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Executive-Level Chief Diversity Officers Developing Relationships to Influence Campus-Wide Diversity

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how executive-level chief diversity officers (CDOs) developed relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study used multiple sources of data collection to establish credibility. The primary source of data collection were semi-structured interviews to capture the textural descriptions from executive-level CDOs about their experiences in developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. A demographic survey and field notes were used to triangulate the data. Three themes and one unexpected outcome emerged from the results of this study: (a) positionality matters; (b) developing relationships is a process; (c) sowing, sowing, and reaping. Female weariness emerged as an unexpected finding. The results from this study provide executive-level CDOs with a process for developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Exploring the experiences of executive-level CDOs in higher education provides valuable insight into the ways in which relationships are developed with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity as an institutional priority.

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By

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of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

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Dedication

I thank God for the strength and endurance to finish this process. *“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well.”* Psalm 139:14

To the best parents in the world, Willie and Earnestine Appling, thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to walk closely with the Lord, as I dream, seemingly, impossible dreams. To my sister, Penny, here’s to the big sister I always wanted to be like and whose shoes, I am still trying to fill – we did it!!!

To my husband, Mel, your kindness and patience supported me through this journey. Knowing that you had my back at home and with the kids motivated me to continue, when I did not think I could go on. Thank you for loving me as much as I love you.

This is for my crew and greatest accomplishment, my children, Jeffery, Celestine, Chelsea, and Jordan, I love each of you for the light you bring to my world. Thank you for believing in and encouraging me to continue my educational journey.

A huge thank you to Dr. Shannon Cleverley-Thompson and Dr. Ruth Harris, the most patient committee in the DEXL program. Your gentle nudges and reminders that I am the expert will leave a lasting impression in my heart. I appreciate your willingness to share your wisdom and knowledge with me throughout this journey.

Biographical Sketch

Myra P. Henry is currently the Deputy Dean for River Campus Libraries at the University of Rochester (UR). She also serves as the co-chair for the University's Diversity and Inclusion committee as well as facilitating the UR Libraries Diversity and Inclusion committee. Mrs. Henry completed her Bachelor of Sciences degree in Organizational Management in 2011 and her Master of Sciences degree in Management in 2014, both from Keuka College. She entered the Ed.D in Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College in Summer 2017. Mrs. Henry pursued her research interest on How Executive-Level Chief Diversity Officers Develop Relationships to Influence Campus-Wide Diversity under the direction of Dr. Shannon Cleverley-Thompson and Dr. Ruth Harris and received the Ed.D. degree in 2019.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how executive-level chief diversity officers (CDOs) developed relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study used multiple sources of data collection to establish credibility. The primary source of data collection were semi-structured interviews to capture the textural descriptions from executive-level CDOs about their experiences in developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. A demographic survey and field notes were used to triangulate the data. Three themes and one unexpected outcome emerged from the results of this study: (a) positionality matters; (b) developing relationships is a process; (c) sowing, sowing, and reaping. Female weariness emerged as an unexpected finding. The results from this study provide executive-level CDOs with a process for developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Exploring the experiences of executive-level CDOs in higher education provides valuable insight into the ways in which relationships are developed with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity as an institutional priority.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Matters of diversity impact student life, academic affairs, and the institutional efficacy of U.S. public and private postsecondary schools of education. Changing student demographics, social injustices, and the need to develop a well-informed global workforce are ongoing critical factors that impact campus climate (Jayakumar, 2008; Williams, 2013). In the face of a growing and changing racial and ethnic student bodies, Smith (2009) posited that college and university senior administrations can no longer ignore the sincere cries of discrimination. In 2015, students at the University of Missouri sparked national outrage to the racial discrimination and social injustice on their campus (Izadi, 2015; Kezar, Fries-Britt, Kurban, McGuire, & Wheaton, 2018). Students of color at other predominately White institutions (PWIs) soon followed, using social media as a platform to spread awareness and to protest similar incidents of racial bias on their campuses (Hartocollis, 2017; Ojalvo, 2017). The students at some PWIs demanded a review of the exclusionary, racist policies and procedures, and, in some cases, they challenged the names of campus buildings associated with slavery and White supremacy (Ojalvo, 2017).

At the center of the students' unrest were their experiences of bias and discrimination on campus, which was often guided by policies and procedures that had systemically and institutionally disenfranchised faculty, students, and staff of color (Izadi, 2015; Leath & Chavous, 2017). According to Williams (2013), these challenges

have led many college and university presidents to address diversity in a more strategic manner and with a sense of urgency. To address the need to create an inclusive campus for faculty, students, and staff to thrive and succeed, college and university presidents have appointed executive-level chief diversity officers (CDOs), and they have included diversity planning as an institutional priority (Aguilar & Bauer, 2017; Wilson, 2015).

Historical context. Diversity-related matters and who is best positioned to lead them on college and university campuses continue to sit at the forefront of a national debate (Kezar et al., 2018). Historically, managing diversity in higher education referred mostly to expanding college admissions programs and hiring practices as they related to the social construct of race (Iverson, 2007; Jones, 2014). However, Baker, D. L., Schmaling, K., Fountain, K. C., Blume, A. W., & Boose, R. (2016) and Williams (2013) suggested that the idea of diversity should include other characteristics such as religion and gender. In the same respect, Jones (2014) submitted that defining diversity should include many of the aspects of the human makeup beyond race and ethnicity. Franklin (2013) further suggested that institutions should take into consideration a broad spectrum of identities and social factors, like geographical location, cultural norms, and values, when developing institutional diversity initiatives.

Some college and university presidents have recognized that leading campus-wide diversity initiatives requires a skilled administrative change agent (Harvey, 2014; Wilson, 2015). According to a report from the National Bureau of Economic Research (2018), more than 60% of higher education institutions have established an executive-level diversity leadership position to increase awareness on the benefits of diversity. Presidents, who have elevated diversity as an institutional priority, by hiring a CDO with

a vice presidential rank, signal to the university community the importance of diversity (Hancock, 2018; Williams, 2013). In order to understand the necessity for CDOs to develop relationships in an effort to influence diversity, it is important to understand how diversity in higher education has evolved over time. Many colleges and universities have included diversity as a symbolic ancillary objective, which is often focused on student demographics and success (Smith, 2009). Williams and Clowney (2007) described three models that address diversity with a focus on access, as opposed to the integration, of diversity as an institutional core value.

Affirmative action and equity model. During the 1950s and 1960s, special admissions programs were designed to diversify student bodies (Smith, 2009). The affirmative action and equity model was implemented as an early diversity program designed to remove unfair policies that negatively impacted faculty, students, and staff. An example of removing unfair policies was to advertise and actively recruit a diverse pool of candidates. The affirmative action and equity model did very little to build relationships and to change institutions' atmosphere of historically not welcoming people from underrepresented and marginalized groups (Smith, 2009).

Multicultural diversity model. The Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s ushered in the multicultural diversity model on college and university campuses. This era of campus diversity introduced services and activities to support the racial, ethnic, and social diversity often found in college and university communities (Williams & Clowney, 2007). The multicultural affairs for student service offices were often responsible for the broad oversight of diversity programming, such as with religious or cultural campus events (Smith, 2009). Smith argued that some colleges and universities

continue to operate hybrid forms of the multicultural model. Today's multicultural affairs office may be led by a unit-based CDO with limited resources and limited access to key stakeholders (Williams, 2013). These limitations may create barriers for diversity officers to build-relationships that can influence diversity throughout the campus community (Williams, 2013).

Academic diversity model. Colleges and universities that have embraced the notion that diversity adds value to all units of their organizations are working in the academic diversity model (Williams & Clowney, 2007). Williams and Clowney (2007) and Smith (2009) argued that human diversity is an essential part of the postsecondary learning experience in the 21st century. By institutionalizing diversity as a fundamental core value, diversity efforts in the academic diversity model attempted to integrate diversity throughout college and university teaching and learning. Unlike earlier diversity models, the academic diversity model does not expect members of the campus community to assimilate to the hallowed ground of the college and university campuses. However, the academic diversity model moves to shift the institutional policies, practices, and environment to be inclusive. The academic diversity model struggles with success if the CDO is not positioned to develop relationships with deans, directors, faculty, student, and staff groups to influence a campus-wide diversity agenda (Williams & Clowney, 2007).

The chief diversity officer. The CDO on many college and university campuses has emerged as the institution's senior diversity leader. According to Worthington, Stanley, and Lewis (2014), the CDO position was established to elucidate the institutional gap in realizing the benefits of diversity that were not addressed by multicultural student

offices. Several researchers have referred to diversity scholars, Williams and Wade-Golden's (2013), description of the CDO as the standard in higher education to guide the development of the CDO job duties and areas of responsibility (Gravely-Stack, Ray, & Peterson, 2016; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2015). Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) defined the CDO as a "senior administrator who guides, coordinates, leads, enhances, and at times supervises the formal diversity capabilities of the institution in an effort to build sustainable capacity to achieve an environment that is inclusive and excellent for all" (p. 8).

The CDO role. The CDO is often a complex and politically charged role. The ability to acquire and maintain social and political capital is required for executive-level CDOs to work collaboratively with key stakeholders across units and disciplines within higher education (Wilson, 2013). The geographical location, student population, and student demographics are factors that can influence the scope of a CDO's responsibilities. Depending on the institution, the CDO's title, rank, job duties, and areas of responsibility can vary (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Wilson's (2013) examination of the phenomenon of CDOs in higher education found that individuals who lead campus-wide diversity efforts may have titles such as vice president, vice chancellor, special assistant, or director. Having a title with gravitas gives the CDO role, and the person serving in the role, an institutional status that is respected across the campus community (Wepner, Onofrio, & Wilhite, 2008).

In addition to an institutional rank and title, the literature indicates that qualified CDOs should possess a combination of academic and administrative leadership experiences along with a high degree of emotional intelligence, decision-making, and

critical thinking skills, and they should have the ability to facilitate and lead difficult, courageous conversations about race (Adserias, Charleston, & Jackson, 2017; Nixon, 2017). According to Williams and Wade-Golden (2013), CDOs, as the chief catalyst to change, should have a working knowledge and a deep understanding in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, they should have the ability to develop relationships with key decision makers in an effort influence diversity throughout the institution.

CDOs are also expected to have a working knowledge of organizational change management, the willingness to traverse through organizational subculture politics, and the ability to motivate and inspire others (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Presumably, these qualities, along with the executive-level title and hierarchical reporting to the institution's president, should position the CDO to collaboratively develop relationships with other campus leaders to positively impact change on campus (Hancock, 2018; Worthington et al., 2014).

Responsibilities. The CDO's wide range of responsibilities are often complicated because of diversity-related matters that differ from institution to institution (Worthington et al., 2014). In addition to job duties that range from managing compliance to leading transformational change, CDOs also need to navigate the potential disregard for the institutionalization of diversity from the campus community (Kezar et al., 2018; Nixon, 2017). Institutions may appoint CDOs to lead and oversee areas of compliance, curriculum, engagement, and/or climate. The literature reflects that CDOs must build relationships with faculty, staff, and students to understand and address issues that may negatively impact campus life (Kezar et al., 2018; Nixon, 2017).

In many cases, the individual serving as the CDO is charged with the responsibility to energize the campus community around a shared set of core values that appreciates and benefits from the many aspects of diversity (Mitchell, 2016). Executive-level CDOs often have oversight without formal authority (Leon, 2014; Williams, 2013). In an effort to ensure accountability and shared ownership, some CDOs build relationships with campus stakeholders, such as deans, faculty, student, and staff groups to develop programming to advance the institution's diversity plan (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Stanley, Watson, Reyes, & Varela, 2018; Wilson, 2015).

Expectations. As a senior-level administrative leader with a direct connection to the president, the CDO is expected to keep the institution's executive branch abreast of the incidents and opportunities that may impact the campus climate (Williams, 2013). In the same regard, the individuals serving as the CDO are also expected to oversee and lead a range of responsibilities from promoting inspiring messages that touch the heart to challenging institutional policies and procedures that present barriers for students, faculty, and staff (Hancock, 2018; Wilson, 2013).

Executive-level CDOs are expected to address diversity issues and opportunities, which often rely on developing relationships to collaborate with deans, directors, student groups, faculty, and staff (Nixon 2017, Stanley et al., 2018). According to Tomlin (2016), deans, directors, and other senior leaders should consider the CDO to be a partner and trusted resource in leading campus change. The CDO, as a member of the president's core team, is also positioned to speak to the advantages of diversity in many aspects of the institution such as campus climate, recruitment, retention, curriculum, and community engagement (Williams, 2013). However, it is incumbent upon the institution's president

to prepare the campus community for the success of the CDO (Tomlin, 2016). Tomlin (2016) asserted that this preparation should include prioritizing expectations and confirming the reporting structure as well as providing adequate resources and support.

Positionality. The context in which the CDO is situated within an institution can impact the CDO's ability to build relationships with the campus community to advance a campus-wide diversity agenda (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Kezar and Lester (2010) defined context "as the circumstances and conditions in which an individual exists" (p. 168). In the context of CDOs reporting to the president, the hierarchical relationship between the institution's president and the CDO can signal to the campus community that the CDO is a high-status position with influence (Lucas & Baxter, 2012; Williams & Wade -Golden, 2013). As a strategic partner with the president and other campus leaders, the CDO works to build internal and external relationships in an effort to enhance the academic benefits of diversity (Hancock, 2018).

With positionality in mind, Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) found that many recently appointed CDOs were members of the executive cabinet and reported to the president in many higher education institutions. CDOs who report to the president and who are included as part of senior administration, institutional boards, and committees are often seen as partners with organizational decision makers such as deans and directors (Leon, 2014; Wilson, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Some institutions may have CDO roles situated within other parts of the institution that may report to a vice president or vice provost (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). However, the notable visibility of reporting to the president helps to amplify the president's commitment to diversity as well as to help with relationship building and collaboration opportunities

across the organization (Leon, 2014). Executive-level CDOs have the visibility of a high-status position, and they can leverage their influence to develop meaningful relationships with other senior administrators to keep diversity-related issues part of an ongoing institutional conversation (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

Strategic diversity leadership. Advancing diversity as a core value requires commitment and effort from the leadership at all levels of an organization, and it begins with the president (Basham, 2012; Kezar, 2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2008; Smith, 2009). Strategic diversity leadership is a new branch of leadership that Williams (2013) described as an “artful science” (p. 14). The interpolation of strategic diversity leadership into higher education mirrors the direction of industries, such as business, health care, professional sports, and government, that have included the role of the CDO to lead and develop a strategic diversity agenda (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). CDOs as strategic diversity leaders often develop diversity plans to guide the institutionalization of diversity on college and university campuses (Kezar, 2007; Wilson, 2015). CDOs are often seen as relational leaders who deliberately develop strategic relationships with key decision makers and campus influencers who can help promote and advance diversity. Similarly, executive-level CDOs develop consulting relationships with key decision makers as a trusted advisor to discuss matters of diversity that can benefit schools, divisions, and units (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

Leading the charge to advance diversity among administration, faculty, students, and staff within higher education takes a high degree of awareness (Douglas & Little, 2017). CDOs who engage in the artful science of strategic diversity leadership have the Strategic Diversity Leadership Compass as a tool. The Strategic Diversity Leadership

Compass requires the interplay of five key frames that have to be observed by an organization, from multiple perspectives, to determine the best approach to advance diversity on their campuses (Williams, 2013). Figure 1.1 illustrates how diversity leaders move through the different dimensions to develop relationships with other senior leaders, faculty, staff, and students regarding diversity-related matters.

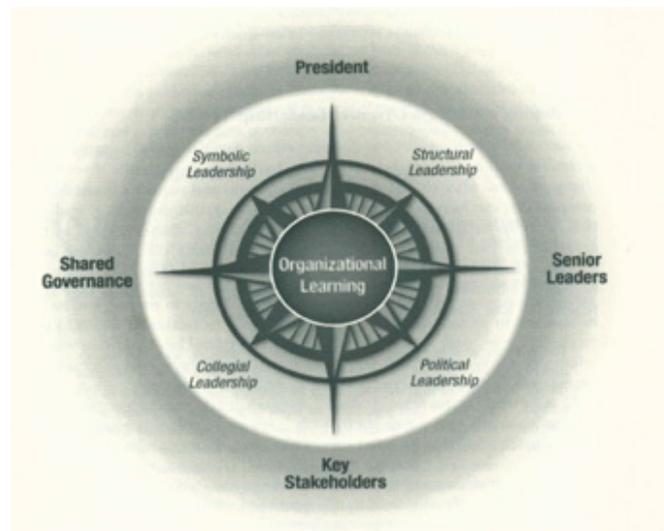


Figure 1.1. Strategic Diversity Leadership Compass. Adapted from “The Artful Science of Strategic Diversity Leadership” by D. Williams, 2013, Strategic Diversity Leadership: Activating Change and Transformation in Higher Education, p. 208. Copyright 2013 by Stylus.

Expanding upon Bolman and Deal’s (2014) four leadership frames, the Strategic Diversity Leadership Compass emphasizes the importance of the organizational learning frame and the collegial leadership frame along with the structural, political, and symbolic leadership frames to navigate the complexities of leading college and university diversity efforts. CDOs who report to the president in higher education can use the compass to navigate through each of the frames in an effort to assess and understand the landscape,

build relationships, conduct critical self-reflection, gain buy-in, and negotiate decision-making processes (Douglas & Little, 2017; Williams, 2013).

The Strategic Diversity Leadership Compass comprises five dimensions of strategic diversity leadership that CDOs can use to move through the complexities of organizational change (Williams, 2013). Those dimensions are (a) organizational learning, (b) structural leadership, (c) political leadership, (d) symbolic leadership, and (e) collegial leadership (Williams, 2013).

The organizational learning frame allows the CDO to intrinsically reshape an institution's thinking about diversity (Williams, 2013). By presenting diversity as an institutional priority and encouraging faculty, student, and staff involvement with promoting diversity, these efforts can begin a culture shift that plants the idea of inclusiveness into the fabric of the institution (Kezar & Eckel, 2008; Smith, 2009; Wilson, 2015).

The structural leadership frame requires senior administrative buy-in and support to institutionalize diversity (Williams, 2013). Diversity committees, units, and other human and financial resources can be deployed to elevate mere concepts of campus-wide diversity to measurable actions that reverberate throughout student life, and academic and institutional affairs (Williams, 2013). Through the political leadership frame, the CDO can navigate campus "power dynamics" (Williams, 2013, p. 210) that invests in building social and political capital. Understanding the power players and gaining trust can help the CDO continue to advance the diversity agenda as power dynamics shift within a complex organizational ecosystem (Williams, 2013). The symbolic and collegial leadership frames provide strategies for CDOs to leverage, negotiate, and build

relationships and have an understanding around a shared set of values, priorities, and opportunities (Williams, 2013).

Diversity scholars have cautioned that appointing a CDO as an institutional diversity leader may suggest that advancing diversity is one person's job, when quite the opposite is true. Creating an inclusive campus community is everyone's responsibility (Gardner, 2015; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Williams, 2013). CDOs are expected to encompass the theoretical contemplation of an academic scholar and the working knowledge of a diversity practitioner (Williams, 2013). Tomlin (2016) emphasized that the CDO, alone, cannot dismantle decades of oppressive systemic practices and institutional policies. However, as a strategic diversity leader, the CDO has the opportunity to build relationships with key stakeholders to collaborate on initiatives that connect the benefits of diversity to academic and inclusive excellence (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Wong, 2017).

