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A Phenomenological Study on Career Ascension and Advancement of African American Women in Senior Academic Leadership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON CAREER ASCENSION AND ADVANCEMENT OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AT

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

By

MEKA A. FRANCIS

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

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"But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall run and not faint." Isaiah 40:31

All praise and honor to the almighty God, who is the head of my life! I would like to first thank my creator, my heavenly Father for bringing my parents together to create me. Without them, I would not be here, and I love them for that. God, thank you for guiding and walking with me each step of this doctoral journey. You have answered my prayers and never left my side. Never in a million years would I have imagined reaching this major milestone.

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To my grandmother, Olga (Big O), I love you so much. Thank you for taking on the major responsibility of raising my siblings and me. I am forever indebted to you. To Janel, my auntie, thank you for all your guidance and support. Uncle Mannie, thank you for your protection. To my brother, Dorian and sister, Myeshia; thanks for being great role models for the baby.

Thanks to my family, friends, colleagues, church family, cohort members and every influential person I have met while on this journey. Thanks for your patience, love, emotional

support, and encouragement to never give up and keep pushing. I have put many things on hold and have missed many trips and events, but for this achievement, it was well worth it.

To each of the women who participated in this study, thank you for saying "yes" to being a part of this study. Thanks for your willingness to share your experiences, your insight, and honesty. I am forever grateful for your contribution in supporting my research.

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Abstract

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Chair: Renée V. Akbar

The U. S. Department of Labor Statistics (2018) reported that there were more than 10 million (53%) African American women in the civilian labor force. However, there is a growing concern of African American women who are underrepresented in higher educational leadership. There are only few studies that focus on the barriers and challenges that African American women encounter. These barriers prevent them from advancing and ascending in positions of higher education leadership. This phenomenological study explored their perceived personal and professional challenges regarding race and gender, as well as highlighted strategies, employed by African American women in senior academic leadership positions, to overcome those challenges. The executive level positions considered for this study are presidents, chancellors, vice presidents, and deans within historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the southeastern region of the United States. Additionally, this study examined initiatives taken by African American women to help support and develop future African American female leaders. Black Feminist Thought, as espoused by Patricia Hill Collins, was used as the framework to examine the journeys of four African American women in higher education leadership positions. Data from this research contributed to the body of literature that focused on African American

women and their ascension to senior administration in HBCUs. The research findings are

important in facilitating institutional change and encouraging institutions of higher education to

increase and enhance diversity and inclusion initiatives designed to develop women leaders.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Adrienne Francis and my father, Michael Coleman. It is because of your lifestyles, addictions, and habits that I have always strived more. Often reminded as a child, that I would end up like my parents, my goal has always been to turn the negative comments into positive accomplishments. I am the rose that grew from the concrete, and I am still growing. Mom, I know you are smiling down on me, bragging to everyone in heaven that your baby did it! To Michael, I pray that one day our relationship will flourish. Until then, I will continue to work to make you both proud.

I also dedicated this dissertation to anyone, especially African American females who aspire to work in higher education administration or anyone working toward leadership. I hope you will gain as much knowledge as I did while conducting this research.

As the first in my family to obtain a Doctorate degree. This dissertation is also dedicated to my nieces, nephews, and relatives who may follow in my footsteps. I pray that I have inspired you to never give up. No matter what obstacles you may encounter; whatever you put your mind to, you can achieve it!

<center>**CHAPTER ONE**</center>

<center>**INTRODUCTION**</center>

The number of African Americans in the total labor force has increased by 12%, which is

19.6 million out of 159.2 million people. This is a slight increase from when the data on African

Americans were first collected in 1972. Back then, 8.7 million African Americans were about

10% of the labor force. In 2016, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that African

Americans accounted for 1 out of 8 people in the labor force and that the number is expected to

increase as the labor force becomes more diversified (Rolen & Toosi, 2018). It has been

projected by BLS that the black labor force will reach 21.6 million or 12.7% of the total labor

force (169 million) by 2026 (Toossi & Joyner, 2018). According to a Census Bureau report, the

United States' population is expected to increase in the labor workforce by more than 98 million

people in 2051 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). In 2017, the U.S. Labor Force reported that all women

made up 57.0% of the labor force. Fifty-two percent of women were employed in management,

professional, and other related professions. Women accounted for 75% of education and health

services related occupations.

Along with the increase, the U.S. Black labor force is experiencing changes in the

educational attainment of African American women and their participation in the workforce.

The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that Historically Black Colleges and

Universities (HBCUs) conferred 48,319 degrees from 2017 to 2018 (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2017). African American women earned 71% of the associate degrees,

65% of the bachelor's degrees, 71% of the master's degrees and 67% of the doctoral degrees.

This high percentage of doctoral degree attainment is important because it is the level

recommended for higher education leadership positions (U.S. Department of Education, 2019),

<center>1</center>

which translates into higher earnings (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

In the world of higher education, it is important to question why there are few African American women in leadership positions, when so many are earning doctorate degrees. According to the ACE College President's study, in 2016, the college and university presidency position was made up of one-third women, but only 5% of those women were African American. Colleges and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) reported in 2017, that women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in the work industry. Not only are women underrepresented, they also do not receive equal compensation in comparison to men. For every $1 men earn, women earn 79 cents. (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017).

African American women have played integral roles in higher education since the first quarter of the 20th century. They continue to make strides in this area, but there are are few studies that focus on the lived experiences of African American women administrators (Barksdale, 2007). Despite academic gains, African American women are still underrepresented in mid to upper- management level administrative positions in higher education (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Institutions which lack successional training that cultivate African American women to prepare for leadership ultimately reduces the number of African American women serving as leaders. The absence of such succession training creates a vacuum for replacing the baby boomers who are retiring and leaving their leadership positions (Hannum et al., 2015). Given the limited number of African American women in higher education leadership positions, this study focused on the perceived personal and professional challenges of African American women currently in higher education leadership and examined the sociological and organizational factors that have impacted their journeys.

