriptor pertaining to your race (i.e.: biracial/multiracial/mixed/two or more races, etc.)? If so, please share.
3. How do you identify based on gender? (Please also include your preferred pronouns).

4. What’s your current role on campus at UC Berkeley? How long have you been in this role? If you are no longer employed at UC Berkeley, what was your role when you were last employed at the institution?
5. How long have you worked at UC Berkeley? If you are no longer employed at UC Berkeley, how long did you work there?
(Optional) Is there anything else you'd like to share as part of this preinterview questionnaire in preparation for the interview conversation?