Challenges. The person serving in the CDO role may face challenges such as isolation, marginalization, and tokenism (Gasman, Abiola, & Travers, 2015; Nixon, 2017; Tomlin, 2016). Researchers have found that people of color hold the majority of these positions (Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017). According to the American Council on Education (2013), 72.7% of CDOs in 4-year degree-granting institutions are African American. As people of color hold the majority of these positions, an executive title, rank, and being a member of the president's executive leadership team may not be enough for full access to develop relationships with the campus community to advance campus-wide diversity initiatives (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

Individuals serving in the role of CDO can experience isolation (Nixon, 2017; Stanley et al., 2018). The CDO whose primary responsibility is to manage compliance may be set apart as the bias related crisis expert only and not seen as a trusted colleague to advise on academic and student affairs matters as it relates to diversity (Hancock, 2018; Tomlin, 2016). In the same respect Stanley (2016), found that the work of the CDO to advance diversity initiatives and lead change in campus culture, cannot be done alone. Without access to other senior leaders, the CDO may find it difficult to collaborate on diversity initiatives that align with the institution's strategic priorities (Stanley, 2016; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

Individuals serving in CDO roles may experience marginalization from those opposed to change (Nixon, 2017; Wong, 2017). Nixon (2017) highlighted the fact that women of color CDOs exist in two worlds. They are often considered outsiders because of their gender or race, and in the same respect, they can participate with the insider group because of their professional rank and title. Although situating the CDO role within the executive administrative ranks may position the individual with access to engage with peers, the people of color who serve in these positions may struggle with being perceived as an outsider as they unapologetically confront barriers and introduce institutional diversity initiatives (Bradley, Garven, Law, & West, 2018; Elliott et al., 2013; Nixon, 2017; Wong, 2017).

Individuals serving in the role of CDO may experience tokenism (Gardner, 2015; Nixon, 2017; Stanley 2016). Members of the campus community may view the CDO as a cursory hire, thus making it challenging to build relationships without public support and resources from the institution's president (Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Williams, 2013). An

example of tokenism is when a CDO has been hired as a symbolic gesture to address some sort of campus crisis (Nixon, 2017; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). CDOs hired to be the face of diversity but without the resources and access to influence institutional strategy diminishes the importance of institutional diversity (Barrett, 2013; Gasman et al., 2015; Wilson, 2013).

Preconceived notions of power and privilege, contextualized by the dominant White male voice in higher education, can consciously or unconsciously diminish the leadership efforts of the CDO (Iverson, 2007). Many diversity leaders on college and university campuses are usually equipped with an astuteness and skillful ability to collaborate and navigate a complex higher education system (Douglas & Little, 2017; Yosso, 2005). In addition to leveraging their rank and positionality, some CDOs use their leadership, their relationship building skills, and their life experiences to overcome potential barriers associated with a leadership position that is responsible for diversity change within higher education institutions (Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2013).

Problem Statement

Several scholars have examined the emergence of the CDO and his or her role in advancing matters of diversity on college and university campuses (Bradley et al., 2018; Douglas & Little, 2017; Wilson, 2013). Diversity champions embedded in student affairs or multicultural affairs offices have had forums, such as the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE), since 1988, to discuss issues of race on campus. However, between 2006-2016, scholars noted that there was a trend of colleges and universities developing strategic diversity plans and hiring individuals to serve as CDOs to oversee and advance these plans as an institutional priority (Gardner,

2015; Mitchell, 2016; Takayama, Kaplan, & Cook-Sather, 2017; Wilson, 2015). In 2006, to support and legitimize the growing field of strategic diversity leadership in higher education, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) was established. The NADOHE developed a set of professional standards (Appendix A) and a list of leadership competencies to serve as a guide, as well as provide a space, for diversity officers in higher education to share best leadership practices and experiences (Worthington et al., 2014).

Since the emergence of this role, researchers have questioned the impact one person can have in a position that is responsible for challenging institutionally oppressive policies and dismantling cultural norms (Gardner, 2015; Wilson, 2013). With people of color holding the majority of CDO roles in PWIs, scholars have cautioned against the potential for tokenism, whereby CDOs may be seen as the *face* of diversity leadership but lack the formidable authority and support to create real and lasting change (Leon, 2014; Nixon 2017).

It has been suggested that the position of the CDO should be aligned with other overarching senior administrative positions, in that the CDO should be a member of the president's executive committee with direct reporting to the president (Bradley et al., 2018; Leon, 2014; Mitchell, 2016; Wilson, 2013). For example, it has been stated that CDOs should be anchored within a reporting structure and with a senior-level rank that allows them to develop relationships with campus leaders to include diversity in most institutional discussions (Hancock, 2018; Nixon, 2017; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). CDOs may find it challenging to introduce and maintain diversity matters at the forefront of institutional conversations in the absence of a conspicuous hierarchical placement and

an executive-level title (Mitchell, 2016; Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). Without the visibility of being a member of the president's cabinet and a public show of support from the president, CDOs may find it difficult to develop relationships with key stakeholders to garner support for programming to advance diversity (Mitchell, 2016). Navigating the complexities of college and university politics to increase awareness regarding the benefits of diversity requires the CDO to employ a variety of leadership skills to develop relationships that advance diversity in a meaningful way (Hancock, 2018).

Literature on the emergence of the CDO position in higher education notes the individual leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities attributed chief to the person serving in the role. The literature also highlights the organizational structure of a diversity office and position including the importance of reporting structure and rank (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Other researchers have explored women of color CDOs and how positionality, agency, and political skill impact their leadership in advancing diversity plans in higher education (Nixon 2017; Stone 2018). Leon (2014) mentioned that all the CDOs he had interviewed “enjoyed” (p. 81) the direct reporting relationship with their president. However, the influence of said enjoyment is unclear. Although, these studies discuss concepts of tokenism, bias, and microaggressions as they relate to gender, no studies have explored how CDOs connect and develop relationships with the campus community to advance a campus-wide diversity effort. Without developing relationships, executive-level CDOs may not be successful at implementing diversity in a meaningful way to change an institution's campus climate. There is literature that chronicles the rise of CDOs as senior administrators in higher education, and there is a set of guiding principles that suggest the

importance of an executive-level reporting structure and rank (Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2013; Worthington et al., 2014). However, at the time of this study, little was known about the relationship-building strategies that had been used by executive-level CDOs who had been responsible for moving their institutions' diversity agendas beyond a symbolic gesture to a community of inclusive excellence (Nixon, 2017; Williams & Wade-Golden 2013).

Theoretical Rationale

The organizational design of the CDO development framework serves as a foundational model for developing the CDO role and positioning the incumbent with authority to advance an institution's diversity agenda (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). As a result of in-depth research and analysis of colleges and universities' diversity strategies, Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) developed the CDO development framework (CDODF). The CDODF outlines a structure for the CDO role as the senior diversity administrative leader who routinely engages with key stakeholders to ensure intercampus alignment with the institution's diversity plan (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013; Wilson, 2015).

The CDODF provides clarity and a suggested infrastructure for college and university officials to embed a senior-level administrative position within the organization to impact and transform institutional culture (Bradley et al., 2018; Leon, 2013; Wilson, 2013). The elements of the CDODF strategic diversity platform, vertical structure, lateral structure, change management, and officers must be in alignment to support the institution's overarching strategic agenda (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Each component of the CDODF has unique aspects that go to support and advance an

institution's diversity agenda. Each component also outlines specific characteristics and key elements that must be present in order to evaluate the success of the CDO (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

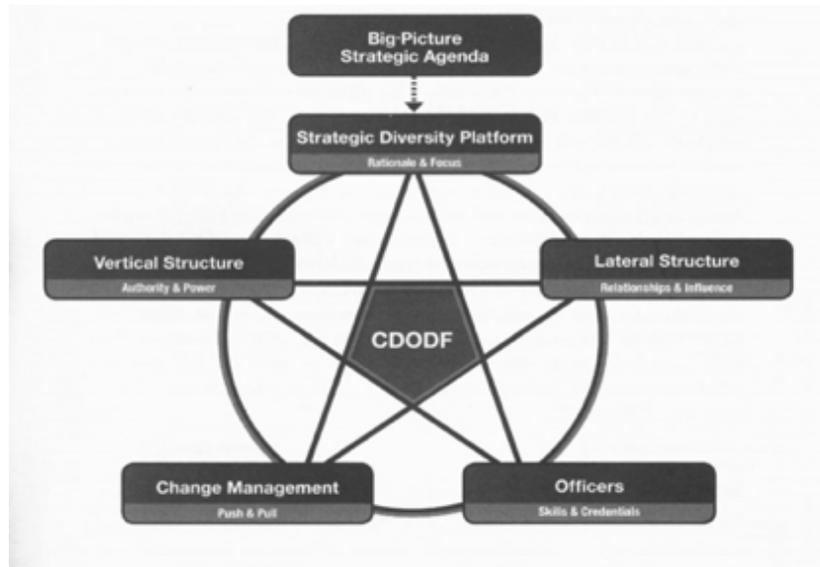


Figure 1.2. The CDO Development Framework. Adapted from “The CDO Development Framework: A Tool to Aid Design,” by D. Williams and K. Wade-Golden, 2013, *The Chief Diversity Officer: Strategy, Structure, and Change Management*, p. 101. Copyright 2013 by Stylus.

Figure 1.2 illustrates how the components of the CDODF are intended to work together and align with the institution's overarching strategic plan to realize a measurable impact on diversity issues across college and university campuses (Williams, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

As illustrated in Figure 1.2 (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013), the strategic diversity platform sits at the top of the CDODF to provide a set of guiding principles for strategic diversity planning. This dimension of the framework also sets forth the scope and areas of oversight for the CDO, such as faculty recruitment or affirmative action

compliance. The second dimension, the lateral diversity infrastructure, provides the theoretical underpinning for this proposed study. The lateral diversity infrastructure refers to the relationship-development opportunities the CDO must undertake when attempting to lead change. Collaborating with campus leaders to administer a campus-wide diversity study or conducting listening tours with student groups are examples of establishing and building strategies to develop relationships overtime (Stanley et al., 2018). In the same respect, the lateral diversity infrastructure also outlines the many internal and external communities of practice the CDO can lead or serve as the primary contributor, for example as a member of the president’s cabinet, chairing institutional diversity or faculty committees, or serving as a board member for a local nonprofit organization near the institution (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

The third dimension within the CDODF, vertical diversity infrastructure, can be used to clearly define the hierarchical positionality and overall “span of control” (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013, p. 113) for the CDO. It is within this dimension that the reporting structure, job responsibilities, and areas of influence for the CDO are established. Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) identified archetypes of vertical structures that can be used to establish the formal authority of the CDO role within the complexity of higher education institutions. The collaborative officer model, unit-based model, portfolio divisional model, and the multi-institutional model are the four organizational archetypes. The *collaborative officer model* is described as an office of one. Much of the work done by a CDO in a collaborative officer model is based on relationships with other units and voluntary collaboration with others who are passionate and dedicated to advancing diversity (Leon, 2014; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

The *unit-based* and *portfolio divisional* models are similar to the collaborative officer model in that they also rely on “collaboration and strategic partnerships” (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013, p. 123). However, unit-based and portfolio divisional models have staff that report directly to the CDO. According to Williams and Wade-Golden (2013), the *multi-institutional model* is the most vertically integrated CDO archetype. This model allows for collaboration and partnership across multiple campuses particularly throughout a statewide higher education system (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Most researchers found that the majority of CDOs served in their role as a direct report to the president—regardless of the different archetypes of vertical structures (Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2013).

The fourth component of the CDODF, change management systems, addresses the strategies employed by the CDO to impact change. Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) suggested that the CDO should have a cache of tools to negotiate change in a potentially adversarial environment, as a person of color in a leadership position who is responsible for advancing a PWI’s diversity agenda.

The fifth and final dimension of the CDODF takes into consideration the CDO’s background and outlines the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to serve as an institution’s CDO. The qualifications are a variety of skills including the ability to manage, plan, and lead the many facets of institutional diversity to move a college or university campus toward an inclusive campus community (Leon, 2014). Given the expectation that CDOs of color are recruited into environments, which are not created for them and that are historically resistant to change, scholars submit that changing a campus culture is everyone’s responsibility (Gardner, 2015; Smith, 2009; Tomlin, 2016).

Although this is a fairly new framework, Leon (2014) used the vertical archetypes of authority, situated within the vertical structure of the CDODF, to explore the development of the CDO position and its impact on campuses. All components of the CDODF are intended to work together as a tool to develop the CDO position. However, for the purposes of this study, the lateral infrastructure of the CDODF was used as a lens to explore the ways in which an executive-level CDO developed relationships to advance a campus-wide diversity agenda (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to capture how executive-level CDOs developed relationships in an effort to influence campus-wide diversity as an institutional priority. The research focused on describing the ways in which executive-level CDOs in higher education engaged with key stakeholders, faculty, students, and staff to advance campus-wide diversity.

Research Question

The research question for this study was: *How do executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives across college and university campuses?*

Potential Significance and Importance

U.S. colleges and universities must be prepared for a more diverse, outspoken student body as the country morphs into a majority-minority population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Results from this study could inform college and university senior leaders and administrators who are considering the appointment of an executive-level CDO on the importance of situating the CDO position

within the senior administrative ranks to provide access and visibility for the individual serving in the role. Results from this study could help deans and directors better understand, in their role as key stakeholders and decision makers, ways in which they can offer support and develop relationships with the executive-level CDO to collaborate on diversity initiatives throughout the academic enterprise. The results from this study could add to the body of knowledge, as well as to the insight into, how executive-level CDOs build relationships with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity. This research study could also help future CDOs gain insight into the relationship-building skills that are required as a leader—to move matters of diversity through a complex organizational system (Aguilar & Bauer, 2017; Gardner, 2015; Nixon, 2017).

Chapter Summary

CDOs in higher education have been added to the executive ranks of senior administration on college and university campuses. Many of these positions came about after some sort of campus crisis (Kezar et al., 2018; Williams, 2013). With a wide scope and range of responsibilities but with little formal authority, it is important to understand how some CDOs have strategically developed relationships with their stakeholders in an effort to influence campus-wide diversity.

This research study has five chapters. The first chapter outlined the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, and the potential significance of a research study capturing how executive-level CDOs build relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the organizational models and structure of the CDO role, CDO experiences and the relationship-building strategies of

other executive leaders in higher education. Chapter 3 describes the research study design, methodology, collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 shares the findings and the researcher's analysis of the findings, and Chapter 5 consists of a summary of the findings and corresponding conclusions, which are followed by recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The CDO in higher education has emerged as an institution's most senior diversity administrator to address a variety of factors that impact campus climate (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). According to a report from the National Bureau of Economic Research (2018), more than 60% of higher education institutions have established an executive-level diversity leadership position to increase awareness on the benefits of diversity. Many executive-level CDOs need to build relationships with campus leaders to keep diversity matters at the forefront of institutional affairs (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2013). Connecting with campus stakeholders is a responsibility that is similar to other executive leaders' responsibilities, such as presidents and deans. There is literature that examines how academic leaders, like presidents and deans, develop relationships to introduce campus-wide initiatives; however, there is a paucity of literature that highlights how CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives (Dowling & Melillo, 2015; Kezar, 2007). The purpose of this study was to explore how executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives.

This literature review details the state of the empirical research regarding the emergence of the CDO and other higher education executive leaders' methods for developing relationships. Peer-reviewed research studies from 2007-2018 are included in

this review. A methodological review of the literature, as well as gaps found in the studies, are also reviewed.

Organizational Structure, Role, and Experiences

The CDO has been established as an executive-level senior administrator position to influence diversity across college and university campuses for faculty, students, and staff to thrive (Wilson, 2013). According to Williams and Wade-Golden (2013), CDOs serve as relation leaders by building strategic alliances with campus units, such as human resources, admissions, the different schools within the university, faculty, and academic and student affairs, to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives. Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) also submitted that CDOs establish consulting relationships with campus stakeholders to expand campus administrators' ability to include diversity language when developing programs and writing grants and policies. Although there is limited research that explores how CDOs develop relationships, the studies in this section review the CDO organizational structure, establishing the CDO role and CDO experiences.

Organizational structure. Research articles in this section reviewed the organizational office types often established to support the work of the CDO. Leon (2014) conducted a qualitative, multiple-site case study that examined the organizational models to develop a CDO position and office at three large public research institutions. Leon (2014) also examined the CDOs' impact on different types of strategic priorities and activities. Leon (2014) expanded on earlier research conducted by Williams and Wade Golden (2013) that identified the organizational models used in higher education to develop the CDO position. These organizational models were referred to as the *archetypes of vertical authority*, which are collaborative, unit-based, and portfolio-

divisional in their approach. The unit-based CDOs and portfolio-divisional CDOs were found to be leaders or primary contributors to the activities associated with the educational, the symbolic, and the accountability strategies on campuses. Some of these activities included serving as the chair of a campus diversity committee and leading efforts to engage the local community as well as regularly requesting and reviewing diversity plans from other schools or campus units (Leon, 2014). Leon (2014) found that the unit-based CDOs and portfolio divisional CDOs contributed to more campus-wide initiatives than the collaborative CDOs. Although Leon (2014) found them to be effective, the collaborative CDOs' span of influence was largely contained to participating in activities that supported the institution's educational strategies. Some of these activities included increasing campus awareness about the role of the CDO and connecting with deans and directors on diversity-related matters (Leon, 2014).

While exploring the contributions of the collaborative CDOs, unit-based CDOs, and portfolio divisional CDOs, Leon (2014) also found that the title, rank, and reporting structure could position the CDO as a colleague to directly engage with other senior administrators. Although Leon (2014) found that all CDOs in the study had a direct reporting relationship with the institution's president, some CDOs were not positioned among the executive ranks within their organizations. The archetype of authority, either collaborative, unit-based, or portfolio-divisional, may determine a CDO's scope of responsibility and span of influence.

Wilson (2013) also explored the rise of the CDO in higher education as the campus-wide diversity expert from the leadership perspective of the CDO. Wilson (2013) interviewed seven CDOs from public and private 4-year institutions. With buy-in and

support from the president and other senior leaders, Wilson (2013) found that the title of director or higher, and a seat as a member of the president's cabinet positioned the CDO to elevate matters of diversity. Although the titles and areas of responsibility differed for the participants, three major themes emerged: (a) all CDOs had personal experience with diversity, (b) all CDOs elevated diversity matters, and (c) all CDOs were optimistic about the future of diversity in higher education.

Wilson's study (2013) highlighted additional findings that included the wide range of responsibilities of the CDO. Wilson (2013) found that many CDOs were involved in recruitment, curriculum development, and improving campus climate. Although the scope of responsibilities varied for each CDO that Wilson (2013) interviewed, all of the participants stated the importance of collaboration with campus leaders to advance diversity. Some of the CDOs expressed the importance of developing relationships and working closely with campus partners (Wilson, 2013).

The research studies conducted by Leon (2014) and Wilson (2013) highlighted the organizational structure and the importance of positionality with the CDO role. However, these studies did not explore how the CDOs accessed other senior leaders to advance diversity. Furthermore, these studies did not examine how CDOs developed relationships with members of the campus community to influence diversity as an institutional priority.