Historically, African American women have served in college and university presidency positions since the beginning of the 19th century (Coleman, 2012; Gaston, 2015). However, there has been little research on their leadership experiences and factors that impact their advancement. Despite the evidence that indicates African American women have leadership capacity for higher education, they are constantly overlooked. This is a problem for two reasons. One, from an income equality standpoint, the persistent underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions means the potential loss of earnings and possibly decreasing their chances for upward mobility. Two, as a matter of diversity and inclusion, the persistent underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions means lost opportunities for diverse thinking that facilitate groundbreaking programmatic initiatives that advance the quality of academic programs and operations at institutions of higher education.

The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR, 2017) reported that women, in general, remain underrepresented in executive positions in higher education (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017). Although there has been an increase of women administrators since 2001, there remains a disparity amongst top executives, such as presidents, chancellors, VPs and deans. Women represent approximately half of higher education administrators. If women would be assessed as a whole across all four regions of the U.S., they would appear well represented among executive administrators. However, only 30% of women hold top executive positions in higher education. Men outnumber women in a ratio of 2:1 among presidents and chief business officers, 4:1 among chief information officers and chief athletics administrators, and 9:1 among chief facilities officers.

Despite the relative gains in the representation of women administrators, the situation for

African American women as administrators is not as bright. According to a CUPA-HR (2018) report, women of color (a category which includes African American women) are underrepresented in administrative positions when compared to men of color, white women, and white men (CUPA-HR, 2018). This finding indicates that African American women face the dual challenge of overcoming not only underrepresentation by gender, but also by race and ethnicity when it comes to executive positions in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Many African American women are confronted with several challenges as they pursue careers in higher education and have unique experiences with educational and social injustices that are as a result of how they have been positioned in society (Davis & Brown, 2017). African American women are often faced with a "double bind" and are devalued for being female and of color (Hinton & Patitu, 2003). Research by Moore (1982) and Ballenger (2010) confirmed that even women with outstanding credentials find it difficult to rise to upper leadership positions without the recommendations of or by powerful individuals in leadership positions. Moreover, other studies indicate that the majority of women in academic leadership positions, especially women of color, have experienced exclusion, condescension, isolation, dismissal, communication challenges, lack of validation or appreciation, and failure to receive credit due (Mainah & Perkins, 2015). These experiences suggest that for African American women, the climb to upper leadership positions is one in which there is little to no preparation or a place for them, and, if they manage to secure a position, they do so with little institutional support.

The underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership represents a gap between the discourse and practices of diversity and inclusion initiatives in higher education institutions. When looking at broad trends in diversity on college and

university campuses, although the racial and ethnic make-up of the student population has become more diverse, faculty, staff, and administrators remain predominately White (Espinosa et al., 2019). This limited or lack of diversity for the non-student body population suggests that institutions are not applying the same standards of diversity and inclusion to higher education administration and leadership.

This is an issue for three reasons. One, since research has shown that campus leadership plays an important role in achieving inclusive institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), it may be assumed that leadership may not be evolving enough to meet the needs of diverse student populations enrolled in institutions of higher education. Two, the lack of evolution in campus leadership may mean that campus diversity and inclusion initiatives as a whole are only as strong or sustainable as its leadership. Three, from a racial and gender standpoint, it is not known how or to what extent the lack of diversity in campus leadership has undermined efforts to increase opportunities for career advancement in higher education for underrepresented minorities, a group which includes African American women (Becks-Moody, 2004). The convergence of these issues points to systematic problems to equitably and fairly execute initiatives to provide educational and leadership opportunities for all individuals regardless of race and gender.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of the professional and personal challenges relating to race and gender experienced by African American females at HBCUs as they ascend to senior academic leadership positions in colleges and universities located in the southeastern United States. This study adds to the limited body of knowledge regarding African American women in leadership positions in higher education. This study did

not focus on the effectiveness of their performance; rather, the focus was on their perspectives and meanings of the events that have helped in their advancement to senior leadership (Alexander-Lee, 2014; Oikelome, 2018). Wilson (1989) explained that women of color are faced with limitations rooted in the history of America. Therefore, emphasis of this study shows the need to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts for African American women in higher education administration. With a single-sector framework, this study highlighted the intersectional issues of race and gender for African American women as they ascend to senior leadership positions in academia. The goal of this research was to understand how African American women navigate the higher education system as they ascend to their senior leadership positions. This research also offered a view of influence from the African American female leader and their coping strategies within the hierarchy of the institution. This study aimed at providing information to African American women who are rising in their careers as senior leaders in institutions of higher education as well as those interested in pursuing a career in higher education.

Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study was to interview African American women in senior leadership positions in higher education to explore the personal and professional challenges they encounter as they ascend into senior leadership positions. This research was designed to answer the primary question: what personal and professional challenges do African American women encounter while ascending and advancing to senior leadership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities? This study utilized interviews of four African American women, who served in senior leadership positions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), to capture and analyze their lived experiences.

Significance of Study

Women in higher education have been underrepresented in leadership for many years. More specifically, women of color are the most underrepresented group when compared to black men, white women, and white men (McKinsey & Company, 2018). Many women of color feel that race and gender limit them from advancing to senior leadership positions. African American women encounter a double set of standards attributed to intersectionality of gender and race. This study is significant because it gives voice and perspective to the challenge African American women face in their development as leaders.

