

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

A Grounded Theory Study on the Experiences of Administrators of Color in Cabinet Level Positions and the Role that Mentoring Played in their Journey

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9:00am-10:30am

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/my/karlaloya> (Password: EDD)

**Dissertation Defense by
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This qualitative grounded theory study explored Cabinet-level administrators of colors and their experiences as they progressed throughout their career and the role that mentoring played in their journey. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided the framework for the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifteen participants from institutions of higher education from the northeastern United States.

Four major themes emerged from the data: (1) mentoring as sponsorship; (2) strategy vs. culture; (3) job title as a social barrier and (4) social identity as both a strength and a weakness. These four themes can be explained through the final core category of this grounded theory: Administrators of Color in Cabinets: Mediating Identity, Culture, and Climate. Within those themes, the data show that higher education has failed to address its racist past. BIPOC individuals have to deal with prejudice, burnout, and toxic campus climates. Furthermore, the data show that mentoring as sponsorship was a vital marker for success. Finally, the data show that these individuals spend a significant amount of time mediating identity, culture, and climate as mandatory aspects of the job. Navigating their identities while juggling their responsibilities as Vice-Presidents was unexpected for the participants.

There are multiple recommendations derived from the study. CRT explains that we need to address racism systematically. One recommendation is that accreditation agencies need to play a larger role in driving this conversation about colleges and universities as anti-racist institutions. Furthermore, the creation and utilization of climate surveys to guide the internal work that these institutions need to do. Another recommendation is the development of permanent spaces for courageous conversations on campus where individuals can challenge the institution in a safe manner. Other recommendations focused on individual decisions that future Cabinet members can make to assist them throughout their journeys.

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