Establishing a CDO. Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) and Stanley et al. (2018) conducted case studies about CDOs. Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) explored one campus's approach to establishing and recruiting a CDO position, and Stanley et al. (2018) explored a CDO's involvement with institutionalizing a campus-wide diversity

agenda. Stanley et al. (2018) conducted a mixed-methods case study of a large public-research university to collect and analyze data about the institution's diversity plan and the CDO's efforts with integrating the plan. Using information gathered from 6 years of institutional, unit, and climate assessment data, as well as interview data from various members of the campus community, Stanley et al. (2018) focused on guiding research questions that examined the impact of the diversity plan on the organizational culture and campus climate.

Key findings from the Stanley et al. (2018) case study highlighted the "leadership efforts of the CDO working collaboratively with campus partnerships and being supported and resourced by the president and provost" (p. 10). These leadership efforts included leading discussions with faculty, students and staff regarding campus climate and working collaboratively with the senior leaders to create a shared vision of diversity (Stanley et al., 2018). Armed with strategic diversity priorities identified by members of the campus community, the CDO, partnering with key decision makers, was able to develop an actionable plan to realize the university's strategic diversity priorities (Stanley et al., 2018). The CDO also worked closely with the provost to create measurable department-specific strategic diversity goals. Some of these goals, such as websites with diversity-related content and meeting agendas that incorporate the institution's vision to institutionalize diversity, were developed by institutional committees, which were led by the CDO.

Another key finding highlighted the methods used by the CDO to encourage leadership across the organization to also embrace and advance institutional diversity efforts (Stanley et al., 2018). The methods included collaborating with the provost to

identify and mitigate challenges and barriers to engaging faculty, staff, and students. Mitigation efforts included providing funding for research and professional development as well as inviting faculty, students, and staff to participate in various committee and departmental/unit work that used data to lead institutional diversity change. The CDO's ability to empower others created an inclusive environment whereby leading diversity the efforts became everyone's responsibility (Stanley et al., 2018).

Similar to the case study conducted by Stanley et al. (2018), Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) conducted a case study of Grand Valley State University (GVSU) as they prepared to establish the role of CDO. GVSU's first step in creating the CDO role was to evaluate the community's perspective of diversity on campus by administering a campus-wide climate study (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012). Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) found that the campus climate study revealed growth in the different campus community groups. With findings from the climate study, GVSU administrators held listening tours to hear student concerns related to "bias incidents on campus" (p. 30). According to Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012), the results of the climate study and listening tours revealed a campus community that was willing to increase awareness with regard to the benefits of diversity, but it lacked a senior diversity champion to lead these efforts.

GVSU's president's commitment to the success of the CDO was supported with buy-in from the board of trustees, deans, and directors (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012). With a strong commitment from the university's senior administration, GVSU then established the CDO position, with a senior executive title of Vice President for Inclusion and Equity, reporting to the president, and with the addition of a divisional

office to support the work of the CDO. An additional commitment to the success of the CDO was further supported with human resources, funding, access to key stakeholders, and a direct-reporting line to the president (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012). Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) found that recruiting for a qualified CDO was an arduous task that was not to be taken lightly. A committee of faculty and staff, led by the provost, drafted a job description that outlined the components of the CDO role that included the need to collaborate, influence, oversee, develop, and lead activities designed to advance campus-wide diversity initiatives.

Once a CDO was hired at GVSU, the new diversity leader focused on engaging with the college and the surrounding community. Within the first year, the CDO developed relationships with the campus community groups to move some of their diversity initiatives forward. This included taking up an 8-year battle from faculty and staff to obtain board approval to provide health insurance for domestic partners. Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) found that the first year for the CDO was filled with building relationships and earning trust. The CDO led a strategic diversity-planning effort to begin fostering a community of inclusive excellence. Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) explored one institution's journey to establishing a CDO position as an executive-level administrative position responsible for creating a climate of inclusive excellence.

The case studies conducted by Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012) and Stanley et al. (2018) highlight the importance of a public commitment to diversity from the institution's president with careful planning and input from the campus community to prepare for a CDO. It is important to note that the president's commitment to diversity was the beginning of preparing the campus for a CDO (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012;

Stanley et al, 2018). CDOs can build on the earlier work of a president, and they can often leverage their position as a member of the president's core team to establish relationships with deans and directors across campus (Stanley et al. 2018). In an effort to incorporate diversity as a core principle, these case studies found that the CDO worked closely with the provost, deans, directors, students, and staff to establish committees with action-oriented goals to advance diversity.

CDO experiences. While Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012), Leon (2014), and Wilson (2014) explored the development and organizational models of the CDO position, Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) and Nixon (2017) described the experiences of CDOs. Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) conducted a Q method study that examined the experiences of 23 CDOs to better understand the challenges of leading change in higher education. In response to a question regarding their beliefs about the CDO position in higher education, participants sorted a Q set with 41 items. Once the responses were analyzed and follow-up interviews were completed, three factors were named as sojourners, partners in social justice, and loyal opposition. Similar to the findings from Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012), Leon (2014), Stanley et al. (2018), and Wilson (2013), the sojourners in the Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) study found that attention to organizational structure and reporting to the president provided visibility and access to key decision makers on campus. Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) also found that the sojourners had positive workplace relationships that helped when discussing diversity issues. However, the study did not describe how these relationships were formed.

Partners in social justice was the second factor in the Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) study, which referred to the relationships and connections needed for CDOs to do their

work. Consistent with the findings in Leon's (2014) examination of the CDO organizational models, Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) found that some CDOs, who were partners in the social justice factor, operated within unit-based CDO organizational models, which were found to lack an institutional presence and were often under resourced. Key findings included lack of public support, from their institution's president, for diversity initiatives and lack of institutional authority to suggest policy changes to be more inclusive (Gravely-Stack et al., 2016). The third factor identified in the Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) study was called *loyal opposition*, which refer to the CDOs' status as campus disrupters and CDOs who intentionally interrupted and challenged long-held beliefs in the spirit of moving their institutions to embrace the idea of inclusive excellence (Gravely-Stack et al., 2016). Key findings from the loyal opposition factor included the importance of the institutional authority that the CDO possessed to review and suggest changes across the institution, and that the institutional authority positioned the CDOs to have influence regarding other institutional matters. Subsequently, Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) found that CDOs with positional authority faced objection to their work, with advancing diversity initiatives, from some peers and other members of the campus community. Although the Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) study examined CDO experiences and highlighted institutional and positional authority as key findings, the study did not explore how CDOs built relationships with members of the campus community to influence diversity initiatives.

Where Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) explored CDO experiences, Nixon (2017) explored the challenges of women of color as CDOs. Nixon (2017) conducted a qualitative study to better understand the leadership experiences of five women of color

as diversity leaders in higher education. Nixon (2017) described the challenges of the women of color as diversity leaders in themes that included professional as being personal and with isolation. In the professional as personal theme, Nixon (2017) found that each had a personal connection to diversity work—meaning that their life experiences and career trajectories had significant impact of their work as CDOs. Nixon (2017) found that the women-of-color CDOs worked diligently to strategically interrupt systems that historically had disenfranchised students, faculty, and staff of color.

Regarding the isolation theme, Nixon (2017) found that learning how to be an effective leader, as a person of color in a PWI, was a challenge for many of the CDOs (Nixon, 2017). The women-of-color CDOs found that being the only person of color in many of their meetings contributed to feeling set apart from their peers (Nixon, 2017). Nixon (2017) found that the women of color who were studied were respected as “insiders” (p. 314) because of their direct reporting relationship to the president and rank as a member of the president’s cabinet. In the same respect, the women-of-color CDOs in the study were also viewed as “outsiders” (p. 314) because of their gender, race, and professional responsibility (Nixon, 2017). Similar to the findings regarding objections to diversity work in the Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) study, Nixon (2017) found that the women-of-color CDOs experienced microaggressions from colleagues who often marginalized the importance of their work on campus. Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) and Nixon (2017) highlighted the experiences of CDOs, such as positional authority and being considered an insider; however, how these experiences impacted relationship building to influence diversity initiatives was not examined. The goal of this current research study was to expand on previous research that explored the CDO organizational

structures, role, and experiences (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Gravely-Stack et al., 2016; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Stanley et al., 2018; Wilson, 2013). The studies reviewed in the literature explored the infrastructure of the CDO office, but they did not explore how the CDO would interact and engage with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity.

Executive leaders in higher education relationship building strategies. Given the unique role of an executive-level CDO, often with a large portfolio of responsibilities and limited authority, research studies from Leon (2014) and Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) found that they have to work with members of the campus community from across institutional divisions to lead diversity initiatives. The literature on how CDOs build relationships is very limited, however, there is literature that examined how presidents and deans build relationships to influence change. Research studies that examined the relationship-building strategies of presidents and deans were used in this section of the literature review to potentially inform how CDOs might go about building relationships to influence change.

Executive leaders in higher education, such as president and deans, employ a variety of relationship-building strategies to connect with members of the campus community to gain buy-in for new initiatives such as a campus-wide diversity platform (Dowling & Melillo, 2015). Similar to school deans, CDOs work closely with leaders, faculty, students, and staff to realize an institution's mission and vision by leading a specific area in higher education. Studies conducted by Kezar (2007), Wepner et al. (2008), and Dowling and Melillo (2015) found that university presidents and academic

deans use multifaceted leadership approaches to build relationships to advance diversity, solve problems, or introduce new programming.

Kezar (2007) conducted a qualitative study that examined the college and university presidents' leadership phases that were used to institutionalize diversity as a core value. The selected participants were identified as seasoned presidents at different phases of institutionalizing diversity. The interview data collected in Kezar's (2007) study was transcribed and reviewed by the participants for member checking and then analyzed for themes. Kezar (2007) identified three phases that were used to build relationships with the campus community to institutionalize diversity on college and university campuses.

According to Kezar (2007), phase one is the *mobilization phase* where diversity initiatives are developed and maintained at the departmental or divisional level. Phase one was found to be an opportunity for college and university presidents to introduce and communicate the fundamental importance of diversity, access campus climate, and develop meaning regarding diversity. One president in the study recalled spending several months hosting listening tours and focus groups to build relationships with faculty, students, and staff (Kezar, 2007).

Kezar (2007) referred to phase two as the *implementation phase* where discussions about the importance of diversity and shared ownership continued. During the second phase, college and university leaders established clear definitions of diversity, identified diversity champions, and departmental and divisional diversity efforts were elevated from the campus units. Kezar (2007) found that presidents would build

relationships with community councils to garner support from dissenting faculty and staff.

Kezar's (2007) findings during the leadership of phase three found the presidents continuing to work to advance diversity. According to Kezar (2007), diversity is fully integrated as part of the higher education system in the third phase. Presidents worked closely with deans and other leaders to influence campus-wide diversity by challenging long-held faculty and recruitment practices. Campuses at this level are action orientated, and they all shared in the commitment to be a more inclusive campus community (Kezar, 2007). Understanding how college and university presidents build relationships may provide useful information for executive-level CDOs as they work with members of their campus communities to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives.

In the same respect as college and university presidents, academic deans have approached building relationships in an effort to connect with the campus community around a shared goal. Wepner et al. (2008) interviewed 27 academic deans' approaches to solving problems as leaders. Wepner et al. (2008) found two key themes regarding relationship building as an academic leader. Continued work on established relationships is one theme Wepner et al. (2008) found that was similar to Kezar's (2007) study of college presidents. The other theme highlighted by Wepner et al. (2008) was the academic deans' efforts toward maintaining established relationships. It is within building and maintaining interpersonal connections where leaders may be able to also engage with members of the community who might have different perspectives (Kezar, 2007; Wepner et al., 2008). Similar to the findings of CDOs working across institutional divisions in the Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) and Nixon (2017) studies, Wepner et al.

(2008) found that building and maintaining relationships required leaders to work with campus antagonists, as well as allies, to advance an institutional agenda, such as a campus-wide diversity.

Dowling and Melillo (2015) conducted a qualitative study that explored senior academic administrators who were leading the efforts to transition a department of nursing into a school of nursing. Ten leaders were interviewed for the study. Dowling and Melillo (2015) found having a “voice at the table” (p. 446) and “titles matter” (p. 447) were pointed out by the CDOs. The title of dean was necessary for access to build relationships and to being respected by other school deans. An executive title also helped the deans to be respected as a domain expert (Dowling & Melillo, 2015).

Similar to a finding from Wepner et al. (2008), Dowling and Melillo (2015) found that continued conversations to build relationships with both allies and adversaries was critical to successful change. Title and rank impact how academic leaders build relationships with those in the campus community who are either in favor of, or against, a new initiative (Dowling & Melillo, 2015). Much like nursing department administrators being elevated to academic deans to symbolize the importance of a nursing school’s mission, the CDO must be positioned within a college or university with an executive title and rank to emphasize the significance of the role and the person serving as the CDO (Dowling & Melillo, 2015; Wilson 2013).

Transactional and transformational leadership. Basham (2012) and Kezar and Eckel (2008) explored the effects of transactional and transformational leadership that were used by college and university presidents to build relationships in an effort to advance diversity. Transactional leadership is defined as a leader’s use of authority and

rewards to encourage change. Transactional leadership is typically accompanied with specific goals and objectives. Conversely, transformational leadership is defined as a leader's impact on followers' core values. Transformational leaders often have high expectations and hold followers to a high moral standard (Basham, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2008). Presumably, like college and university presidents, CDOs attempting to develop and lead institutional diversity may employ transformational and transactional leadership to establish trust and build relationships with campus leaders and decision makers.

Kezar and Eckel (2008) conducted a qualitative study that examined the use of transactional and transformational leadership styles to evaluate the ways in which college and university presidents inspire change. The 27 college presidents interviewed were selected and identified as higher education senior executives with a demonstrated commitment to advancing campus-wide diversity. As they shared their personal commitment to diversity, many of the presidents in the study described using a transformational approach to connect with the campus community (Kezar & Eckel, 2008). Kezar and Eckel (2008) found that the use of transformational leadership was effective when connecting the importance of diversity to an institution's mission and vision.

Transactional leadership approaches proved to be effective when administering accountability and assessment measures. Kezar and Eckel (2008) found that transactional leadership was deemed to have a greater impact on policy and procedural changes. The researchers found that transactional leadership did not have an impact with building relationships and trust. Presidents reflected on their use of transactional leadership approaches when met with opposition regarding institutional changes that might have

impacted curricular, faculty, student, or staff affairs, such as the introduction of online classes or cluster hiring. Many of the presidents reflected on the need to use a combination of both styles to advance a campus-wide diversity agenda and create meaningful change in the campus climate (Kezar & Eckel, 2008).

Basham (2012) conducted a Delphi panel to examine the use of transactional and transformational leadership qualities used by college and university presidents to develop a well-defined vision statement that included diversity. The Delphi panel, with the presidents as participants, attempted to reach a consensus about the practices and concepts of transactional and transformation leadership. Basham (2012) found that presidents used a variety of transactional and transformational leadership characteristics to create change. Similar to the results found in Kezar and Eckel's (2008) study, Basham (2012) found that university presidents acknowledged the need to use transformational skills when attempting to connect the campus community to a shared sense of mission and vision—including diversity. The presidents also used transformational skills to motivate and establish a shared ownership around a topic such as the importance of diversity and inclusive excellence (Basham, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2008).

Transactional leadership works to obtain buy-in from constituent groups on campus who might not have responded to impassioned sentiments or fiery discourse to support the need to advance diversity at the institutional level (Basham, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2008). Kezar and Eckel's (2008) results indicate that transactional leadership begins to address issues of climate; however, it is not sustainable. Higher education presidents in Basham's (2012) study found that the use of transactional leadership was effective for holding people accountable for implementing activities that moved the

shared mission, vision, or purpose forward, such as supporting the need for an executive-level CDO.

Basham (2012) and Kezar and Eckel (2008) gleaned from the presidents that there is a strategic approach to the use of transformational leadership. Many of the presidents talked about the impact of their ability to motivate and develop relationships with faculty, staff, and students on a personal level as they moved to integrate diversity into the campus culture. The presidents' ability to relate to deans, faculty, students, and staff presented an opportunity for them to share their personal commitment to diversity (Basham, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2008). Transformational and transactional leadership approaches may bode well for executive-level CDOs as they develop relationships with their campus communities to influence campus-wide initiatives that may not be accepted by all. The reviewed research studies examined how presidents and academic deans used strategies to develop relationships to create institutional change. This study explored how executive-level CDOs developed relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

CDO common themes. Many of the studies reveal that developing relationships with members of the campus community is critical for advancing a campus-wide diversity (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2015). Each of the CDOs were operating under different organizational structures, portfolio-divisional, unit-based, or collaborative office models, and those structures depended largely upon the institution type. Although institution types and organizational structures were varied, the primary responsibility for each CDO was largely the same—to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2015). Each of the studies reviewed found that the college and university

president must lead the charge to institutionalize a diversity agenda, provide a public commitment to diversity, and contribute to the success of the CDO (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2008; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2015).

Many of the studies found that the CDOs held various titles, with most reporting to the president, but not all had a rank as an executive-level administrator (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Stanley et al., 2018; Wilson, 2015). CDO titles and rank at a vice-president or vice-provost level served a dual purpose to provide access for the CDO to keep diversity matters at the forefront of executive-level discussions as well as to integrate diversity principles within the whole organization (Gravely-Stack, 2016; Leon, 2014).

Some of the CDOs interviewed were affected by role-related isolation and the need to routinely navigate working with peers who resisted their work in diversity (Gravely-Stack et al., 2016; Nixon, 2017). The CDOs often endured competing pressures concerning race and gender as it related to the role of a CDO in higher education (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2015).

Some of the researchers highlighted the potential pitfalls of the CDO being seen as a messiah or as the one person on campus who could fix diversity (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2015). One of these findings included a sense of doubt among the campus community regarding the effectiveness of a centralized diversity office led by a CDO (Leon, 2014). Other studies found the sense of doubt to be true with faculty who did not believe in diversity beyond student retention (Leon, 2014; Wilson, 2013). Operating with the understanding that not every member of the campus community will agree or engage in efforts to implement diversity initiatives,

Gravely-Stack et al. (2016) and Wilson (2013) found that the CDOs in their studies still believed in the diversity mission of their institutions. Similarly, Stanley et al. (2018) found that the CDOs focused on relationship building and collaboration to foster a sense of ownership among faculty, staff, and students as they worked together to embed diversity as an institutional core value.

Much of the most-recent research literature does not address the strategies used by CDOs to build relationships with campus leaders, faculty, students, and staff to influence diversity (Nixon, 2017, Stanley et al., 2018). The ways in which CDOs build relationships with members of their campus communities to influence diversity as a core value, often without the direct authority to mandate change, is unknown (Nixon, 2017; Stanley et al., 2018; Wilson, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore how executive-level CDOs build relationships with deans, faculty, students, and staff to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives.

Methodological Review

Researchers have used qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, most often, to study CDOs in higher education. Semi-structured interviews, using a set of predetermined questions, were most often used for the qualitative studies as a means to fully capture the lived experiences of those who led diversity efforts on college and university campuses (Kezar, 2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2008; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Wilson, 2013). In some of the studies, college and university webpages relating to diversity were reviewed to provide context, clarity, and additional information (Leon, 2014; Wilson, 2013).