The primary aim for this qualitative phenomenological study was to document the personal and professional experiences of African American women who currently hold senior academic leadership positions at HBCUs. While African American women encounter many barriers related to advancement in the workforce, the goal of this study was to understand the strategies that assisted in their advancement. Although women in general, often face inequalities on the job, African American women in particular deal with inequities due to being female and black. This study's significance was to bring awareness to barriers African American women encounter as they pursue higher education leadership with the intention of providing recommendations for making the process for the next generation of African American women more equitable and rewarding. To this end, findings from this study may be used to create or enhance leadership development/training programs that could help future African American women candidates prepare for and secure leadership roles in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Black Feminist Thought served as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory, first proposed by Patricia Hill Collins in 1989, is grounded in specific ideologies related to

justice movements for African Americans and women (Davis & Brown, 2017). This theory

provides a platform for African American women to speak and share their experiences from their

perspective (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The knowledge gained via their perspectives can lead

to advancing group consciousness. Providing insights on the experiences and raising the

consciousness about this marginalized group aligns with the intent of this study. Black Feminist

Thought is a consciousness that explains the social locations and identities of African American

Women. It encompasses the intersection of influences on African American administrators.

      To support the phenomenological approach selected for this study, the researcher focuses

on the Black Feminist Theory (BFT) while conducting interviews. At this juncture, a discussion

of the researcher's positionality is relevant. In general, two types of positionality- etic and emic

viewpoints- have been adopted by qualitative researchers in anthropology, folkloristics, and the

social and behavioral sciences to study the social realities of their study participants (Creswell,

1998; Given, 1998; Morris et al., 1999). An etic viewpoint is one in which the researcher takes a

position as an outsider in relation to the culture of the intended study while an emic viewpoint is

one in which the researcher takes the position as an insider within the culture of the intended

study. Over three decades of literature exist about the value of etic and emic viewpoints and

debates regarding the use of one or both viewpoints in research (Bergman & Lindgren, 2018;

Berry, 1989; Harris, 1990; Headland, 1990; Headland et al., 1990; Patton, 2010). In brief, while

some researchers see etic and emic viewpoints as mutually exclusive, others argue that both

viewpoints may be upheld at different stages of research (Morris et al., 1999). For example,

Greenfield (1996) argued that an emic viewpoint may be appropriate for exploratory research

while an etic viewpoint may be appropriate for testing hypotheses. Moreover, regardless of

whether researchers use one or both approaches, Yin (2010) advised researchers to acknowledge

that several interpretations may exist in the analysis process and urged them to take precautions to avoid imposing their own interpretations.

An appropriate location of the researcher's positionality may be found in the study's primary research question, "What personal and professional challenges do African American women encounter while ascending and advancing to senior leadership at HBCUs?" Adopting an etic viewpoint was appropriate from this question because it allowed the researcher to apply theories, hypotheses, and perspectives as constructs to see if they apply to the culture under study (Olive, 2014). One advantage of using an etic viewpoint is the opportunity for the researcher to make brief, narrow observations of more than one setting (Olive, 2014). This advantage was suitable, as the study aimed for 3-5 interviews at different settings. Regarding the potential for subjectivity, as discussed earlier, since the researcher was an African American woman, biases regarding matters such as gender, race, and shared cultural beliefs may have emerged and interfered with the researcher's etic viewpoint. The researcher improved the validity and reliability of the research by identifying artifacts such as institutional websites, posters, pictures, books, etc. in their educational spaces to check interview findings against these sources of information. The researcher used this information in conjunction with an analysis of the four issues of BFT:

- Black women are often marginalized in educational spaces
- Black women often struggle with race and gender in educational spaces
- Black women are often viewed as outsiders in educational spaces
- Black women face systems of power in educational spaces

Black Feminist Theory also addresses the importance of Black women acquiring positions of power. For African American women, acquiring positions such as presidents,

provosts, and deans may be understood as both overcoming systems of power in higher education as well as securing positions of power. According to Collins (2002), the themes of Black Feminist Thought that relate to women acquiring leadership power include:

- Self-definition and self-valuation: African American women are able to paint their own image of the Black women's reality and not just based on images from the oppressor. This frees African American women from the interlocking nature of oppression and the suppression of their culture. This liberty allows them to share their own stories rather than having their stories told by others.

- African American women have unique individual experiences based on their circumstances. Due to their marginalized status in society, they hold a special kind of knowledge.

- The appreciation of different experiences from African American women through the diversity of class, gender, religion, age, and sexual orientation. Black women are viewed as "outsiders within" because of their personal experiences as outsiders and their unique challenges of their social place.

Collins (2000) identified six key features of Black Feminist Thought, which serve to explain the "standpoint" of African American Women, (p. 21-49). To put the theory into perspective, it is important to identify the distinctions identified by Collins (2000):

- Black women's group location in intersecting oppression produces commonalities among individual Black women. The aim of Black Feminist Thought is to achieve empowerment that is reflective of a collective voice and sense of consciousness among African American Women.

- Black Feminist Thought emerges from a tension linking experiences and ideas. Every woman has a story; however, African American women have very unique perspectives of their stories and experiences.

- Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the connection between Black women's experiences as a heterogeneous collectivity and any ensuing group knowledge or standpoint. The diversity in the experiences do not negate their commonalities in the experiences of African American women which have shaped and formed their collective standpoint.

- Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the essential contributions of African American women intellectuals. For African American Women as a whole, the struggle to self-define Black feminism is a continuous dialogue in which thought, and action inform one another (Collins, 2009).

- Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the significance of change. The voices and standpoint of African American women must adapt as social conditions change. It is important for Black intellectuals to continue to generate knowledge that is based on current situations for Black Feminist Thought to continue as an effective critical social theory.

- Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the relationship to other projects for social justice. Like other social movements, Black Feminist Thought aims to empower oppressed groups. The elevation of African American women in the U. S. cannot occur in isolation, however, there has to be a commitment to human solidarity regarding any political movement regardless of the social location or perspective (Collins, 2009).