Gaps and Recommendations

Several gaps emerged from the review of the literature. First, there is very limited empirical research relating to CDOs in higher education. Many of the published articles were personal CDO accounts of their work influencing diversity in higher education. Second, studies conducted by Arnold & Kowalski-Braun (2011) and Nixon (2017) did not address the support networks or additional resources needed by CDOs to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives. And finally, although many of the findings highlighted the need for CDOs to collaborate, the strategies used to build relationships with deans, faculty, staff, and students to ensure diversity was embedded as an institutional priority that remains unclear (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2011; Gravely-Stack et al., 2016; Nixon, 2017; Stanley et al., 2018). This research study explored the gap between hiring CDOs and how they develop relationships with campus leaders, faculty, staff, and students to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives.

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlighted the emergence of the CDO role as an executive-level senior administrator responsible for leading campus-wide diversity initiatives and the literature offered the experiences of CDOs leading these efforts. Due to the paucity of literature regarding CDOs' relationship-building strategies with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives, research studies that examined the relationship building strategies of president and deans in higher education were reviewed. The first section in this chapter reviewed the organizational models and structures of the CDO role in higher education, providing context to understand where the CDO role is positioned, as a change agent, within higher education institutions. The following section explored the establishment of the CDO position on

college and university campuses and outlined the work setting and environment for influencing campus-wide diversity initiatives. CDO experiences as the institutions' diversity leaders included detailed accounts about the successes and challenges of working relationship as they influence diversity initiatives across an institution. The next section explored correlated information regarding relationship-building strategies of president and deans in higher education to influence change. The last sections reviewed the methods and highlighted the gaps in the literature. Chapter 3 outlines the research design, context, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

This research study explored the relationship-building strategies used by executive-level CDOs to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives. Without developing relationships, executive-level CDOs may not be successful at implementing diversity in a meaningful way to change an institution's campus climate. The research study focused on describing the ways in which executive-level CDOs in higher education engaged with key stakeholders, faculty, students, and staff to advance campus-wide diversity. On many college and university campuses, CDOs are expected to work closely with campus leaders, faculty, students, and staff to implement diversity initiatives. Public support from the institution's president, a reporting structure, and a rank that positions the CDO within the senior administration provides CDOs with the access to build relationships with key stakeholders and decision makers to ensure diversity is properly embedded throughout the campus culture (Arnold & Kowlaski-Braun, 2012; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). The purpose of this study was to describe how executive-level CDOs develop relationships with members of their campus communities to influence campus-wide diversity (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Detailed in this chapter is the research context, the research participants, the instruments to be used for data collection, the procedures used for data collection, and the procedures for the data analysis. The chapter ends with a summary.

Qualitative Research Methodology

A transcendental phenomenological qualitative research design was used to explore this study's research question: *How do executive-level CDOs build relationships to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives?* A transcendental phenomenological method illustrates the essence of the participants' lived experiences through textural and structural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). According to Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004), the textural descriptions chronicle the participants' experiences, and the structural descriptions illustrate how the participants experienced the phenomenon to coalesce into the essence or fundamental idea of the CDO experience by developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Descriptions regarding how executive-level CDOs developed relationships to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives are described (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Context

This study took place on college and university campuses and by virtual meetings with CDOs located within the United States. Institutions of higher education that met the Carnegie Classification (n.d.) of baccalaureate degree-granting colleges served as the population for the study. The NADOHE website was searched for members to identify potential participants for this study. The NADOHE serves as a collective of higher education institutions and diversity officers who work toward inclusive excellence on college and university campuses. The NADOHE's membership roster is located on a public website and includes the names of colleges or universities, names of the members, and the members' email addresses. At the time of the study, there were more than 300 private and public, 4-year, NADOHE member institutions that spanned the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. However, only 150 institutions were identified as having an

executive-level CDO. Executive-level CDOs employed by U.S. colleges and universities, and who met the study's criteria, were considered.

Research Participants

For this study, a CDO is defined as the individual in the most senior administrative diversity leadership position and who reports to the institution's president. Position titles may include vice president, CDO, executive director, or special assistant. Participants for the study were selected through the use of purposeful sampling to recruit the participants. Purposeful sampling was used to search the NADOHE website and select potential research participant CDOs from colleges and universities who could provide meaningful insight into the phenomena of how executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity (Creswell, 2014). The following inclusion and exclusion criteria was considered when selecting the participants for this study. The participants had to meet the following criteria to be included in the study:

1. Served as an institution's most senior administrative diversity officer (CDO).
2. Reported to the president.
3. Served as a member of the president's executive cabinet/committee.
4. Had at least 3 years of experience as an executive-level CDO.

The participants in the study were excluded if they:

1. Reported to a provost, dean, or other senior administrator.
2. Did not serve as a member of the president's executive committee.
3. Had less than 3 years of experience as an executive-level CDO.

The goal was to have a sample size of five to eight participants who were serving as executive-level CDOs in higher education. Consistent with the transcendental

phenomenological approach, a small sample size allows the researcher to collect meaningful data to better understand the participants' experiences. The small sample size allows the researcher to capture the essence of the participants' experiences and "in what context or situations they experience it" (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 21).

Out of the NADHOE members who were identified as their institution's executive-level CDO, at the direction of the researcher's Institutional Review Board (IRB), 20 were emailed invitations to participate in the study, and a link was included in the email to a demographic survey and an informed consent form. Of the 20 NADHOE members emailed, 11 potential participants responded, but five did not meet the inclusion criteria because they had less than 3 years of experience as an executive-level CDO. The remaining six participants met the inclusion criteria and were interviewed for the study.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The instruments used for this study were the researcher, a demographic survey, semi-structured interviews, and field notes.

Researcher. The researcher was the primary instrument used to collect and analyze the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcendental phenomenological studies require researchers to reflect upon their experience with the phenomenon, and then set aside or "bracket" (p. 78) out presumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). At the time this study was conducted, the researcher was employed full time at a 4-year, private, research university, in search of an inaugural CDO. The researcher served on the university's Diversity and Equity Executive Committee, was the co-chair of the institution's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and worked closely with members of the campus community to plan and implement unit-level diversity initiatives. Additionally, the researcher was an

organizational development consultant with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, working with higher education institutions in the United States and Canada. The researcher's familiarity and experiences connected with the proposed study (Creswell, 2014).

Demographic survey. Study participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which was developed by the researcher. The information provided allowed the researcher to identify similar aspects of the participants' backgrounds. The demographic questionnaire obtained the race, gender, age, educational background, professional background, years in current position, title, rank, and organizational structure of the potential participant.

Interview protocol. Once the demographic surveys were completed, semi-structured interviews with guided questions were conducted with the CDO. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ask the open-ended predetermined questions but follow up with an additional line of questioning to further explore the participants' responses (Creswell, 2014). Seven interview questions were developed by the researcher.

Field notes. The interview questions were printed in advance and brought to each interview, with space on the document for the researcher to capture observations. The field notes were used as a tool for the researcher to capture general observations and other nonverbal information. Field notes were collected before, during, and after the interviews as well as used as part of the data analysis process of this study.

Data Collection

The research study was reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher Institutional Review Board (IRB), prior to collecting the data. Recruitment for participants for this

study took place by the researcher sending an email (Appendix B), with a link to the demographic survey (Appendix C), and informed consent form (Appendix D) to a batch of 20 purposefully selected executive-level CDOs from the NADOHE membership roster.

The researcher reviewed the demographic surveys and informed consent forms to determine if the participants met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. The researcher scheduled a time to interview each of the qualified participants. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes. Three interviews were conducted in person, at a location chosen by the participant. Three interviews were conducted using the video conferencing tool, Zoom, because the participants were not within 4 hours' driving distance for the researcher. The in-person interviews were digitally recorded using an iPhone 6s, and immediately following the interviews, the virtual interviews were recorded using the Zoom audio recording function and then transcribed, verbatim, by an outside transcription service.

The researcher started each interview by reviewing the purpose of the study, confirmed that the participants' participation was voluntary and confidential. To protect the participants' identities they and their institutions were assigned pseudonyms after each interview. The researcher used the guiding questions (Appendix E), for each interview. The researcher took 6 weeks to complete the data-collection process. The digital recordings were saved to an external hard drive and transcribed by a professional transcription service the day after each interview. All digital recordings are stored on an external hard drive. The transcribed data, the demographic surveys, and field notes are

kept in a locked safe in the researcher's home office. All digitally recorded audio data and notes will be kept for a period of 5 years after the publication of this work.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Data collected from the demographic survey, the semi-structured interviews, the researcher's perspective, and the field notes were reviewed and analyzed consistent with a transcendental phenomenological approach for this research study. Results from the demographic survey were summarized and categorized into a Microsoft Word document. The semi-structured interviews and field notes were analyzed according to Moustakas's (1994) data analysis procedure of transcendental phenomenology. The five-step process to transcendental phenomenological approach includes:

1. Suspension of judgement
2. Significant statements
3. Develop themes
4. Outline textural and structural descriptions
5. Construct composite description (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004)

Suspension of judgement. Before the interviews began, the researcher wrote down her thoughts, preconceived ideas, and biases relating to the phenomenon. This allowed the researcher to be fully present and able to conduct the interviews without judgement (Moustakas, 1994).

Significant statements. After each interview, the researcher assigned the participant and his or her institution with a pseudonym, and she read and reread each interview transcript to identify significant statements. Significant statements are nonrepeating, complete sentences that identify how the participants' experienced the

phenomenon. The manner in which executive-level CDOs developed relationships with members of the campus community to influence diversity, presented an understanding of what was on the horizon or becoming apparent (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). These statements were not categorized or put in any particular order. Identifying the participants' significant statements is considered the circumstance that describes the specific nature of their experience. These significant statements made up the structural descriptions (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Develop themes. The transcripts were reread to identify the remaining relevant, nonoverlapping statements. These statements were then grouped together to identify emerging themes. These statements depicted the participants' perspectives of the phenomenon or the horizon. The depiction of the participants' perspectives of the phenomenon made up the textural descriptions (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Textural and structural descriptions. Once all of the interviews had been conducted, the transcribed interviews were analyzed for significant statements and themes, the researcher gave a description of *what* the participants experienced, using the themes, and then the researcher gave a description of *how* to the participants' experiences by gleaning information from the significant statements (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Construct composite description. The significant statements and themes of the what and how of the participants' experiences were synthesized into a blended description. This description evolved into the fundamental idea or *essence* that "captures the meaning ascribed to the experience" (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p.31). Once all of the steps were completed, the field notes were summarized and, using the

composite description, the researcher described how the executive-level CDOs in this study developed relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

The researcher's due diligence of carefully listening to the audio recordings and reading and rereading the transcribed interviews was used as a validation strategy to demonstrate the accuracy of the researcher's findings (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation of data sources used the demographic survey, semi-structured interviews, and field notes as a validation strategy to support the findings (Creswell, 2014). The recorded data, transcribed interviews, demographic survey, field notes, all paper documents, and data files are kept on an external hard drive in a locked safe in the researcher's home office to maintain the participants' confidentiality. All information collected will be destroyed after a period of 5 years.

Summary

The primary focus for this study was to describe the essence of the relationship-building strategies that were used by the executive-level CDOs in this study who were responsible for advancing a campus-wide diversity agendas in U.S. colleges and universities. Using a transcendental phenomenological research approach, this study sought to understand how executive-level CDOs in this study built relationships with campus leaders, faculty, staff, and students to influence campus-wide diversity. Textural and structural statements from the transcribed interviews were used to develop and organize themes. A qualitative semi-structured interview process, using guided, open-ended questions, was used to describe, with a fresh perspective, the executive-level CDO participants' perceptions and experiences of the relationship-building strategies they used to influence campus-wide diversity.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the essence of how executive-level CDOs in higher education developed relationships with members of their campus community to influence campus-wide diversity. The goal of this study was to describe the strategies used by executive-level CDOs to shape relationships with members of their campus communities to institutionalize diversity as a strategic priority on college and university campuses. A transcendental phenomenological design was used to inform the understanding of the research question: *How do executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity?*

The CDO development framework served as the theoretical underpinning for this research study and provided a lens through which to describe the relationship-building opportunities that are important to the success of the CDO role. This chapter includes a summary of the study design and a description of the demographic survey. The chapter also includes a narrative description of the participants and the research study findings to support the themes. Three themes and one unexpected finding emerged from the data analysis as they relate to how the executive-level CDOs in this study developed relationships with members of their campus communities to influence diversity. The following three themes were identified:

1. Positionality matters
2. Developing relationships is a process
3. Sowing, sowing, and reaping

Female weariness emerged as the unexpected finding. The findings from the research study are an analysis of the participants' lived experiences brought to light through the individual semi-structured interviews, demographic survey responses, and field notes. The chapter ends with a summary.

Research Study Design

A transcendental qualitative phenomenological research study design was conducted to explore the essence of this study's research question: *How do executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity?* Textural and structural descriptions were identified from the interview transcripts to extrapolate the essence of the participants' lived experiences in developing relationships with members of their campus communities to influence diversity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Demographic Survey

Six CDOs with a vice-presidential title and rank and at least 3 years of experience as a CDO, at a U.S. college or university, participated in this research study. The participants were selected from public and private colleges and universities from different geographical regions. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and his or her institution to ensure confidentiality.

The total sample size was six participants that included three females and three males. Of the six participants, five identified as Black or African American, and one participant identified as Hispanic. Three of the participants served as CDOs at large public institutions, one served at a large private institution, and two served at small private institutions. All of the participants had more than 5 years of experience serving as

an executive-level CDO at a PWI. Table 4.1 shows the demographic information regarding the participants, which include their age, race, gender, years of experience, and region.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Gender	Institution/Type	Years Exp.	Region
Dr. Byrd	58	Black	M	Eatonville College/Private	7	NE
Dr. James	47	Black	M	Hungerford College/Public	10	SE
Dr. Mae	56	Black	F	Great Lakes State University/Public	7	NE
Dr. Masters	60	Hispanic	F	North Star College/Private	9	NE
Mr. Newton	43	Black	M	Kingston State University/Public	6	MW
Dr. Vanside	65	Black	F	Acres University/Private	16	MW

Interview Process

Within 24 hours of the researcher’s invitation to interview, each of the participants responded by email, agreeing to participate. The 60-minute interviews were scheduled with each of the participants. Semi-structured interviews with Dr. Byrd, Dr. Mae, and Dr. Masters were face-to-face and conducted at their institutions. Semi-structured interviews with Dr. James, Mr. Newton, and Dr. Vanside were conducted virtually, face-to-face, using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Each semi-structured interview was guided by a set of seven predetermined questions. All of the questions were asked by the researcher, responded to by the participants, and recorded. On average, each interview lasted about 45-50 minutes and yielded an average of 15-18 transcribed pages.

Participants’ Profiles

The participant profiles highlight the participants' name (pseudonym), institution name (pseudonym), institution type, and an overview of their career trajectories that led them to the CDO position at the vice-presidential level. In response to the first interview protocol question regarding their journey to the executive-level CDO role, each of the participants, all people of color, shared their career paths. At the time of their interviews, Dr. Byrd and Mr. Newton were tenured members of the faculty before accepting the role as CDO. Dr. Byrd and Mr. Newton were first-time CDOs, unlike Dr. Mae, who had served as a CDO in the corporate sector before transitioning to her CDO role in higher education. Dr. James had served as the inaugural executive-level CDO for two previous institutions before Hungerford College. The participant profiles provide foundational information to support the participants' professional experiences that contributed to the process of their relationship-building skills as a strategic diversity leader.

Dr. Byrd. At the time of his interview, Dr. Byrd was the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion at Eatonville College. Eatonville College is a large, private college located in the Northeast United States. Dr. Byrd considered his journey to the role of CDO as unorthodox. He had an undergraduate degree in communications, a graduate degree in interpersonal communications, and was trained as an interculturalist, with a Ph.D. in public address. As an active member of the faculty and an administrator at Eatonville College, Dr. Byrd said that, "it is the interculturalist angle that speaks most to the work that I'm doing now." Dr. Byrd's work of creating programs through curriculum and instruction for students led to an opportunity for him to work in senior administration on institutional diversity matters at Eatonville College.

As the vice president and associate provost for diversity and inclusion, Dr. Byrd acknowledged that it was the straightforward advice from a trusted colleague that encouraged him to broaden his horizons regarding his career trajectory. “Change position or find other opportunities that allow you to become much more valuable to your department,” recalled Dr. Byrd of the advice from his colleague. Because of the intercultural communications courses Dr. Byrd had taught and his work with underrepresented student groups, shortly thereafter, he was approached to serve as the vice president and associate provost for diversity and inclusion.

Dr. James. At the time of his interview, Dr. James was the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Hungerford College in the Southeast United States. Dr. James considered his journey to an executive-level CDO role as “reactive.” He held a juris doctorate and doctorate in education. Dr. James was encouraged to earn a doctorate, in addition to his law degree, as a measure to add credibility to his career as a scholar in higher education. Dr. James’s experience with ADA compliance led to an opportunity to investigate discrimination complaints at a local college, “so that was my first kind [of] foray into higher education. Started out on the reactive side of the diversity inclusion pendulum and really loved it.”

Dr. Mae. At the time of her interview, Dr. Mae recalled her journey to the role of CDO and Title IX Coordinator with a light laugh, “I chuckle, because it was not carefully orchestrated. It just happened.” After completing a master’s degree in counseling, Dr. Mae was recruited by the institution, which conferred her degree, to oversee residential life; and after some time, transitioned into advisement services. When a position became available in disability services, she was approached to take on the role as

coordinator for disability services. Although she was concerned about not having the right skill set, she recalls a colleague encouraging her by saying, “Listen, you have a master’s degree in counseling, you have the disposition to manage this, why don't you consider it.” So, she did, and she considered her experience working with ADA and disability services as the platform that led to the CDO’s office.

Dr. Masters. Dr. Masters began her journey to the position of Vice President for Community and Belonging at North Star College, as an administrator in higher education. At the time of her interview, Dr. Masters held a Ph.D. in sociology and had worked for several years as a researcher. After some thought, Dr. Masters summarized her journey by saying that “luckily, I started in administration, moved up the ranks through different positions in higher education, and then moved to being a full-time faculty member.” Dr. Masters credited her experience as an administrator and tenured faculty member as providing a framework for her work in diversity and inclusion:

My experience as an administrator and faculty member opened the lens to culture matters. Culture matters in all of our professions and understanding that as key to the work that I did as a teacher, working in admissions, working in student affairs, and academic affairs. I think I’ve had that thread of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout my career as something that was important to me.

(Participant Interview, p. 2)

Mr. Newton. At the time of his interview, Mr. Newton was the Vice Chancellor and CDO at Kingston State College, a large public university system in the Midwest United States. Mr. Newton shared how his research focus in the history of storytelling, training as an artist, and several years as a member of the faculty, exploring issues of race

relations, sexual orientation, gender, power, and privilege prepared him to take on the role as CDO:

I've blended telling stories with a sort of philosophy that uses theater, based on real-life situations and scenarios to address what I refer to as sensitive subject matters, that folks want to talk about, but they may not necessarily have the right space to engage in those conversations as freely as perhaps they'd like to.

(Participant Interview, p. 2)

He saw his journey to the executive-level CDO position as a culmination of relationships built over time with students, faculty, and staff. Mr. Newton valued the relationships he had built over time as an active member of the faculty. As he transitioned to the senior administrative role of CDO, Mr. Newton looked to leverage the relationships he developed as a faculty member. In his role as the Kingston State College CDO, the existing relationships were used to manage campus crisis and move Kingston State College toward inclusive excellence.