Collins (2000) explained that Black women have held an outsider-within status, which encourages Black women to seek support networks and friendship relationships whenever possible. Alemán et al., (2002) found that women of color pursue these relationships for various reasons such as to:

- Develop positive self-identities independent of racist and/or ethnocentric definitions imposed by college environments,
- engage in noncombative and noneducative "race talk" that is a respite from racial and/or ethnic hypersensitivity and hostility,
- share in academic encouragement; and
- gather a gendered focus self within their ethnic and/or racial identities (p. 253).

Although Martinez Aleman's research focused on Black female students, Black women ascending to leadership can utilize the same coping mechanisms in higher education as they focus on career advancement. Not only do Black women feel like outsiders, but they also experience the feeling of isolation. Therefore, this theory grounds the analysis of this study and highlights the professional journey of African American women in higher education leadership. It is not often discussed how intersectionality impacts leadership in academia (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Hence, the researcher for this study used Black Feminist Thought to provide relevant context for understanding the intersections of race and gender of African American women in higher education. African American women bring unique experiences and perspectives to educational communities. The perspectives of the research participants when paired with the literature review added more depth and richness to this research.

Definition of Key Terms

To provide clarity for the discourse on African American women in higher education, the researcher identified key terms used throughout this research. The terms and subsequent definitions noted intended to structure the literature review, data collected, and findings discussed. They included:

African American/Black (Used interchangeably). Individuals who have a history of African descent but were born in the United States.

Culture. "The learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people" (Northouse, 2013, p. 384).

Cultural Competence. "Set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that came together in a system or agency or among professionals and enables the system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross cultural situations" (Cross et al., 1989, p.13).

Cultural Leadership. Broadly defined as the culture of leadership at colleges and universities as distinguished by elements such as their values, visions, missions, traditions, and administrative procedures.

Diversity. "The inclusion of a variety of ethnic, racial, and gender-based groups" (Buckley, 2011, p.102).

Executive Level Leader (Senior Academic Leadership Role). Individual leaders of the university who hold the position of President, Vice President, Provost, Chancellor, dean, chair, or director (Henderson & Ikenberry, 2013).

Glass Ceiling. An invisible barrier that prevents women from ascending into elite positions of leadership (Northouse, 2013).

Higher Education Institutions. Two-year and four-year public and private degree granting colleges and universities, legally authorized to operate in the State in which they operate and accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body or agency (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Institutions of higher learning that were established before 1964 to provide an education to the African American community (hbcucolleges.org).

Intersectionality. "… the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015, p.15).

Presidential Cabinet. Executive level leaders who report directly to the President of the respectful university.

Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). "Institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment" (Lomotely, 2010, p.523).

Post positivism. A research paradigm which emphasizes reductionism, logic, and empirical approaches for scientific inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Organization of Study

Chapter one provided an introduction of the study, which included the problem and purpose of the study. This chapter also introduced the research question addressed in this study: What personal and professional challenges do African American women encounter while ascending to senior leadership at HBCUs? Additional sections of chapter one included the statement of problem, purpose of study, significance of the study, theoretical framework,

limitations, definitions used throughout the study, and an historical overview of African American women in higher education. Chapter two features a literature review, which focused on women in higher education, African American women in higher education, common barriers to ascendency in leadership that African American women encounter, gender imbalance, leadership in higher education, and mentorship. Chapter three gave an overview of the research methodology which featured the research design, population of interest, procedures, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter four discussed the research findings per the interviews from four African American women in senior leadership positions and chapter five highlighted the conclusion, implications, and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature for this study focused on African American women in senior academic leadership positions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) located in the southeastern part of the United States. Highlights of this literature review included cultural and leadership barriers encountered by African American women during their ascension into leadership positions and how they overcame those barriers.

History of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In 1837, the first higher education institution for Blacks was founded in Cheyney, Pennsylvania. Founded by Richard Humphreys, the school was called the Institute for Colored Youth (Stefon, 2019). This school was to provide Black youth with a basic education and the training to become teachers and "tradesmen" (Stefon, 2019). Today, this school is known as Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, which is part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Following Cheyney, there were two other institutions established for Black students- Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania (1854), and Wilberforce University, in Ohio (1856). Fisk University and Howard University are also among the earlier Historically Black Colleges and Universities that were considered coeducational institutions that educated Black women (Patterson-Stephens, 2019). Although these schools were called institutions, their focus was on providing elementary and secondary schooling to students with no previous education (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Prior to the Civil War, there was no structured higher education system for African American students. In 1890, the enactment of the Second Morrill Act provided Black students with public support for higher education. Eventually, there were 16 public Black institutions for

Black students that were designated as land-grant colleges. These land-grant colleges offered courses in agricultural, mechanical, and industrial subjects, but few offered college-level courses and degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Today, there are 112 land-grant institutions and 19 are historically Black.

There is a major increase in the number of Black students receiving secondary education. African Americans were denied admission to traditionally white schools for many years, until they were given the opportunity to attend HBCUs. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are institutions that were established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating African Americans. The term, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities", was created by the Higher Education Act of 1965 to expand federal funding for colleges and universities (Stefon, 2019). As a result of the establishment of HBCUs, they became the standard means for African Americans to receive a postsecondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

It has been reported that at the well-known private Black institutions such as Fisk University, Hampton Institute, Howard University, Meharry Medical College, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Tuskegee Institute, as well as a host of smaller black colleges located in southern Louisiana (such as Dillard University and Xavier University of Louisiana) and other states, there were more than 32,000 students enrolled. The public Black colleges also experienced an increase in enrollment with over 43,000 students by 1953. During this time, HBCUs enrolled 3,200 students in graduate programs. These private and public institutions mutually served the important mission of providing education for teachers, ministers, lawyers, and doctors for the African American population in a racially segregated society (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, established by the Office of Civil Rights, substantial progress has been made in desegregating state systems of higher education and HBCUs continue to play a vital role in enhancing equal educational opportunity and success for all students.

- More than 80 percent of all African Americans who received degrees in medicine and dentistry were trained at the two traditionally Black institutions of medicine and dentistry--Howard University and Meharry Medical College (Today, these institutions still account for 19.7% of degrees awarded in medicine and dentistry to African American students).

- HBCUs have provided undergraduate training for three fourths of all African American persons holding a doctorate degree; three fourths of all Black officers in the armed forces; and four fifths of all black federal judges.

- HBCUs are leading institutions in awarding baccalaureate degrees to African American students in the life sciences, physical sciences mathematics, and engineering.

- HBCUs continue to rank high in terms of the proportion of graduates who pursue and complete graduate and professional training (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2020), to date, there are currently 107 HBCUs with more than 228,000 students enrolled. Fifty-six of the institutions are under private control, and 51 are public colleges and universities. The public institutions account for more than two-thirds of the students in Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Most of the institutions (87) are four-year colleges or universities, and 20 are two-year institutions. In the past, more than 80% of all African American college graduates have been trained at these

HBCUs. Today, HBCUs enroll 20% of African American undergraduates. However, HBCUs award 40% of baccalaureate degrees earned by African American college students.

Women in Higher Education

An American Council on Education American College (ACEAC) President Study in 2017 reported that women make up 30% of the nation's colleges and university presidents (Johnson, 2017). That percentage is a 4% increase from 2011. Women continue to earn the majority of all college degrees and obtain more entry and mid-level positions. These trends correspond to a dynamic shift in higher education that occurred in the 1980s in which women began outpacing men in college enrollment as well as increasing their share as college and university presidents (Frances, 2018). Several researchers have argued that such trends support the theory of the higher education pipeline for women: as larger numbers of women enter lower hierarchies of higher education, they will, over time, move into upper hierarchies of higher education (Camp, 1997; Kulis et al., 2002; McBride, 2002). The conventional wisdom behind the theory is that the influx of women will alleviate barriers to access and equality in higher education.

Despite the influx of women into the higher education system over the last 30 years, several researchers argue that the pipeline theory has failed to produce proportionate representation across faculty and administrative positions (Cook & Kim, 2012; Frances, 2018; Kellerman & Rhode, 2014; Kellerman & Rhode, 2017). Particularly, Longman and Madsen (2014) reported that although women have increased their presence as college and university faculty, they tend be disproportionately represented in mid-to-low level positions. This situation has implications for the faculty to administration progression as well. According to a 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report, significant drop-offs in women faculty positions

such as instructors, lecturers, full and tenured professors has diminished the pool for senior administrators (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Other researchers have noted that the number of women as college presidents has hit a ceiling (Frances, 2018; Kellerman & Rhode, 2014; Kellerman & Rhode, 2017). They argue that the higher education leadership pipeline has failed to produce an increased representation of women presidents (Cook & Kim, 2012; Kellerman & Rhode, 2014; Oikelome, 2018).

When examining the faculty-to-administration progression, the flow of women through the higher education pipeline is leaking, stagnant, or blocked in several areas. Regarding leakage, Merrigan and White (2010), referring to a 2007 female faculty retention initiative at the Harvard Business School, reported that nine out of 28 female junior faculty left the university after being denied tenure, choosing not to apply for promotion, or taking a leave of absence. Regarding stagnancy, Kellerman and Rhode (2017), from their 2013 study, women at Harvard University made up less than 25% of the tenured faculty and only 25% of the faculty ranks. Furthermore, Kellerman and Rhode (2017) reported that the gender composition of tenured faculty has remained the same for the last twenty years. Regarding blockage, White (2005) found that despite increased numbers of women earning doctorates, the number of women in full professoriate positions does not reflect this increase. White (2005) posited that because women are not advancing in the professoriate, this situation may be creating difficulty for them to reach high level leadership positions such as the presidency. In summary, these examples of leakage, stagnancy, and blockage in the pipeline indicate a closer examination of institutional, cultural, and societal factors as it relates to women in higher education leadership. A closer examination of the pipeline as it relates to African American women in higher education leadership is discussed in the section, "African American Women in Higher Education."

Institutions risk their competitiveness as they pass over potential leaders who will either fail to be utilized in tertiary education or be absorbed by other sectors (Airini et al., 2011). While women do advance to university leadership roles, gender imbalance among senior university academics is an acknowledged problem in many countries, with only slow progress being made towards equity.

African American Women in Higher Education

For many years, African American women have been faced with oppression, not only in society, but in education as well. Patterson-Stephens (2019) shared that, throughout history, African American women have experienced and continue to face personal and professional barriers that attempt to impede their success. Despite the many obstacles African American women are faced with, they continue to strive to create better lives, not only for them, but for their families as well as future generations. In 1970, less than 6% of Black women aged 25 or older possessed a bachelor's degree or higher (Patterson-Stephens, 2019). Over the years, that number has increased tremendously, and Black females are soaring with obtaining degrees, but they are slow to advance to leadership positions.

There are Black women who hold presidency positions in higher education (Jena-Marie & Tickles, 2018). However, similar to their low representation as full-time faculty, African American women have low representation as presidents. This problem exists at both HBCUs and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Although they ascend to the presidency position, African American women still face discrimination even at that level. The body of literature on Black women in leadership is growing. However, most of the research focuses on African American women at PWIs. If attention is not devoted to HBCUs, the underrepresentation of

African American women in leadership will continue to persist and, as a consequence, the number of African American women in higher educational leadership will continue to be scarce.