Dr. Vanside. At the time of her interview, Dr. Vanside was a seasoned professional in the field of diversity in higher education. With more than 16 years of experience, Dr. Vanside had worked her way up to the role of vice president at Acres University in the Northeast United States. She attributed her career trajectory to her support role working with advisers who were hired to retain male students of color. "That was my entry into diversity. It was helping these other people try to help our students more. So, that's where the interest in diversity came from." Dr. Vanside completed her higher education at Acres University, where she was employed.

It was during the completion of her undergraduate work on a pluralistic society that caught the eye of the institution's president. Dr. Vanside recalls fondly, "so when the president knew that I had this paper that I wrote, and I had studied at Acres University, as it relates to diversity, he read it, and he gave me the job." However, the promotion came with stipulations. Dr. Vanside said that the president told her, "you better get your master's degree, because this job requires a master's." She talked about how she pursued her graduate degree with a sense of urgency, "so I got that done in about 12 months. I wasn't playing. So, I got the job. And then I worked for him for the next 16 years," eventually being named the CDO.

Theme Development

The theme development of this study followed Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological data analysis process. From the interview transcripts, 36 significant statements were identified and highlighted in yellow to form the structural descriptions about relationship development to influence diversity as an executive-level CDO. The transcripts were reread to identify the remaining relevant statements. The remaining nonrepeating statements were highlighted and grouped into categories to analyze for themes. Three themes emerged from the analysis regarding the participants' lived experiences as executive-level CDOs who were developing relationships with members of their campus communities to influence diversity.

Theme 1: Positionality matters. With the first theme, positionality matters, the executive-level CDOs in this study noted the importance of having a vice-presidential title and rank as a member of the president's cabinet or executive team. In this research study, the participants recalled how their positionality could be attributed to instant

credibility among their colleagues and it was used as leverage in certain situations.

However, the participants also acknowledged that titles were not enough to influence campus-wide diversity when developing relationships.

Instant credibility. Some of the participants in this study shared how having an executive title and rank positioned them to have instant credibility as the domain expert in diversity, equity, and inclusion among other senior leaders and faculty but not necessarily with students and staff. Dr. Byrd, who as vice president and associate provost worked within a dual-reporting structure at Eatonville College, recalled how the executive level of the CDO role helped to validate his credibility among other leaders. Dr. Byrd said, “With the deans, it was the position of being an assistant provost for diversity. I have greater influence with the faculty and staff, as the vice president for diversity and inclusion” (Participant Interview p. 4). Both titles, vice president and vice provost, allowed Dr. Byrd to be respected as a domain expert in diversity and a contributing member of the senior administration and peer on par with other vice presidents. The vice provost title allowed him a pathway to integrate diversity with faculty members and those who serve in moving the academic mission of the institution forward.

Similarly, Dr. James, who served as the vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion at Hungerford College has held previous executive-level CDO roles within a dual-reporting structure at other institutions, “I don’t mind having an additional reporting relationship where I have a dotted line” (Participant Interview, p. 8). This comment suggests that executive-level CDOs may have the added obligation of reporting to an institution’s president as well the provost, whereas other senior administrators, such as

the chief financial officer, dean, or the chief human resources officer, are only required to report to either the president or provost. However, the additional reporting line provided opportunities for Dr. Byrd and Dr. James to influence campus-wide diversity, directly, with key decision makers.

Dr. James expanded on Dr. Byrd's sentiments regarding how the title and rank frames the CDO position with instant credibility among other senior leaders and members of the community but not students:

It [title and rank] can influence how a community views you or how they believe the institution values you. So, if you are called a CDO, but you're [the] director of the multi-cultural center, that reports to someone who reports to someone who finally reports to a VP of student affairs or a president or something like . . . then the community will say that the institute doesn't value this role. If you're a person that reports to a president or a provost, the community will say they value you and that can help you with credibility with faculty but not so much with students.

(Participant Interview, p. 8)

Although Dr. Byrd served as an executive-level CDO for a private institution and Dr. James served in a similar capacity at a large public higher education system, they both regarded their title and rank as foundational to situating their position for instant credibility to the campus community. Their positionality as the executive-level CDO opened doors for them to develop relationships with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity.

In addition to instant credibility, Dr. Vanside believed that positionality solidified her voice as a member of the institution's executive team. Dr. Vanside said without the title and rank, the CDO's voice is relinquished to someone else's interpretation:

You need a relationship with the president of the university. Anything lower than that puts you sort of in second place, or it goes through someone else. And their interpretation is out there, not yours, always. Sometimes, it works. But a lot of times, it does not. (Personal Interview, p. 3)

Executive-level CDOs in this study found it necessary to have a seat at the senior administration table, as a contributing member, to give first-hand accounts on their work regarding campus-wide diversity. The participants' stories reflected that in order to be seen as a credible and contributing member of the campus community, they needed to report to the institution's president.

Leverage. The executive-level CDOs in this study were able to leverage their credibility and influence to test their relationships with senior leaders and faculty during a campus crisis. Mr. Newton shared an account of multiple racially charged student incidents at Kingston State College. There were more than a dozen occurrences with students that included pictures from the Kingston State College mascot draped in KKK gear to a Black female student receiving a racist and misogynistic-filled note, that was slid under her dorm room door. Although bias-related incidents happen on some campuses, according to Mr. Newton, addressing these particular incidents had a sense of urgency. Without input from Mr. Newton, KSU communications and the Dean of Students offices sent out messages to students that proved to be ineffective. Growing frustrated with the situation and the lack of respect from his colleagues on the senior

team, Mr. Newton produced and released a YouTube video to the campus community to address the campus climate. Mr. Newton reflected on how he leveraged his role, “I know when to push and know when not to push. This [the racial incidents on campus] was a time I needed to push, so, I did my job.” (Participant Interview, p. 11)

Each of the participants lamented on the times in their role as executive-level CDOs when they had to take risks for the greater good of the institution. To address the hate-filled episodes at KSU, Mr. Newton produced and released the YouTube video without approval from the president, dean of students, or vice president for communications. Mr. Newton decided to leverage the relationships he developed with the senior leaders and hoped they would trust him. He did call them and let them know that he would send a message to campus but did not provide details. The contents of the video were reported on by the local news and subsequently went viral, gaining attention from the national news. The next day, he received several calls from KSU’s senior leadership, including the president, to see Mr. Newton as soon as possible. He hesitated but was reassured that everything he did was “tasteful” (Participant Interview, p.10) and with respect. Leaning on his record as an accomplished diversity leader, he met with the senior leaders who all thanked him for his courage and willingness to call attention to the ugly campus behavior.

Dr. James shared a story similar to Mr. Newton’s regarding how he leveraged his credibility and influence as CDO, to accomplish a goal. Dr. James shared, an experience when he was facilitating an open discussion between the president and members of the campus community. The open discussion was to review adding a level of accountability for diversity to the faculty activity reports. At some point during the discussion, the

president became combative and expressed his disagreement by throwing the document with the proposed accountability measure on the floor. Dr. James did not agree with the president's actions. Dr. James recalled:

I pride myself on conflict-resolution skills. I took a moment to try and think on my feet—how do I navigate this? I just said to him, “[the president], you know when we spoke, I asked that you give this a try and to do it effectively, you had to come in here without any hidden agendas and to really give an opportunity to engage in meaningful, probably vulnerable, transparent dialogue? I’m going to ask you to do something that I think is going to be uncomfortable. It’s uncomfortable for me, so I know it’s going to be uncomfortable for you. And I’m going to ask you to pick up the paper, and I’m just going to ask the spokesperson if she would mind starting again.” (Participant Interview, p. 6)

As Dr. James thought about the amount of courage he displayed, he recalled, “I think he [the president] trusted me enough, and the faculty trusted me, so I was able to leverage both relationships to help move the conversation forward.” (Participant Interview, p. 6). The participants, in this study shared examples that suggest that executive-level CDOs must have courage to leverage their positions and relationships to call out behavior that could have a negative impact on the campus climate.

Titles are not enough. Although positionality matters, some of the participants were adamant that having an executive title and rank would not be enough to develop substantial relationships with many of the other constituent groups to influence campus-wide diversity. Some of the participants were quick to acknowledge that being vice president or vice chancellor, will only get you so far. As Dr. James noted in an earlier

statement, title and rank does not work so much with students. Mr. Newton shared that the Kingston State University campus does not ascribe to a culture of “calling people doctor” (Participant Interview, p. 6), they respect the hierarchy, but they are less formal in their day-to-day interactions. Mr. Newton said:

We rarely call people doctor. It’s always first name. That’s just the culture of Kingston. The title piece is less relevant. So, when I introduce myself, unless we’re at a formal setting, where I introduced this is doctor so-and-so, but thereafter, hey, it’s Jeffery. It’s Myra, you know. (Participant Interview, p. 5)

The executive-level CDOs in this study did not wear their title and rank as a cudgel or a crown to force relationships with staff and students. They used their skilled ability as strategic diversity leaders to connect with staff and students in a real way, not bound up in political positioning or prestige. Mr. Newton reflected on how staff and students were not impressed with titles:

That goes back to our shared governance infrastructure, our university staff; they’re quick to point out, “I don’t want to hear that title mess. You can take that somewhere. We know you’re important, but you don’t need to hit us upside the head with it.” They find ways to push back. (Participant Interview, p. 5)

Similarly, Dr. James reflected on how the students just want to connect with someone who is real and who shows genuine interest in developing a relationship with them. One example of that type of genuine interest in developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity was demonstrated by the actions of the executive-level CDOs in this study, like Dr. Vanside who was willing to raise funds for minority students to study abroad. Dr. Vanside said, “I want students to understand what diversity really looks like

widespread, and what's the story behind Jewish people, and I needed them to go to Poland" (Participant Interview, p. 6). Even though Dr. Vanside was not mandated to fundraise for Acres University in her role as CDO, she felt compelled to use her position as a platform to bring attention to a diversity-related issue that alumni, faculty, and staff could help solve. "Every unit in my division, we all go out there and raise money. We're not advancement people. but we raise money because we know our students need it," Dr. Vanside recalled (Participant Interview, p. 6). Although a vice-presidential title and rank positioned the participants to engage with other executive-level leaders, the results of this study indicate that title and rank, alone, are not enough to garner trust to develop relationships in an ongoing process that is needed to influence campus-wide diversity.

Theme 2: Developing relationships is a process. The results of this study revealed that the executive-level CDOs in this study engaged in developing relationships as an ongoing process to influence campus-wide diversity that included intentionally establishing, strategically building, and continuously maintaining relationships in an effort to embed diversity as an institutional priority.

Intentionally establishing relationships. In the process of developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity, first, the participants set out to intentionally establish relationships with members of the campus community. The executive-level CDOs in this study intentionally established relationships by connecting with campus leaders and connecting with students. Drs. Byrd and Mae looked to meet with key decision makers, such as vice presidents and deans, to lay the foundation for future collaborations or support. Similarly, Dr. Vanside initiated meetings with faculty,

staff, and students to get their perspective and an understanding of their commitment to campus-wide diversity.

Each of the participants recalled some of their initial meetings with campus leaders as being predetermined and arranged in advance of their assuming the role of executive-level CDO. These were typically meetings with deans, vice presidents, and vice provosts as well as campus diversity champions and meetings that were arranged as introductions to the institutions' newest vice president. To compliment the prearranged meetings with members of the campus community, Dr. James and Dr. Masters also intentionally pursued opportunities to engage with others in an attempt to obtain unsolicited impressions of the campus diversity. Although predetermined meetings were helpful, Dr. James, the executive-level CDO from a large Southeast public institution, said that, "often times, the people that other people put on your calendar can feel very prescriptive." Dr. James reflected on the sincere intentionality needed to establish relationships:

I think they have to be relationships with people at all levels: faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members. You have to do that in a way that's intentional, authentic, transparent, and [in] a way that speaks to humility and modesty and vulnerability, quite honestly. I think people need to know that they can kind of relate to you. (Personal Interview, p. 1)

Dr. Masters, a seasoned Hispanic, executive-level CDO from a small Northeast institution, echoed similar thoughts as Dr. James regarding intentionally meeting with members of the campus community at North Star College, "It is important to use an inclusive process in terms relationships across all levels of folks in different categories

and intersections” (Participant Interview, p. 8). These meetings included voices from all areas of campus. The executive-level CDOs in this study were obligated to meet with their colleagues on the senior leadership team as well as initiate introductory meetings beyond those suggested members of campus.

In addition to predetermined meetings, the participants intentionally reached out to people when they started in their role as CDO, whether or not they arrived at campus as an experienced strategic diversity leader or if the position was their first job as CDO. Dr. Byrd, in his initial stance as vice president and vice provost for diversity and inclusion at Eatonville college, sought out the influencers first. He looked for those members of the campus community with formal authority to make decisions and those who could activate their networks to impact change.

I think the first step is to identify, who are the influencers? Are they influencers by legitimate power, or is it by social capital that they bring to the table? You begin to identify those players and establish relationship with them. (Personal Interview, p. 1).

Despite the fact that Dr. Byrd was a longstanding, tenured faculty member and the former assistant provost for diversity at Eatonville College before joining the senior administration, he reflected on establishing relationships with the key influencers in specific areas of the institution. Dr. Byrd shared how intentionally connecting with the decision makers was essential to his work as CDO to impact change on campus.

So, who are the key vice presidents that you need to know? Primarily the vice president for enrollment management, because I was focused on students; I was focused on faculty, so that would mean that I need to establish relationship with

the provost and the provost's office; and then the third area was staff, and staff fell up under the vice president for finance and administration here at Eatonville College. That was important, even as the assistant provost for diversity, very much important now. (Participant Interview, p. 4)

Dr. Byrd went on to identify the key administrators in other areas with whom he set out to meet.

I set up meetings with all of the deans of the colleges. I set up meetings with the vice president for student affairs, because in order for you to talk about enrollment management, once the students get here, what ensures their success? So, student affairs became a big part of that also, and having that student affairs background myself, it was a logical place to have those types of partnerships. (Participant Interview, p. 4)

Three of the participants had previous faculty and staff positions in their institutions before assuming the role as the executive-level CDO, therefore initiating meetings with colleagues with similar backgrounds and experiences helped them transition into the new CDO role by creating a foundation of trust through listening, asking questions and understanding their colleagues' commitment to campus-wide diversity.

Similar to Dr. Byrd, Mr. Newton was also a longstanding, tenured professor at his institution, Kingston State University, before accepting the vice chancellor and CDO position. Mr. Newton reflected on his initial actions in establishing relationships when he transitioned into the vice chancellor and CDO role:

When I stepped in the role, one of the first things I did, I did a listening tour, to engage with stakeholders, students, and our staff who are actively engaged in diversity and inclusion. Part of it [the listening tour] has just been understanding the landscape, sort of painting the picture, providing the historical context for the stakeholders, and making sure that I'm reflecting their understanding and based on what I see and sharing my understanding, so we can cocreate our shared vision moving forward. (Participant Interview, p. 3)

Although, Mr. Newton had been a part of the KSU's campus community for many years, he acknowledged the need to meet with campus leaders and campus diversity champions in his new role as CDO, to lay the foundation for shared responsibility for campus-wide diversity.

Dr. Mae shared her experience with intentionally establishing relationships. She said, "Before I try to make any significant changes, I take time to meet the folks on campus." Dr. Mae expounded on her process for establishing relationships with campus leadership:

I take time to meet the folks on campus, meeting with my colleagues on the cabinet, meeting with the respective deans, meeting with the chairs in their respective schools and colleges. I engage them so that they can see themselves as a contributing partner. (Participant Interview, p. 9)

Dr. Vanside intentionally arranged meetings with deans and vice presidents. Dr. Vanside, who had a storied career with more than 16 years of experience as a strategic diversity leader in higher education, specifically focused on learning more about her colleagues' understanding of campus diversity and their level of commitment.

My first agenda item was to ask questions. I gave them a list of 10 questions, them meaning all the deans and all of the vice presidents. I wanted to talk to everybody to get an interpretation of how they saw diversity, and how well do they know it? Where's their passion, if they had passion? Or, how do they talk about it? (Participant Interview, p. 4)

Some of the participants were eager to intentionally establish relationships with members of the campus community who advanced diversity from their sphere of influence. Dr. Masters looked for the diversity "champions." She said, "Start with your friendly faculty, staff, and students that you know are going to do the work." Similarly, Dr. Mae said that, "you're always looking for those who are automatically signing up to join the choir. I look to see, for example, those who have partnered with my office in the past? What things they would like to see from the diversity office." In their role as executive-level CDOs, each of the participants shared the thought that diversity work is not done in a vacuum or in silos. Therefore, they looked to intentionally establish relationships with allies. Of the six participants, three also sought out their adversaries to work on campus-wide diversity initiatives.

Mr. Newton looked to intentionally establish relationships with members of the campus community who were engaged with the work toward improving campus diversity, as well. Mr. Newton echoed, "obviously connecting with the champions; people who are out there advocating, doing the work without any prompting from my office" (Participant Interview, p. 6). In contrast, Dr. James considered it suspect to meet with the champions first. Dr. James gladly met with the folks who were suggested he

connect with; however, he also looked to engage with the folks who were not suggested as well:

I ask people. I'll ask for names from my supervisor, to my team members, to people that I just meet and bump into in a garage or, you know, just say that I'm new, and I just would love to get to know people and their stories and to get their perspective on what DEI looks [like] here, maybe pockets of opportunity; are there things they think are going well? I need to know from the people that they don't put on your calendar, kind of what their perspectives are. And quite honestly, see if they mesh or if they're very different. If they match, then I'm just like, "great, people were really open and honest," but if they just put choir members on my calendar, then it makes it real difficult to get an idea of where I need to start. (Participant Interview p. 5)

Dr. James's approach for hearing a variety of campus voices supports the earlier finding of connecting with campus leaders and students. Each of the participants stressed the importance of meeting with people at all levels, with differing opinions, to get their thoughts on campus-wide diversity.

The participants shared their experiences with intentionally establishing relationships, which included attending predetermined meetings and initiating contact with diversity champions. The executive-level CDOs in this study attended these meetings with an agenda, ready to listen and gain insight into the campus leaders' perspectives on campus-wide diversity. Upon starting in their position as an institution's executive-level CDO, the participants connected with campus leaders with an open mind

and willingness to intentionally establish relationships to create a shared vision for campus-wide diversity.

Connecting with students. Given that the overarching mission of postsecondary institutions of higher learning is to educate students, all of the participants from this study focused on establishing relationships with students. As a transient constituent group, intentionally establishing relationships with students is an ongoing part of the relationship-building process. However, only one of the participants, Dr. Byrd, insisted on teaching a course as part of their CDO responsibilities. Mr. Newton tried to remain an active faculty member and serve as CDO but was unsuccessful. The other participants connected with students through various programs administered from their offices or in collaboration with other cocurricular student units.

Mr. Newton and Dr. Byrd both agreed that relationships with students were very important to their role as CDO. Mr. Newton and Dr. Byrd, both long-standing, tenured professors at Kinston State University and Eatonville College respectively, held opposing thoughts on remaining in the classroom and serving in a senior administrative capacity as CDO. Dr. Byrd insisted on teaching at least one class, in addition to his vice president and vice provost for diversity and inclusion responsibilities at Eatonville College. Dr. Byrd said:

I do teach one course per semester. That's my commitment. It keeps me in the classroom, it keeps me connected to students, and that's important to the work that I do. If I'm disconnected and only administration, it doesn't work for me.