A closer examination of the pipeline is particularly necessary for the status of women of color and higher education leadership. The higher education pipeline for women of color, which includes African American women, may be broadly characterized as one that features disadvantages associated with their representation in numbers and their positions within the higher education employment system. Women of color not only experience underrepresentation in the higher education pipeline as a group (Jones, 2014), but they are also disproportionately hired into lower ranks of faculty and administrators (Evans, 2017). The distribution of African American women faculty by rank in comparison to their counterparts by race, ethnicity, and gender is presented in Figure 1. While researchers determined that female administrators were chosen within the ranks of higher education institutions, (Glazer-Ramo, 2008; Roberson, 1998; Turner & Quaye, 2010), Roberson (1998) noted that for minority women, the most common entry point to becoming a senior administrator was as a professor, staff, chair, or dean. Under conditions of institutional underrepresentation and low rank positions, the pool of potential African American women for higher ranked faculty and administrative positions is subsequently limited. Furthermore, the journey of African American women through the pipeline is heavily shaped by the intersectionality of their race and gender (Oikelome, 2018), a situation that subsequently creates challenges for African American women aspiring to higher education leadership.

In their book, *Black Colleges Across the Diaspora: Global Perspectives on Race and Stratification in Higher Education*, Brown and Dancy (2017) reviewed the 2013-14 White House Initiative on HBCUs' report on the status of African American women as presidents at HBCUs.

The report indicated that out of the 106 HBCUs (including 2 year colleges), 29 women held the position of chancellor/president; at least 25 were African American women. Brown and Dancy (2017) also made the following observation about African America women presidents at HBCUs: "No distinct path exists that makes evident the career path or educational background needed to obtain the presidential role." Their statement reveals an opportunity for HBCUs to take a closer look at how African American women ascend to the presidency, but also to become more knowledgeable of diversity of educational experiences they bring to the presidency.

In 2016, only 5 percent of college presidents were women of color, while 25% were white women, according to the American Council of Education. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the breakdown of college presidents by gender. Data were collected over a 15-year span, and it shows that men continue to excel in obtaining leadership positions, even at the presidency level. Figure 3 shows that in 2016, African Americans made up 8% of presidents while Caucasians made up 83%.

Figure 1.

Race/ Ethnicity of College Faculty by Academic Rank and Race

https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61

23
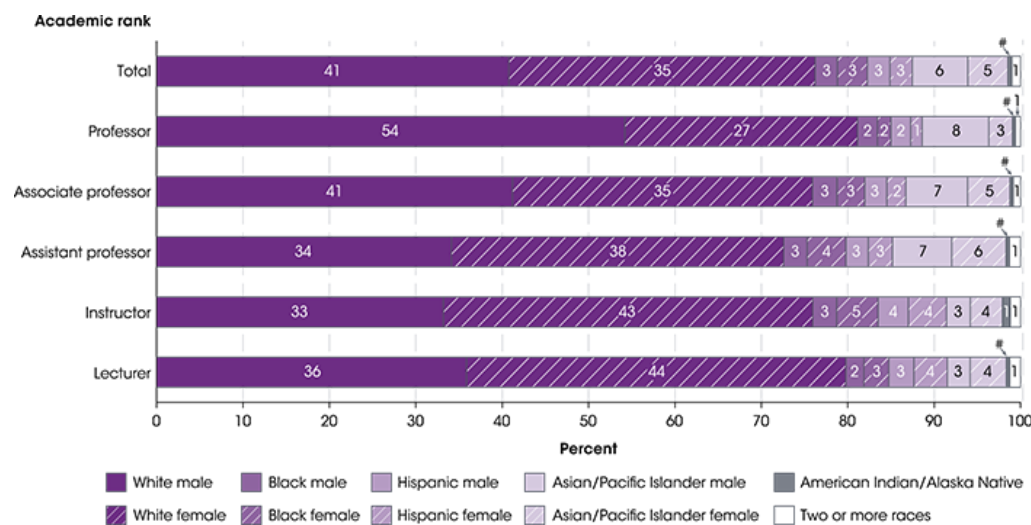
Figure 2.

College Presidents, by Gender

College Presidents, by Gender

	2016
	Men: 70%
	Women: 30%
	2011
	Men: 74%
	Women: 26%
	2006
	Men: 77%
	Women: 23%
	2001
	Men: 79%
	Women: 21%

● Men   ● Women

Source: www.acenet.edu/acps2017

ACE American Council on Education® 100 Years of Leadership and Advocacy   TIAA Institute

https://www.aceacps.org/summary-profile-dashboard/
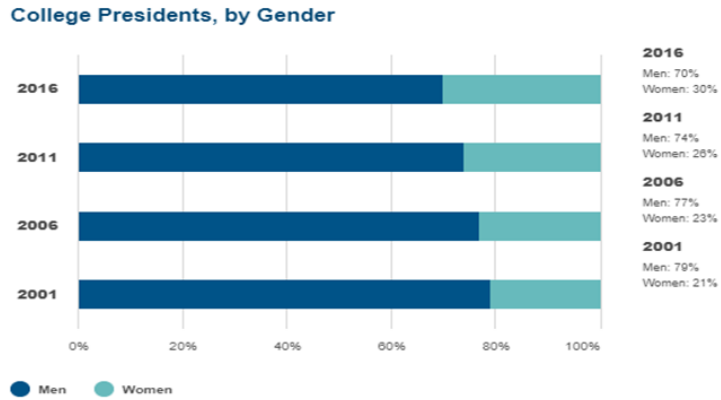
Figure 3.