(Participant Interview, p. 3)

Unlike Dr. Byrd, Mr. Newton no longer taught but looked for other ways to engage with students. When asked if he still taught, Mr. Newton with a sullen response said, “No, I do not teach anymore. I’m definitely on the dark side now.” Mr. Newton was aware that becoming a member of senior administration could be seen as aligning with the powers that govern the institution. With that possible stigma in mind, Mr. Newton continued:

I tried teaching my first year and it was really a disservice to the students. I had a grad assistant that was working with me, but they, they didn’t see me enough. I just said, “well, let me find another way to be connected with students.” And it’s through the project that my office puts on as a part of the programming that we do. (Participant Interview, p. 4)

The executive-level CDOs in this study described connecting with campus leaders and students as well as seeking out other campus voices to intentionally establish relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Each of the participants stressed the importance of connecting with students in a real way. Each of the participants were dedicated to influencing campus-wide diversity in a way that supported student success. The participants had a variety of ways in which they connected with students and campus leaders that included teaching credit-bearing courses; serving as a trusted advisor; and creating spaces for faculty, staff, and students to engage in courageous conversations.

Strategically building relationships. The second step in the process to developing relationships was strategically building relationships. Once relationships were intentionally established, the participants embarked on aligning their fundamental responsibilities as a strategic diversity leader with people and programs through various strategic collaborations, such as inviting colleagues to serve on diversity committees,

working across portfolios, and through appreciative inquiry. After intentionally establishing relationships with faculty, staff, and students, the executive-level CDOs shared how they strategically built those new relationships by inviting others to serve on diversity-related committees. With limited hierarchical authority, executive-level CDOs are often responsible for accomplishing a wide range of goals that address campus-wide diversity, such as faculty recruitment and campus climate (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). In an effort to deepen the trust and credibility with the campus community, executive-level CDOs in this study continued to strategically build relationships. The participants actively engaged with members of the faculty, staff, and student body who passionately worked to advance diversity on campus to accomplish their goals as executive-level CDOs. When asked if there was a time when developing relationships helped to accomplish their goal as CDO, each of the participants responded by accrediting their career success to the ways in which they strategically set out to build upon the connections they had intentionally established to influence diversity campus-wide diversity.

Dr. Vanside recounted a 6-year project, which involved more than 80 people, to implement a campus-wide diversity scorecard at Acres University. She accredits the success of the project to the foundational relationships she intentionally established, and then strategically continued to build, by inviting colleagues from across Acres University to partner with her to develop a university diversity scorecard.

Similarly, Dr. Mae recalled inviting members of the campus community to serve on a campus self-study review of Great Lakes State University police. Dr. Mae said, “We engaged them [faculty, students, and staff] to serve in the self-review.” Seeking members

of the campus community with resources or a particular skillset to serve on institutional committees is one way executive-level CDOs in this study strategically collaborated to advance diversity-focused initiatives.

Each of the executive-level CDOs in this study, shared examples of diplomatically working across their respective institutions to create diversity programming that was created by multiple voices from the campus community.

Dr. Masters recalled some of her best work was with North Star College faculty and staff who did not report directly to her. She was able to advance diversity initiatives, such as creating spaces for folks to share their stories, by working collaboratively with colleagues from different portfolios across the institution.

I find that my best work has been with those players who were going to build the capacity for intergroup dialogue. Whether they were reporting to me directly or not, they understood the importance of the congruence on that. When I had the understanding, it's been powerful in opening the lens of what do we mean by diversity. (Participant Interview, p. 6)

Mr. Newton, a distinguished artist and theatre professor, accustomed to collaborating with others to create, was careful not to position himself as the “diversity police.” Mr. Newton spoke to the value of planned interactions when strategically building relationships:

I'm always approaching the work from a posture of being collaborative. That's the nature of my discipline as an artist. We are collaborators. More often than not, what people appreciate is that I am adopting a posture of inquiry, to understand

really what they're coming wrestling with and where they're coming from.

(Participant Interview, p. 8)

Strategically building relationships helped the executive-level CDOs in this study to create a shared vision of campus-wide diversity with members of the campus community. The executive-level CDOs in the study invited people to serve on diversity-related committees and worked across portfolios to strategically build relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

Continuously maintaining relationships. The third step for developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity was continuously maintaining those relationships. The executive-level CDOs in this study indicated that, to be successful at influencing campus-wide diversity, the connections they intentionally established and strategically built must be continuously maintained over time. The participants' shared experiences regarding how they constantly reminded themselves and others that implementing campus-wide diversity was a community effort. The participants also facilitated face-to-face meetings and highlighted how self-care was necessary for continuously maintaining relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Dr. Mae set out to continuously maintain relationships with administrators, faculty, staff, and students at Great Lakes State College with questions that helped evaluate the campus's commitment to diversity. Dr. Mae shared with excitement, "We're continuously gathering information, and so those folks, we solicit them. Sometimes they just naturally; I shouldn't say "naturally." They appear to naturally evolve, but... (Participant Interview, p. 8). As Dr. Mae's voice trailed off, the thought suggested that nothing happens on its own. Diversity work is purposeful and strategic.

It's we – It's not about me! In an effort to continuously maintain relationships, the participants were adamant that their work was not about them as solo practitioners impacting change alone. It was very necessary for the participants to be able to articulate their motivations and, in turn, galvanize others to work toward inclusive excellence.

Dr. Vanside started with the importance of knowing your “why” and how to use that to engage with colleagues regarding matters of diversity. With a motivated tone,

Dr. Vanside stated that:

Once you understand why you do this work, then it becomes easier. Even though it's hard, and we say it's hard work, we know that we can change lives. We know that because of our persistence and because we feel that that's why you are here, we take the responsibility of becoming a change agent. So, all of this is so connected. It's hard for me to even express it, because there are so many connecting values in this work (Participant Interview, p. 9).

Dr. Vanside and the other participants expressed that, in their roles as executive-level CDOs, it was important for them to reflect upon what personally motivated them to keep serving as a strategic diversity leader. Therefore, having a well-developed sense of self-awareness helped them stay grounded and humble as they continuously maintained relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

Mr. Newton agreed that this work was not about his ability to change opinions; however, he was always mindful of others when creating a space for people to share their thoughts. Mr. Newton shared:

You always have to take a posture of affirmation. An affirmation doesn't imply that you agree with, but that you recognize that the individual has a perspective,

and it isn't so much about me trying to change our perspective as much as it is about me giving you a broader sense of the context in which the work is being done. (Participant Interview, p. 11).

Dr. Mae stated that she implored her colleagues to keep Great Lakes State College's mission and vision front and center. As an alum and parent of student at GLSU, Dr. Mae was sincere in her thoughts about the importance of keeping the institution's priorities at the forefront. Dr. Mae said:

I tell my peers at the cabinet, if we focus on the mission of the institution, we won't have time to think about us. It's not about us. It's not about us. It's not about us getting accolades, it's not about us getting, she did this, or he did that. It's about, what are we doing to improve the lives of our students, plain and simple. Plain and simple! Because these are someone's kids, and they are entrusting their kids with us. And we have a responsibility to do the best that we can. It's not about us. (Participant Interview, p. 10)

The participants were adamant that this work was not only about their knowledge, skills, and abilities as a leader but about how people can come together for the greater good of an organization. Each of the study participants routinely reflected on their greater purpose and impact of continuously maintaining relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

Face-time. The participants in this study found that face-to-face interactions with members from across their institutions proved to be helpful when continuously maintaining relationships. Dr. James, Dr. Mae, and Dr. Vanside referred to these regular face-to-face interactions as, check-ins. These were regularly scheduled meetings where the executive-level CDOS went to their colleagues' offices to discuss a wide range of

topics. Dr. Byrd commented on the action of “facetime” to maintain relationships with members of the campus community at Eatonville College. “Real facetime and not technologically” he said, with a serious expression as he pointed his finger at the Apple electronic device on his desk.

Real facetime, that becomes key. Showing up at events that students are doing, that faculty and staff are doing. You show up as much as possible, you make it to a Black student graduation celebration, a Future Stewards graduation celebration, a Rainbow graduation celebration, an international student graduation celebration. (Participant Interview, p. 3)

Along with Dr. Byrd, the other participants firmly believed that they must leave their offices and be willing to meet people in other spaces. One of the participants recalled meeting with student leaders at a Zumba class, while other participants would often meet faculty and staff at the campus coffee shops or some other convenient location. As noted in the first theme, positionality matters, and the executive-level CDOs in this study recognized that their title and rank would get them an initial meeting, however, it was up to the CDO to follow up with the members of the campus community to continuously maintain relationships.

Self-care. All of the participants, self-reflected on knowing how far their title and rank would take them in establishing and building relationships, but they quickly reconciled that they could not rely on their positionality, alone, to continuously maintain relationships or sustain executive-level CDOs in their roles as senior leaders. The participants in this study presented a strong moral compass that reflected an innate desire to help others.

In an effort to present themselves as effective executive-level CDOs, they were aware of their own strengths and weaknesses as well as well how they related to others. With a bright smile, Dr. Mae shared, “most of my friends tell me that I know no strangers” (Participant Interview, p. 3). To remain vigilant, Dr. Masters talked much about self-care, “I don’t think I could stay in it long without self-care. I mean that with all the love for all the work that I’ve done, it takes the building of character, the building of faith, the building of just strength” (Participant Interview, p.10).

As Dr. James continued to advance the work of diversity and inclusion in higher education, he was very careful and cautioned others to stay humble and remember the importance of building relationships.

When I get away from that recipe, staying true to myself, I forget; I start smelling my own sauce, and I’m like, “I don’t need to be humble anymore.” My confidence turns to arrogance; all of that, that’s when it’s a recipe for disaster. And the same . . . you can use the same ingredients and your cake will fall in the oven because you’ve forgot about relationships. And I think that’s what . . . I would say that, to me, is important. (Participant Interview, p. 12)

Dr. James and Dr. Mae associated their career success to intentionally establishing, strategically building, and purposefully maintaining meaningful relationships. Dr. Mae asserted that her relationships with members of the campus community helped her accomplish her goals as CDO, “every day” (Participant Interview, p. 4). Dr. Mae continued her sentiments by stating, “My success is attributed to the kids on campus. The president is very supportive, my colleagues at the cabinet are supportive, students and faculty are supportive” (Participant Interview, p. 4). Similarly, Dr. James, a seasoned

diversity officer who had served in executive-level CDO roles at two other institutions, also attributed the success of his career on relationships. After a long pause and deep breath, Dr. James shared, “I’ll be just brutally honest and say that there is not a success that I have had that I could have gotten without my relationships that I’ve built on campus and in the community” (Participant Interview, p. 5). This work was personal to them and required them to exert a great deal of emotional energy that needed to be replenished through self-care. The executive-level CDOs in this study gave of themselves personally by pouring their expertise into developing relationships with colleagues, faculty, staff, and students. Mr. Newton asserted that:

This space of work, diversity, equity, inclusion is as personal as, excuse me, someone’s, I would argue, religious beliefs, their political beliefs. ’Cause all of that stuff is embedded in it. And when you walk in a space and you’re trying to say, ‘hey, you’re racist or sexist,’ and if that’s your point of entry, or if that’s the takeaway, and that’s the message that the recipient hears, they’re not gonna hear that from you unless they have some trust (Participant Interview, p. 10).

The participants all expressed the significance of self-care as a necessary action for continuously maintaining relationships. Continuously maintaining relationships was the last step in the relationship-development process but it does not stop there. To remain steadfast as executive-level CDOs, all of the participants in this study reflected on the need to manage their self-care, remain humble, and remember the importance of developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

Theme 3: Sowing, sowing, and reaping. Theme 3, sowing, sowing, and reaping exemplifies how the executive-level CDOs in this study were diligent when developing

relationships with members of the campus community to influence diversity. Some of the participants intentionally tried to develop relationships with people on campus who were not supportive of advancing a diversity agenda. Not everyone on a college or university campus understands or agrees with institutionalizing diversity as an organizational priority. Dr. James stood steadfast in his belief of establishing relationships by using words such as, “intentional,” “authentic,” and “transparent” as a way to minimize the number of people who were opposed to his work in diversity at Hungerford College. Dr. James, an attorney before becoming a CDO said, “I always go into every experience just recognizing there’s going to be some people that don’t agree and my goal is to not let that number grow” (Participant Interview, p. 4). Dr. James went into meetings and conversations mindful that there could be individuals who did not agree with campus-wide diversity. Dr. James and the other participants had to exercise resilience to endure negative voices that may have interfered with advancing campus-wide diversity.

Dr. Vanside activated her faith before dealing with difficult people at Acres University. She said jokingly, “I put a lot of prayer on them,” (Participant Interview, p. 5). and then quickly followed up with a more serious tone, “I do pray a lot” (Participant Interview, p. 5). However, Dr. Vanside never gave up on an opportunity to intentionally establish a relationship with people. With a spirit of tenacity, Dr. Vanside worked diligently to bring opposing administrators, faculty, staff, and students into the fold. Dr. Vanside recalled, “We can’t work against all this opposition unless we bring them in so that they, too, can understand how to work through opposition” (Participant Interview, p. 7). The executive-level CDOs in this study had to be prepared for the negative voices that were opposed to their work by exercising open-mindedness and personal prayer.

Similar to Dr. Vanside, Mr. Newton was also persistent with his efforts to intentionally establish relationships with members of the Kingston State University campus community who may be opposed to the work of the CDO. Mr. Newton used an agriculture metaphor to explain his approach:

It's more of a sowing, sowing, and reaping. You plant seeds and, over time, you water them to come back to them. And maybe the conversation shifts a little bit, but you keep at it, and you keep the door open for discussion as opposed to, you know, "you're dead wrong." (Participant Interview, p. 9)

Mr. Newton went on to give a very specific example of this:

One of my colleagues, the faculty member in PolySci, he's brilliant, and he's a committed ally; White, cisgendered man, Christian but his commentary on the work of diversity and inclusion, it undermines, quite frankly, what I'm trying to accomplish because he's saying, "Hey, none of this stuff has been evaluated and none of the stuff has been assessed. We don't really know [if] this stuff is working. We don't really know if this role is really relevant." And I'm like, Dude, don't say that! (Participant Interview, p. 10)

Mr. Newton continued, with closed fists in a boxing motion:

We'd go back and forth and I said, "at the end of the day, we want the same thing. You know, I'm use to what you do; well, let me do what I do. So at least we can coordinate" (Participant Interview, p.10).

Mr. Newton continued to share how he was able to work collaboratively with the faculty member who did not see the benefit of diversity. Mr. said:

I just tapped him to give me a couple of proposals for some research studies and projects that, you know, my office will commission and support him to do in concert with us, so we can both feel good about the context. And I'm able to say, "Hey man, you're missing some things from my vantage point." And he can say, "Well, you may want to be more intentional about how you measure this." We're having that conversation, but it's taken—literally—the last four and a half years. (Participant Interview, p. 10).

The executive-level CDOs in this study may have encountered push back from members of the campus community who opposed campus-wide diversity initiatives. However, five of the six participants did not turn away; they willfully pressed forward in an attempt to develop relationships with those who did not espouse the tenets of diversity as an institutional priority.

In contrast to Dr. Vanside and Mr. Newton, Dr. Byrd had a very different approach. When Dr. Byrd was asked about establishing relationships with adversaries opposed to diversity work at Eatonville College, he quickly replied with a serious expression, "sometimes you don't!" (Participant Interview, p. 4). After a long pause, he continued by giving an example of how you cannot be expected to please everyone:

When you get into sort of targeted type programming, heritage months, for example, we do a host of heritage month celebrations, Native American heritage month, Hispanic heritage month, we call it here African American heritage month. We do all of these celebrations, women's history month. We do all of these, and when we do them, there was a note that came once from an individual who says, "When are you going to do something for blah blah blah?" And it was

those who were not represented in that way. I ran it by the president, and we agreed, no response is necessary for that. So, there are some things that we may choose not to respond to (Participant Interview, p. 4).

Due to the positive nature of their relationship, Dr. Byrd believed that the president would stand by his decision not to engage with members of the campus community who were opposed to campus-wide diversity programs.

Similarly, Dr. Masters, a seasoned faculty member and diversity administrator at North Star College, chose to no longer engage with those opposed to the work of the CDO. Dr. Masters clarified, then unapologetically stated, “The adversaries? The ones that are not wanting this? I just don’t waste my time on them. I used to, and I don’t do, I don’t anymore” (Participant Interview, p. 7). Dr. Masters shared her decision to be more selective when engaging with members of the campus community. She found that going after the adversaries was emotionally draining and took time away from her availability to intentionally establish relationships with faculty, staff, and students. The participants in this study shared their desire to work with all people but acknowledged there were circumstances when they had to choose not to engage. Overall, the executive-level CDOs in this study had to initiate and participate in several engagements with members of the campus community as they worked to influence campus-wide diversity.

Theme 4: Female weariness. All of the participants in the study acknowledged that intentionally establishing, strategically building, and continuously maintaining relationships to influence campus-wide diversity as an institutional priority was hard work that took constant effort. However, the fourth theme, female weariness, illuminated the emotional toll of serving as an executive-level CDO in higher education. At different

points during the semi-structured interviews, only the three female executive-level CDOs described a sense of tiredness associated with the position and the work. At some point during each of the interviews with the female executive-level CDOs, they offered remarks with regard to feelings of exhaustion that were not in direct response to an interview protocol question. For example, Dr. Mae stared out of the diversity office conference room's large picture window overlooking campus, she gathered her thoughts and counted five complaints she was currently investigating. Dr. Mae who also served as Great Lakes State College's Title IX coordinator and CDO, stated, "It's exhausting" (Participant Interview, p. 13). She continued her thoughts with a sense of urgency:

Every day I wake up, it's frightening. Because not only do I have to come here and think about how do I safeguard the interests of the institution, the faculty, the students, the staff, our branding as it relates to the community, to make certain that the folks in the broader sense of community understand how we value diversity and inclusion and belonging, but yet still, every day I see in the paper, on the news, about how being Black is a detriment. How we're being killed. How our young men are being killed. How we're being shamed for doing something. How we're being attacked on every end. So, there's no peace for me. (Participant Interview, p. 13).

Dr. Mae concluded this emotive response with three words, "Yeah, it's [diversity work] taxing!" (Participant Interview, p. 13).

Although each female executive-level CDO worked at a different type of institution, the three female participants shared similar experiences of weariness. These feelings of weariness suggest that female executive-level CDOs do not easily emotionally

disengage from their work. The female executive-level CDOs were all in until they had gone as far as they could go. For example, Dr. Masters, a self-proclaimed activist who fondly recalled, “I’ve been the warrior, I’ve been in your face, I’ve been the person who took over buildings. I mean, back in the day, when folks were taking over buildings” (Participant Interview, p. 8). But then she quickly exhaled, leaned back in her chair and said reflectively:

I think that it’s like an athlete. You’ve got to know when you got to leave the field or the court. I do think that there are enough new players that—not to reinvent—but build if there is a place of building, continuing building. Not to start from scratch again (Participant Interview, p. 8).

Dr. Masters was not done yet, however, she saw the value in inspiring the next generation of diversity leaders in higher education. Dr. Vanside talked about the weight of the CDO position and how it is not a job for everyone due to the complexity of human behavior.

Dr. Vanside said with an audible sigh:

Everybody can’t do this work, and I know they can’t, because it is hard. I tell people that this work is hard. I don’t try to gloss over it as though it is not. It’s not all fun and games. You get hurt. You hurt for people, and you see people get hurt all the time. And so, you try to fix all that (Participant Interview, p. 10).

Dr. Vanside, an administrator with more than 16 years of experience, who was planning to retire at the end of the 2019 spring semester, followed her statement with a bright smile and, again, spoke of how prayer sustained her in her work as CDO, “I use a lot of prayer in my job.” Dr. Vanside admitted that she could not share her prayer life with

everyone but also gladly acknowledged that she found herself, “a lot happier than they are because I can lay my burden down” (Participant Interview, p. 12).

In contrast to the female executive-level CDOs, the male executive-level CDOs seemed to engage with members of the campus community in a tactical, rather than emotional, manner. For example, Dr. Byrd stated plainly, “I just don’t” at the thought of engaging with difficult people. Dr. Byrd approached difficult people with the mindset of limiting unnecessary engagement, whereas Dr. Masters, one of the female executive-level CDOs, with a hint of sadness in her voice, said, “I just don’t, anymore” (Participant Interview, p. 11). Dr. Masters and the other female participants had to eventually get to the point where they would not engage with difficult people. The other male participants, Dr. James and Mr. Newton, also seemed to be quite resolute, they were not willing to keep engaging people when those people clearly did not want to embrace the benefits of campus-wide diversity.

The female executive-level CDOs took on the work of a strategic diversity leader intentionally by establishing strategic building and purposefully maintaining relationships with unrelenting tenacity. They all gave 100% of themselves in a way that left them emotionally spent; for example, on several occasions they had to confront a professor who submitted several frivolous bias-related complaints without merit. Unlike the male executive-level CDOs, who were willing to limit their engagements with difficult people, the female executive-level CDOs were willing to keep attempting to engage in the relationship-development process.

Summary

Exploring the research question, *How do executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity?*, is a complex exercise into human relations. The participants in this study all asserted that a direct reporting line to the president and a seat at the executive leadership table was very necessary to maintain bidirectional communication with the president and other senior leaders. The findings from this research study outline the process of developing relationships with faculty, staff, students, and senior administrators to influence campus-diversity through the lived experience of executive-level CDOs in higher education. Due to the expected collaborative nature of the CDO position, executive-level CDOs in this study described how they were constantly developing relationships with many different constituent groups on college and university campuses in an effort to embed diversity as an institutional priority.

The major themes that emerged from the data analysis were: (a) positionality matters; (b) relationship building is a process and; (c) sowing, sowing, and reaping. Female weariness emerged as an unexpected finding. The executive-level CDOs in this study from both public and private higher education institutions engaged in the relationship-development process in similar ways. All of the participants acknowledged the importance of developing relationships with members of the campus community in order to collaborate with campus units on diversity programming; to have the ability to create spaces for students, faculty, and staff to discuss difficult topics; and to challenge the campus community to rise above racial animus.

One surprise finding was the female executive-level CDOs feelings of weariness. Some of the responses from the female executive-level CDOs uncovered feelings of

weariness, whereas the male CDOs did not. Overall, all the participants in the study exclaimed how developing relationships with faculty, staff, and students through intentional, strategic, and purposeful actions were very necessary for embedding diversity throughout the academic enterprise.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Since 2007, private and public higher education institutions in the United States have created the executive-level CDO position to address ongoing critical factors that impact institutional efficacy and campus climate (Wilson, 2015; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Individuals serving as executive-level CDOs might find it difficult to be effective leaders if they do not have a vice presidential title and senior administrative rank to give them access to other key stakeholders and to give them visibility as a senior leader with faculty, students, and staff. Executive-level CDOs may not have the hierarchical authority to compel others to implement diversity-related programs in their schools, units, or departments (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Therefore, CDOs must rely on their ability to develop relationships with key decision makers and members of the campus community to influence diversity as an institutional priority.

This research study was conducted to explore how executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity in higher education. The goal of this study was to identify practical strategies used by executive-level CDOs to engage with members of the campus community in an effort to influence diversity as an institutional priority. One research question was used to guide the study: *How do executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity?* This chapter includes a discussion regarding the implications of the findings, research study limitations, and recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with a summary.

Implications

The results from this research study provide several implications relating to the experiences of executive-level CDOs in higher education. The implications for research are discussed in the first section. Implications for research, policy, theory, executive-level CDOs, and college and university presidents are also discussed.

Implications for research. The participants' experiences added to the body of knowledge the perspectives of executive-level CDOs to the significance of title and rank as a senior administrator in higher education. Wepner et al. (2008) explored academic deans' approaches to problem solving. The results from their study indicate the importance of an executive title and relationship building for academic deans to be successful. Wepner et al. (2008) noted that senior academic administrators in higher education who are responsible for leading transformational efforts require the leader to have an executive-level title. The executive-level CDOs in this study shared the importance of the title and rank, as well as their reporting to the president, that gave them instant credibility and a platform for developing relationships with key stakeholders and members of the campus community. The results from this current study expand on the Wepner et al. (2008) study by including the experiences of executive-level CDOs. These findings also support the Wepner et al. (2008) study, which implied that the participants' title and rank were necessary for them to be taken seriously as a colleague and domain expert among other senior leaders as well as faculty, students, and staff.

The executive-level CDOs in this study shared the importance of reporting to the president, which gave them instant credibility and a platform for developing relationships with key stakeholders and members of the campus community regarding diversity as an

institutional priority. The participants in this study who worked within a dual-reporting structure with the president and the provost reported that the vice-provost title gave them academic credibility among the faculty and students. These findings support the research study conducted by Leon (2014) who examined the various organizational structures for CDOs in higher education. The results from Leon's (2014) study found that a CDO should have a vice-presidential title and rank and be positioned as a member of the president's executive team. The findings from this current study also imply that it is important for the CDO to report directly to the president and have a vice presidential title and rank as a member of the president's executive team.

The results in theme 1 of this study, positionality matters, suggests that college and university executive-level CDOs are not effective when working in silos. They must set out to become a part of the community. The participants in this study reported the need to don themselves with multiple personalities to be seen as a fellow academic, counselor, and advocate when developing relationships with the different constituent groups on campus. Although rank and title positioned them at the institutional leadership table and gave them credibility as the resident domain expert, intentionally developing authentic and transparent relationships seemed to be key to their success at influencing campus-wide diversity as an executive-level CDO. These findings are supported by the studies of Leon (2014) and Gravely-Stark et al. (2016) who implied that executive-level CDOs must develop relationships with senior administrators, faculty, students, and staff from across the institution to influence campus-wide diversity.

Kezar (2007) conducted a study that identified the strategies used by college and university presidents to institutionalize diversity. Kezar (2007) identified three phases

that were used by college and university presidents to develop relationships with the campus community to institutionalize diversity (Kezar, 2007). During the first phase, mobilization, diversity initiatives were developed and maintained at the departmental or divisional level (Kezar, 2007). The second phase, implementation, the campus community participated on campus-wide committees in an effort to develop institutional definitions of diversity. Faculty, staff, and students who participated in the campus-wide committees were often charged with reviewing the campus climate and policies that may have negatively impacted faculty, staff, and students of color (Kezar, 2007). The third phase, institutionalization, found diversity immersed in all aspects of a college or university teaching, learning, and workplace efficacy (Kezar, 2007). Similar to college and university presidents in Kezar's (2007) study, executive-level CDOs, in this study used the power of their platform and commitment to diversity to galvanize members of campus community around the shared goal of embedding diversity as an institutional priority. The results from theme 2, relationships building is a process, found in this current study, expand on Kezar's (2007) study by including how executive-level CDOs use similar practices to influence campus-wide diversity.

Nixon (2017), Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012), Leon (2014), and Wilson (2015) indicated the potential pitfalls to the success of the CDO being seen as the messiah of the only person who can fix diversity on campus. The findings from this study expanded on the Nixon (2017), Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2012), Leon (2014), and Wilson (2015) findings by suggesting that embedding diversity is everyone's responsibility, not just the CDO. The executive-level CDOs in this study offered practical methods for developing relationships with members of the campus community to

advance diversity. Some of the methods included developing relationships in an inclusive manner by holding their staff accountable for engaging with members of the campus community to encourage others to feel included and empowered. The participants in this study were adamant that the work was about “we” not about “me,” implying that developing relationships is necessary for embedding diversity as an institutional priority.

Nixon (2017) found that women of color, executive-level CDOs often suffer from feelings of tokenism and marginalization. The women executive-level CDOs in this study, all women of color, expressed the emotional toll of serving as a strategic diversity leader by sharing feelings of exhaustion. The results from this study suggested that the female executive-level CDOs found diversity work emotionally draining. Although all of the female participants in the study were passionate, determined, strategic diversity leaders, they seemed to unselfishly share their time, knowledge, skills and abilities, in their role as CDO, in way that tested their empathy. The female participants in this current study found themselves repeatedly attempting to engage with individuals who did not initially agree with or see the need for campus-wide diversity. The results from this current study expand on Nixon’s (2017) study of women of color CDOs’ experiences of isolation and marginalization by adding feelings of weariness.

These findings from this study support the research studies of Arnold and Kowalski-Braun (2011) and Stanley et al. (2018) who found that executive-level CDOs partnered with key decision makers such as the provost, deans, and department chairs to institutionalize diversity. All of the participants mentioned having regular meetings or check-ins with their colleagues in senior administration. However, each of the participants detailed their willingness to seek out faculty, staff, and student voices that

may not have had the opportunity to meet. The findings from this study further support the findings from Kowalski-Braun (2011) and Stanley et al. (2018) the indicate the collaborative nature of the CDO working with the various staff, faculty, and student committees or groups to advance diversity.

Implications for policy. The findings from theme 2 in this study, developing relationships, is a process suggests that the intentional efforts from the executive-level CDOs to connect with faculty, students and staff could help bridge a gap between senior leadership and the campus community. Recognizing the importance of developing relationships beyond implementing diversity programming could have policy implications for colleges and universities. Kezar et al. (2018) noted the contributions of the executive-level CDO as it relates to students, faculty and staff experiences after a major campus crisis. The executive-level CDOs in this study were connected with members of the campus community at all levels and were attuned with the pain points and areas of success regarding diversity. The connections the executive-level CDOs had with the community could have policy implications by the CDO sharing faculty, staff, and student perspectives that could impact institutional policies such as harassment, discrimination, or retention. The executive-level CDOs in this study served as a conduit of information on behalf of the different constituent groups on campus. The participants' shared how their effort in developing relationships with faculty, students and staff have led to understanding how some institutional policies may create barriers to success.

The executive-level CDOs in this study all served as advisors to the president, and they shared governance structures on incorporating a diversity lens on institutional policies and procedures. This finding suggests that some presidents were committed to

diversity and appreciated the executive-level CDO keeping them abreast of diversity matters on campus that could impact campus climate. Without the knowledge and counsel of an executive-level CDO, presidents may be blindsided by the negative impact of a campus crisis. Therefore, it is helpful for the executive-level CDOs to have working knowledge of institutional policies, and national and federal laws.

Some of the participants shared how they worked closely with faculty and staff governance councils to implement accountability measures for diversity as part of the performance assessment and review process. This type of collaboration could have implications on faculty and staff human resources and faculty policies. Although the institutions in this study all had chief human resources and chief academic officers, the executive-level CDOs were positioned and had developed relationships to influence student affairs, faculty recruitment, retention, and human resources policies that may enhance teaching and learning for a diverse student population. Therefore, the executive-level CDOs that can successfully develop relationships with the chief of human resources and financial and academic affairs officers who may be more effective influencing diversity as an institutional priority.

Implications for executive-level CDOs. The participants in this study shared experiences that reflected the new branch of leadership, strategic diversity leadership (Williams, 2013). As strategic diversity leaders, the stories shared by the executive-level CDOs' in this study highlighted their skillful ability to develop relationships as an artful science. For example, one participant shared how he would engage with people in the dining hall or parking lot to get their perspective on campus diversity. Similarly, another participant shared how she would meet with campus leaders with 10 questions to

understand their commitment to campus-wide diversity. According to the participants, very little happened by chance. They were keenly aware of their environment and how they presented themselves as leaders. Therefore, the stories from the executive-level CDOs in this study suggested that they were strategic diversity leaders and embraced a strategic diversity leadership lens to develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

The results from theme 2 in this study highlighted developing relationships as a process for the executive-level CDOs. The process included three phases: the first phase was intentionally establishing relationships, the second phase was strategically building relationships, and the third phase was continuously maintaining relationships with members of the campus community to influence diversity as an institutional priority. The results from this research study revealed how executive-level CDOs took the time to develop relationships with their allies and, in some cases, their adversaries. This relationship development process seemed to serve as a critical leadership skill for influencing campus-wide diversity. Theme 2: developing relationships is a process, supports the Strategic Diversity Compass the foundational work developed by Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) to illustrate how executive-level CDOs navigate the complexities of a higher education institution.

The process noted in theme 2 outlined a relationship development process that includes intentionally establishing relationships, strategically building relationships and continuously maintaining relationships. The executive-level CDOs in the study, emphasized the importance of developing relationships with members of the campus community as an ongoing process. The first phase in the process to develop relationships

is intentionally establishing relationships, highlighting how executive-level CDOs in this study set out to connect with campus leaders and students. This finding would imply that executive-level CDOs in this study, went beyond the meetings that were assigned to their schedules to meet with the members of the campus community who influence conversations regarding diversity across the institution.

The second phase in the relationship development process is strategically building relationships. In an effort to strategically build relationships, the executive-level CDOs in this study extended invitations to faculty, staff, and students to serve on institutional committees, and they worked across the institution with departments that did not report to the diversity office to inspire change. This finding suggests that the participants in this study would seek out individuals who could quietly engage in diversity work and elevate their efforts by inviting them to serve on institutional diversity committees and projects.

The third phase in the process is continuously maintaining relationships. Continuously maintaining relationships required the participants to focus on the purpose and impact of campus-wide diversity, frequently meeting face-to-face with colleagues and members of the campus community. The executive-level CDOs in this study also noted the importance of self-care as they worked to continuously maintain relationships with members of the campus community to influence diversity as an institutional priority. It was important for the participants to employ the phases for developing relationships in an ongoing manner. If the executive-level CDOs did not consistently work at developing relationships, they could potentially isolate themselves and the work of the diversity office from the larger campus community.

The findings in theme 2 suggest that the executive-level CDOs in this study were purposeful and consistent with their efforts to develop relationships with senior administration, faculty, staff, and students to influence campus-wide diversity. Theme 2 also suggests that the executive-level CDOs in this study remained humble and vigilant as they unselfishly shared their domain knowledge, skills, and abilities while developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. Additionally, this finding also suggests that the participants in this study, were mindful to take care of the emotional and spiritual health to remain steadfast in their efforts to embed diversity as an institutional priority.

The results from theme 3: sowing, sowing, and reaping, highlights the participants' perseverance developing relationships with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity. According to Williams and Wade-Golden (2017), CDOs are relational leaders with the skill to establish connections with members of the campus community at all levels. Given that the CDO role has limited hierarchical power to compel school deans, department chairs, or others in position of authority to implement diversity, it is necessary for the CDO to engage with the decision makers to collaborate on initiatives to advance diversity. One of the participants expressed that, "80%-90% of the job is establishing good relationships" (Participant Interview, p. 12). The findings also suggest that title and rank matter; however, CDOs cannot rely on their positionality alone to build trust and develop relationships with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity. The executive-level CDOs in this study, worked diligently to cultivate relationships overtime.

Implications for theory. Williams and Wade-Golden's (2013) CDO development framework (CDODF) was used as the theoretical rational for this research

study. The CDODEF has five components that can be used to develop the CDO role as the senior administrative diversity leader on college and university campuses. In the same respect, executive-level CDOs in higher education can refer to the CDODF for guidance regarding how to evaluate the success that leads institutional matters of diversity working across the institution with a great deal of responsibility and limited hierarchical authority. The first component, the strategic diversity platform, establishes the scope of and areas of oversight of the CDO. Although each of the executive-level CDOs in this study reported to the institution's president, they each had oversight of different institutional diversity offices and varying responsibilities. One of the participants at a small private college managed faculty retention and recruitment, while another participant in a large public higher education system had general oversight for the diversity initiatives at each campus in the system. Therefore, the areas of oversight and scope of responsibility did not impact the need for the executive-level CDOs, in this study, to develop relationships with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity.

The second component, the lateral diversity infrastructure, was used as the primary lens to frame this research study. The lateral diversity infrastructure highlights the opportunities for executive-level CDOs to develop relationships with members of the campus community to influence institutional diversity (Leon, 2014; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). The executive-level CDOs in this study, shared stories that spoke to the importance of developing intentional, authentic and transparent relationships with members of the campus community. The participants initiated developing relationships with fervor to collaborate on diversity initiatives that would change the campus climate. One participant shared how developing a relationship with the vice-president for

enrollment established a platform to engage in conversations about improving new student experiences on campus. Other participants shared how developing relationships with faculty, students, and staff led to the creation and implementation of a diversity scorecard and institutional diversity strategic plan. The findings from this study overwhelmingly support the lateral diversity infrastructure as the component of the CDO development framework to undergird this research study.

The third component, vertical diversity infrastructure, defined the hierarchical positionality that includes the reporting structure, job responsibilities and areas of influence for the CDO (Leon, 2014; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). The collaborative office, portfolio divisional, and unit-based models make up the archetypes of vertical structures within the CDO development framework. Each of the participants in this current study appeared to operate within a portfolio divisional model. The portfolio-divisional model is an organizational structure that allows for collaboration and direct reporting of diversity units to the executive-level CDO. There seemed to be no ambiguity with regard to the executive-level CDOs' responsibilities or spheres of influence in this study. The participants in this study had different sized portfolios and staff. The current study suggests that the portfolio-divisional structure is most effective at creating opportunities to collaborate across the institution in an effort to embed diversity as an institutional priority.

The fourth component in the CDODF is change management systems, which are outlined potential strategies for the CDO to impact change. Some of the participants in this study used specific strategies to manage members of their campus community who did not agree with or understand the need to embed diversity as an institutional priority.

Several of the participants shared how they handled faculty who rejected the notion of diversity by creating a welcoming environment for them to air their grievances without judgement. On the other hand, one of the participants would not engage with his adversaries, as long as he had the support and understanding from the institution's president. The findings indicate that the executive-level CDOs in this study used their knowledge, skills and ability to apply the components of the CDODF in their role as strategic diversity leaders.