Demographics: College Presidents, by Race/Ethnicity

Demographics: College Presidents, by Race/Ethnicity

2016

American Indian/Alaska Native: 1%
Asian or Asian American: 2%
Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American: 8%
Caucasian, White, or White American: 83%
Hispanic/Latino(a): 4%
Middle Eastern or Arab American: 1%
Multiple Races: 1%

◐ American Indian/Alaska Native   ● Asian or Asian American

◑ Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American

● Caucasian, White, or White American   ● Hispanic/Latino(a)

◍ Middle Eastern or Arab American   ● Multiple Races

Source: www.acenet.edu/acps2017

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https://www.aceacps.org/summary-profile/

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Hannum et al. (2015) revealed that in the early 1970s, 11% of doctoral degrees were awarded to women; and since 1979, more than 50% of students enrolled in higher education were women; and since 2005, women earned more than 50% of doctoral degrees. Mainah and Perkins (2015) conducted research on challenges facing female leaders of color in U.S. higher education, revealing that women in the U.S. earn the majority of postsecondary degrees and 26.4% of college presidents are women, but only 4.5% are women of color.

Many African American women are well-educated, qualified, have the experience, and are highly capable of being in executive level positions at HBCUs, but their presence at these levels is scarce. According to Mainah and Perkins (2015), most studies on this topic have indicated that a majority of women in academic leadership positions, especially women of color, have experienced exclusion, condescension, isolation, dismissal, communication challenges, lack of validation or appreciation, and failure to receive due credit.

African American Women in Higher Education Leadership

African American women such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Anna Cooper, and Mary Jane Patterson have paved the way and have proven that African American women are capable of being great leaders at educational institutions for African Americans. Glover (2012) discussed the strides that Black women made in education beginning with the opportunity to receive a higher education at Oberlin College (Ohio) in 1837, almost three decades after white women. Lucy Sessions was the first Black woman to obtain a literary degree in the United States from Oberlin in 1850. In 1862, Mary Jane Patterson was the first Black woman to receive a bachelor's degree, which was the turning point for Black Women in higher education. Fanny Jackson Coppin earned her bachelor's degree from Oberlin in 1865 (Patterson-Stephens, 2019). The first and only Black woman to earn a doctorate in Medicine was Rebecca Lee Crumpler, in

1865, from the New England Female Medical College (Massachusetts). Saddie Turner Mossell Alexander was the first Black woman to earn a PhD in economics, in 1921, from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1929, Jan Ellen McAlister was the first Black woman to earn her PhD in education. African American women are constantly working to leave traces of their footprints (Patterson-Stephens, 2019).

The brief historical snapshot presented in the previous paragraph illustrates that African American women may be appropriately described as pioneers in the frontiers of higher education during the 19th and 20th centuries (see Appendix A: Chronology of the Advancement of African American Women in Higher Education). When taking a closer look at their leadership roles, it appears that several of these women acquired leadership positions as founders of educational institutions. However, even with the prominence these women achieved from these leadership positions, the history of presidencies at several of these institutions indicates that a pipeline to facilitate African American women into higher education was lacking. Using two examples of African American women pioneers in higher education from the previous section, the following sections briefly highlight the histories of their leadership roles at African American secondary schools, the evolution of these schools into degree-granting HBCUs, and the sporadic entry of African Americans into higher education leadership.

As the first example, Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator, founded the Daytona Beach Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls. The school merged with the all-male Cookman Institute to form Bethune-Cookman College in 1929. Bethune served as the president of the college from 1923 to 1942 and 1946 to 1947 (Past Presidents of Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.). Between Bethune's tenure and after her tenure ended, three African American men occupied the presidency, a period that lasted over 50 years (Past Presidents of Bethune-

Cookman University, n.d.). It was not until 2004 that an African American woman, Dr. Trudie Kidde Reed, became president of Bethune-Cookman College (History of Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.). Three years after Dr. Kidde Reed became president, the college attained university status in 2007 (History of Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.). When Dr. Kidde Reed's tenure ended in 2012, an African American man, Dr. Edison O. Jackson, became president and served until 2017. Following the end of Dr. Jackson's tenure, Bethune-Cookman University underwent a presidential transition period. As of this writing, Bethune-Cookman University welcomed an African American man as its seventh president, Dr. LaBrent Chrite, in 2019.

As the second example, Fannie Jackson served as the first African American principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, a Quaker institution. In 1881, Jackson acquired the surname Coppin though her marriage to Reverend Levi Jenkins Coppin (Jackson-Coppin Historical Marker, 2019). In honor of Mrs. Jackson-Coppin's legacy of teacher education for African Americans, in 1926, the Douglas High School in Baltimore, Maryland, was renamed the Fannie Jackson Coppin Normal School (Coppin State University, 2020). Between 1938 and 1950, the school underwent a period of development in which the curriculum extended to four years (Coppin State University, 2020). By 1950, to recognize the school's newly granted authority to award bachelor's degrees, the school was renamed Coppin Teachers College.

The succession of presidents was firmly in the hands of men well before Coppin Teachers College was renamed Coppin State University in 2004 (Coppin State University, 2020). From 1950 to 2013, the five presidents of Coppin State University were all African American men. By 2013, the university was struggling with financial problems and poor graduation rates. In 2015, Dr. Maria Thompson became Coppin's first African American woman president. Unfortunately,

this milestone in the university's history was not followed by a succession of African American women presidents. Dr. Thompson's tenure at Coppin State University was short-lived. In June 2019, she resigned to return to her home in Nashville, Tennessee, after overcoming health challenges (Thompson, 2019). Upon Dr. Thompson's resignation, two African American men succeeded her as presidents at Coppin State University. In 2017, Dr. Mickey L. Burnim became interim president of Coppin State University. As of this writing, Dr. Anthony Jenkins was later appointed to become president in May 2020.