Limitations

This study was limited by not including executive-level CDOs from higher education institutions located on the Pacific West coast or in the Southwest U.S. regions. The study was limited to executive-level CDOs in higher education with more than 3 years of experience. Individuals who were new to the role of executive-level CDO in higher education may have resulted in different findings. The participants were not asked and did not offer reflections of when they were first-time, executive-level CDOs. This may have provided insight into how they prepared to develop relationships within a complex political environment like a higher education institution. Another possible limitation is the likelihood of researcher bias. The researcher is conscious of the possible bias due to her experiences as a strategic diversity leader in higher education and a consultant in the field of diversity and inclusion. This research study has value by adding to the body of knowledge, including experiences of executive-level CDOs, and expanding on prior research regarding executive-level CDOs in higher education who were developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

Recommendations

The results from this study provide several recommendations regarding the experiences of executive-level CDOs who were developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. The recommendations for future research are discussed first, followed by recommendations for executive-level CDOs as well as university and college presidents.

Recommendations for future research. The executive-level CDOs in this study were all experienced strategic diversity leaders. The participants in this study had experience as strategic diversity leaders whose experience ranged from 6 to 16 years. Therefore, a future study that explores the experiences and perceptions of executive-level CDOs with less than 6 years of experience would be valuable. The findings gleaned from a study that includes less-experienced, executive-level CDOs would add to the body of knowledge on strategic diversity leadership in higher education. This recommended research study would also provide more information if the relationship-development approaches of new executive-level CDOs in higher education are similar or different to those with more experience.

This study included executive-level CDOs, who were all people of color. Of the six participants interviewed, five were African American and one participant was Hispanic. A future study could expand the population by exploring the experiences of White executive-level CDOs in higher education. By adding the perspective of White executive-level CDOs insight could be provided regarding if race is a factor in developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity in higher education institutions.

The results from this study reveal a process that the executive-level CDOs used to intentionally establish, strategically build, and continuously maintain relationships with members of their campus community in an effort to influence diversity (Appendix F). A recommended study could use the relationship-development process to examine if others executive-level CDOs utilize this process or parts of the process to engage with faculty, staff, students, and senior administrators. Conducting a study using the relationship-development process could provide additional insight into how executive-level CDOs meet with the various constituent groups on campus to advance matters of diversity as an institutional priority.

The findings from this study revealed an unexpected outcome, female weariness. All of the women executive-level CDOs, in this study, expressed some sort of feeling related to exhaustion. At different points during the interviews with each of the women executive-level CDOs, they shared how the work of a diversity leader has an emotional toll on the leader. A recommended future study could consider the experiences and perceptions of women executive-level CDOs. This type of study could explore how women executive-level CDOs develop relationships and manage stress as a strategic diversity leader in higher education.

Recommendations for Executive-Level CDOs

Based on the findings in theme 1, positionality matters, the participants in this study highlighted the importance of having an executive title and serving as a member of senior leadership. As strategic diversity leaders, executive-level CDOs, in this study transcended different types of leadership styles to engage with colleagues, faculty, staff and students in a meaningful way. Positionality matters also highlighted the transactional,

transformational and servant leadership skills that the participants exhibited. These leadership skills included partnering with other campus departments and units to sponsor programming, creating space for faculty, students and staff to have difficult conversations around such topics as race, religion or sexuality as well as their willingness to serve and attend to others in a way that promotes diversity. A recommendation for executive level CDOs would be to hone their various leadership skills as a discipline to increase their capacity to work across the institution to influence campus-wide diversity.

The executive title and rank provided access to other senior administrators as well as providing visibility as a domain expert and senior leader to faculty, students, and staff as they develop relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. A recommendation for aspiring executive-level CDOs would be to negotiate a vice-presidential title and rank as a member of the college or university president's executive team before accepting the role of CDO.

The findings from this study indicate that the participants would seek out individuals who had quietly engaged in diversity work and elevated their efforts by inviting them to serve on institutional diversity committees and projects. Theme 3, sowing, sowing, and reaping highlighted how the participants had to work diligently with willing and non-willing members of campus community to influence diversity. A recommendation to executive-level CDOs would be to actively engage the diversity champions at the departmental level—those faculty, staff, and students who may not have routine opportunities to serve on institutional committees and projects could provide a fresh perspective on diversity related issues.

The findings in theme 2 also suggest that the executive-level CDOs in this study were purposeful and consistent with their efforts to develop relationships with senior administration, faculty, staff, and students to influence campus-wide diversity. A recommendation to current and aspiring executive-level CDOs is to follow the developing relationships process, identified in this study, with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity.

Recommendations for College and University Presidents

Findings from the first and second theme, positionality matters and developing relationships is a process, suggest that the presidents were committed to diversity and appreciated the executive-level CDOs, in this study, keeping them abreast of diversity matters on campus that could impact campus climate. The participants served as special assistants or advisors to the institution's president and were often called upon by their peers to offer advice on institutional matters of diversity. A recommendation to college and university presidents would be to have the executive-level CDO serve as a special advisor to the president, provide information and counsel regarding campus climate and the state of campus-wide diversity.

Based on the findings from this current study, it is implied that it is important for the CDO to report directly to the president, have a vice presidential title, and rank as a member of the president's executive team. A recommendation to college and university presidents would be to create the CDO role as an executive title and rank as a member of the institutional executive leadership team in order to provide them with access to key decision makers and members of the campus community. CDOs with an executive title and senior administrative leadership rank are structurally positioned to develop

relationships with the various constituent groups across campus to influence diversity as an institutional priority.

Conclusion

The emergence of the executive-level CDO in higher education continues to increase (Wilson, 2013). CDOs are appointed to serve as strategic diversity leaders on college and university campuses to influence campus-wide diversity (Leon, 2014; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Executive-level CDOs positioned with a vice presidential title and rank as a member of the president's senior leadership team should have access to key stakeholders and visibility among faculty, students, and staff as a domain expert to lead diversity (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Executive-level CDOs typically have a broad range of responsibilities with limited hierarchical authority.

Although executive-level CDOs have a vice-presidential title and rank, this positionality is foundational for developing relationships across the institution to influence campus-wide diversity. The review of the literature indicates a gap that supported the need for this study. The literature, at the time of this study, highlighted the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for individuals serving in the role of as executive-level CDOs. However, the literature did not highlight the ways in which executive-level CDOs used their knowledge, skills and abilities to develop relationships across the institution in an effort to embed diversity as an institutional priority. The purpose of this study was to explore how executive-level CDOs developed relationships to influence campus-wide diversity.

This transcendental phenomenological research study allowed the researcher to examine the experiences of 6 executive-level CDOs in higher education. Three males and

three females participated in this research study. Three of the participants were executive-level CDOs in large public universities and three of the participants were CDOs at mid-sized and small private institutions. Each of the participants had more than 6 years of experience as a strategic diversity leader in higher education. Data was collected using a demographic survey, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. The three forms of data were analyzed to identify themes.

The findings from this study add to previous research on executive-level CDOs in higher education (Arnold & Kowlaski-Braun, 2012; Kezar & Lester, 2010; Leon, 2014; Nixon, 2017; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). The results from this study also support and expand research in the field of strategic diversity leadership in higher education with a focus on how executive-level CDOs develop relationships with members of the campus community, to influence diversity as an institutional priority. Three themes emerged from the data collection:

1. Positionality matters
2. Developing relationships is a process
3. Sowing, sowing, and reaping

During the interview process an unexpected finding emerged, female weariness. The female executive-level CDOs all expressed emotional feelings of exhaustion with the work of a diversity leader. The thoughts, from the female executive-level CDOs, were expressed at different times throughout the interview process and were not in response to a specific interview protocol question. These unprompted remarks resulted in highlighting a sense of weariness the female executive-level CDOs felt as they worked to influence campus-wide diversity.

Recommendations were discussed to suggest future research explore how early-career, executive-level CDOs develop relationships to influence diversity. Further study is recommended using the relationship-development process, which would add insight into how executive-level CDOs engage with members across the institution to advance and move college and university campuses toward inclusive excellence. The findings and recommendations from this research study add to the body of knowledge and provide a process that may be used by executive-level CDOs as they develop relationships with key decision makers, faculty, students, and staff in an effort to influence campus-wide diversity.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of executive-level CDOs developing relationships to influence campus-wide diversity. The primary goal was to identify how executive-level CDOs engage and connect with senior leaders, faculty students and staff to embed diversity as a fundamental institutional priority. The participants in this study shared their experiences with developing relationships with their colleagues and other members of the campus community in a meaningful way to move a college or university campus towards inclusive excellence. The executive-level CDOs in this study were experienced strategic diversity leaders who highlighted their contributions as leaders recognizing that their executive title and rank provided introduction and access to key stakeholders. However, the participants in this study stressed the importance of not relying on positionality alone to develop relationships needed to embed diversity as a fundamental core value. As the participants in this study developed relationships with senior leaders, faculty, students and staff, each of the participants gave 100% of

themselves to their work as executive-level CDOs in an effort to influence campus-wide diversity.

As colleges and universities continue to grapple with dismantling storied traditions and policies that were implemented as exclusionary practices and the need to educate and prepare students to become part of a global society, there is need for executive-level CDOs. The CDOs in this study were adamant that their work was not about them but about galvanizing people around a shared goal that recognizes the individual contributions of faculty, staff and students to the institution's mission and vision. The experiences shared by the executive-level CDOs in this study addressed how they developed relationships with members of campus community to influence diversity as an institutional priority.

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Appendix A

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education Standards of Professional Practice for Chief Diversity Officers (2014)

STANDARD ONE

Has the ability to envision and conceptualize the diversity mission of an institution through a broad and inclusive definition of diversity.

Institutions of higher education, like the U.S. population, are becoming increasingly diverse, not just in terms of racial and ethnic identity, but also age, cultural identity, religious and spiritual identity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical and mental ability, nationality, social and economic status, and political and ideological perspectives. Chief diversity officers give voice to diversity in ways that continue to evolve in regional, national, and international contexts that extend beyond a traditional or historical understanding and application.

STANDARD TWO

Understands, and is able to articulate in verbal and written form, the importance of equity, inclusion, and diversity to the broader educational mission of higher education institutions.

The ability to effectively communicate the importance of equity, inclusion and diversity in verbal and written forms are fundamental practices necessary to advance the diversity mission of an institution through formal and informal interactions with stakeholders and constituents both inside and outside higher education institutions (e.g., faculty, staff, students, administrators, legislators, media, alumni, trustees, community members, and others). CDOs articulate the importance of equity, inclusion and diversity in a variety of ways (e.g., educational benefits, business case, social justice frameworks) that fit the broader educational missions of the institutions they serve.

STANDARD THREE

Understands the contexts, cultures, and politics within institutions that impact the implementation and management of effective diversity change efforts.

Colleges and universities are complex organizations that are accountable to internal, state, national, and global stakeholders. The internal contextual landscape is influenced by the interactions between and among these stakeholders, and affects the definition and implementation of the diversity mission. CDOs have the strategic vision to conceptualize their work to advance diversity, inclusion and equity, while simultaneously having the administrative acumen to be responsive to the broader contextual landscape.

STANDARD FOUR

Has knowledge and understanding of, and is able to articulate in verbal and written form, the range of evidence for the educational benefits that accrue to students through diversity, inclusion, and equity in higher education.

Existing research on the educational benefits of diversity to students provides a critical foundation for the work of chief diversity officers, and new findings continue to emerge in the scholarly literature. Basic fundamental knowledge and understanding of a wide range of evidence provides the basis for daily activities, diversity programming, leadership, and strategic planning at multiple levels of institutional operations.

STANDARD FIVE

Has an understanding of how curriculum development efforts may be used to advance the diversity mission of higher education institutions.

Curriculum is the purview of the faculty, and it also is a place where institutional diversity goals and learning outcomes are articulated, implemented, taught, and assessed. Chief diversity officers partner with faculty in curriculum development efforts to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning practices.

STANDARD SIX

Has an understanding of how institutional programming can be used to enhance the diversity mission of higher education institutions for faculty, students, staff, and administrators.

Colleges and universities vary with respect to mission, values, culture, and context. Chief diversity officers can identify and apply multiple sources of delivery methods to reach a diverse and complex audience within campus communities to enhance the diversity mission of an institution. These methods include, but are not limited to, presentations, workshops, seminars, focus group sessions, difficult dialogues, restorative justice, town hall meetings, conferences, institutes, and community outreach.

STANDARD SEVEN

Has an understanding of the procedural knowledge for responding to bias incidents when they occur on college or university campuses.

Bias incidents and hate crimes often occur on college and university campuses. Chief diversity officers serve as leaders regarding appropriate and effective responses to such incidents. In collaboration or partnership with others, chief diversity officers provide leadership in advancing appropriate and effective campus responses, such as (1) providing support and consultation to victims; (2) assisting in working through the institutional complaint process; (3) engaging law enforcement, regulatory agencies, or other campus authorities; and (4) providing consultation to campus leadership in communications with the media, as well as campus and community constituents, about the incidents. Where appropriate, CDOs facilitate, monitor and/or assist in record keeping and reporting activities that are required by law regarding such incidents (e.g., Clery Act; Title IX).

STANDARD EIGHT

Has basic knowledge of how various forms of institutional data can be used to benchmark and promote accountability for the diversity mission of higher education institutions. Existing research provides compelling arguments for the use of various assessment tools to document the educational benefits of diversity and institutional effectiveness. Diversity efforts should be assessed beyond compositional data and satisfaction surveys. Basic knowledge of various methods of institutional data collection (e.g., academic achievement gaps, academic remediation, STEM participation, honors enrollments, graduation and persistence rates, recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff) will help chief diversity officers promote accountability.

STANDARD NINE

Has an understanding of the application of campus climate research in the development and advancement of a positive and inclusive campus climate for diversity. Campus climate research plays a central role in the development and advancement of strategic diversity planning. Although expertise as a researcher is not generally required, CDOs should be capable of providing oversight for periodic assessments related to campus climate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Chief diversity officers can draw on the expertise of internal or external consultants to conceptualize and conduct research on their own campuses, and to utilize the findings to effect change and advance the development of institutional strategic planning efforts.

STANDARD TEN

Broadly understands the potential barriers that faculty face in the promotion and/or tenure process in the context of diversity-related professional activities (e.g., teaching, research, service). Teaching, research, and service activities take many forms, and are the intellectual drivers and pillars for most colleges and universities. Working collaboratively with the academic community, chief diversity officers can support and advocate for faculty who work to challenge the hegemony of a disciplinary body of knowledge or who are historically underrepresented in the academy.

STANDARD ELEVEN

Has current and historical knowledge related to issues of nondiscrimination, access, and equity in higher education institutions. Access and equity are central to the mission of higher education institutions, as are nondiscrimination laws, regulations, and policies, which have a longstanding history of advancement and modification. Institutional policies related to nondiscrimination may conform to, or be at variance with, federal and/or state mandates. For example, sexual orientation nondiscrimination may be incorporated into institutional policies despite lack of inclusion in federal or state laws. The chief diversity officer should have an awareness and understanding of the interplay among various laws, regulations, and policies regarding nondiscrimination.

STANDARD TWELVE

Has awareness and understanding of the various laws, regulations, and policies related to equity and diversity in higher education.

Institutions of higher education operate under the authority and jurisdiction of laws, regulations, and policies related to (or affecting) equity and diversity in higher education. In some cases, laws, regulations and policies mandate specific actions regarding issues of harassment, hate, nondiscrimination, equal access, equal treatment, and procurement/supplier diversity. In other instances, laws, regulations and policies place restrictions on the types and forms of activities chief diversity officers may pursue in advancing a diversity mission. Thus, awareness and understanding of the various national, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies are critical for the effective functioning of the CDO.

Appendix B

Participation Invitation Letter

Dear Invitee,

I am requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting, entitled: Executive-Level Chief Diversity Officers: Relationship-Building Strategies to Influence Campus-Wide Diversity. The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies used by executive-level Chief Diversity Officers to engage with members of their campus communities in an effort to influence diversity throughout their college or university campuses.

This research study involves completing a brief demographic information questionnaire; participating in a 60-minute, in-person, or virtual semi-structured interview. If you are interested in participating in the study, please complete the brief demographic survey and informed consent form ([link to form](#)). I will receive an email notification once the survey and consent form are completed. I will follow up with you within 48 hours of receiving the email notification, to schedule a time and location at your convenience to conduct the interview.

If you have questions or need more information feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Doctoral Student
St. John Fisher College

Appendix C

Chief Diversity Officer Demographic Questionnaire

1. Name: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Racial or Ethnic Background: _____
4. Age: _____
5. Educational Background:
 - a. Highest Degree Earned _____ Year Completed _____

6. Professional Background

Current Position or Title	Length of Time in Position	Institution Name

Previous Position or Title	Length of Time in Position	Institution Name

7. Chief Diversity Officer Position

- a. Years of experience
 - i. 3-5
 - ii. 6-10
 - iii. 11 or more
8. Reporting structure – Who do you report to? (please circle)
 - a. President/Chancellor
 - b. Provost
 - c. Dean
 - d. HR
 - e. Other _____
9. Are you a member of the President’s executive team? (for example, president’s cabinet/committee)
 - a. YES or NO (please circle)

- 10.** Does your organization have a campus-wide diversity plan?
a. YES or NO (please circle)

Appendix D

St. John Fisher College

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: An Examination of Executive Level Chief Diversity Officers: Relationship Building Strategies to Influence Campus Wide Diversity Initiatives

Name(s) of researcher(s):

Faculty Supervisor: _

Phone for further information:

Purpose of study: The purpose of this proposed study is to describe the ways in which executive level Chief Diversity Officers in higher education, build relationships with members of the campus community to influence campus-wide diversity initiatives.

Place of study: U.S. Colleges and Universities Length of participation: 60 minutes

Method(s) of data collection: demographic survey, semi-structured interviews

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below: A possible risk involved with participating in this study is experiencing stress from recalling any challenges the participant may have experienced as an executive level chief diversity officer. To minimize this risk, participants may choose not to answer any questions or withdraw from participating in the study at any time without penalty.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of subjects: Participants and institutions will be assigned a pseudonym. All data collected for this study will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected: Demographic survey data will be stored on a password protected, external hard drive, digital recordings, transcribed data will be kept in a locked safe, in the researcher's home office for a period of 5 years after publication.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.

2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print name (Participant)	Signature	Date
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Print name (Investigator)	Signature	Date
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If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher(s) listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your personal health care provider or an appropriate crisis service provider.

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact Jill Rathbun by phone during normal business hours at (585) 385-8012 or irb@sjfc.edu. She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of 5 years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for 5 years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.

Appendix E

Chief Diversity Officer Interview Protocol

Opening Banter: Good morning/afternoon, thank you for taking the time to participate in my research study. I look forward to a robust conversation about your experience as an executive-level Chief Diversity Officer building relationships with members of your campus community to influence campus-wide diversity. As a reminder, the interview will be recorded, to protect your identity and confidentiality you and your institution will be given a pseudonym.

General Questions

1. There are multiple paths that lead to diversity work in higher education, specifically the role of CDO. Tell me about your journey to becoming an executive-level Chief Diversity Officer in higher education?

Relationship Questions

2. What key relationships you have established in your role?
 - a. How were these relationships developed?
3. Can you share an example of how you go about identifying relationships to establish on your campus?
4. Tell me about a time when building relationships with members of the campus community helped you accomplish your goal as CDO?
5. Understanding that not everyone will support campus-wide diversity how do you engage with your adversaries?
 - a. How does positional authority influence adversarial relationships?

Concluding Questions

6. What advice would give to someone considering a CDO role regarding the importance of relationship building to advance a campus-wide diversity plan?
7. Is there anything I didn't ask that you would like to share about your experience with developing and building relationships to influence diversity on your campus?