From these examples, it is clear these African American women pioneers laid the foundations for several of today's HBCUs. In many cases, these HBCUs recognize and honor their pioneering groundwork. To this end, the historical webpage of Bethune-Cookman University recognized Bethune for her legacy of "legacy of faith, scholarship, and service" (Bethune-Cookman University, 2020). In a similar fashion, the historical webpage of Coppin State University describes Fannie Jackson Coppin as "a model of academic excellence—both in her life and in the heritage that she has bequeathed to those who followed" (Fanny Jackson Coppin, 2020). From the accolades of HBCUs, it appears that these African American women pioneers exhibited a form of "charismatic leadership." Drawing from the story of Ruth Simmons, the first black president of Simmons College, Kleine (2002) described charismatic leadership as leadership that breaks down barriers against African American women from entering higher education, highlights their outstanding skills and contributions, and generates enthusiasm about the diversification of higher education.

The sentiments and tributes expressed by the HBCUs broadly reflect characteristics of charismatic leadership. However, although charismatic leadership is an admirable legacy of African American women pioneers, it did not facilitate a foundation for African American

women to acquire positions as college presidents. In fact, it appears that African American men, unlike African American women, may have benefited more from charismatic leadership as far as establishing a legacy of presidency at HBCUs. In other words, by marriage or merger, African American men were able to enter the doors of the institutions that these pioneering African American women opened and have their surnames incorporated into the founding of these institutions. Furthermore, African American men were not only appointed as presidents, but they also developed a pipeline that assured them that they would be appointed as presidents in the future. This situation reinforces the need to closely examine the underrepresentation of African American women in the higher education pipeline as well as the experiences and barriers they face as they enter and attempt to ascend into higher education leadership.

Barriers to Ascendency

Glass Ceiling

The term Glass Ceiling was introduced in the 1980s by the U.S. Department of Labor as "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into senior-level positions" (Beckwith et al., 2016). Over the years, women and minorities continued to be underrepresented in leadership positions. Therefore, in 1991 congress created the Glass Ceiling Act, which established the Glass Ceiling Commission to investigate organizational discrimination against women and minorities. Many African American women and minorities consider the glass ceiling as a barrier when pursuing senior leadership positions in higher education. Davis and Maldonado (2015) defined glass ceiling as, "an invisible barrier to advancement based on attitudinal or organizational biases" (p.51). In its 1995 edition of *The Black Scholar,* the speech that was made by former senator Carol Mosley Braun of Illinois on March 30, 1995 was

highlighted as she addressed congress about issues surrounding Affirmative Action and the Glass Ceiling. Braun's speech focused on the importance of the need for continuous support of Affirmative Action. Johns (2013) explained that the purpose of the commission was to study:

- The processes in which business fill management and leadership positions,

- the practices to foster the qualification for advancement,

- the compensation and reward structures that are in place; and

- the creation of an annual award for excellence in promoting a diverse workforce.

Due to constant discrimination in the workplace, efforts have been made to reduce barriers in promotion (Davis, 2009). Even though more African American women are graduating with degrees, they have faced many issues that hinder their career development and career ascension. African American women experience challenges in advancement and are underrepresented at predominantly white and black institutions (Gasman et al., 2015). Although the number of African American women persevering through college is increasing, this should increase the pool of eligible candidates to hire for leadership positions. However, for those African American women who are qualified, many are often overlooked or dismissed. It was reported in the 2016 edition of *The Culture,* that there have been at least four African American women who held a presidency position and were terminated or resigned for various reasons within months apart. June Cole was fired from Allen University and Elmira Magnum stepped down from Florida A&M. Gwendolyn Boyd, former president of Alabama State University, was suspended due to "failure to maintain confidence". Carolyn Meyers, former president of Jackson State University, resigned due to concerns about the university's finances. Many African American women have become leaders in higher education. Yet, they continue to encounter barriers while achieving their goals. African American women have encountered barriers due to

"double oppression", being black and female. They have also encountered barriers due to the glass ceiling, as well as being marginalized in many spaces even within and outside of the black community. Molina (2008) added that it is quite often that women of color feel marginalized, silenced, invisible, or tokenized in institutions of higher education. Often, due to being marginalized, the skill sets of the African American women are overlooked. They are constantly encountering issues other than social identities such as: gender, class, ability, and sexuality. In fact, the lived experiences of women of color are almost nonexistent in research on higher education, which is why the researcher conducted this study. It is highly important to share the perspectives of African American women.

Gender Imbalance

Race and gender play a major role in the development of African American women as leaders (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). African American females are tenacious and can rise above obstacles they are faced with (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Women encounter more barriers as they ascend to leadership roles. Retention and continuity become more scared. Education has always been a respectable career area for African American women. African American women have experienced alienation in the higher education setting. African American women remain in academia, but they are still viewed as invisible. Once the existing barriers are addressed, African American women will become more visible, and their representation will increase.

The lack of women in higher education leadership is a reflection that the existing structure and culture of the educational system was created for and by men (O'Connor, 2018). Regardless of where the university is in the world, men are constantly rising to senior leadership at a rate disproportionate to females (Osborn et al, 2000). Although there is a rise of women who are being employed at educational institutions and women are known to be higher achievers,

they are still not advancing to leadership at a rate higher than males (O'Connor, 2018). Women are constantly being overlooked.

Cultural Competency

Cultural Competence, which can also be called diversity competence, is defined by (Sperry, 2012) as "the capacity to draw effectively upon cultural knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and skillful actions in order to relate appropriately to, and work effectively with, others from different cultural backgrounds" (pg. 312). Cultural Competence has several models that can be adapted by campus leaders to foster awareness in respect of other culturally diverse groups and help to build an inclusive environment on campuses (Chun & Evans, 2016). According to Sperry (2012), cultural competence has four dimensions:

- Cultural knowledge: Understanding an individual's ethnicity, social class, acculturation, religion, gender, and age (Sue & Sue, 2003).

- Cultural awareness: Having the ability to identify a cultural problem or issue.

- Cultural sensitivity: Being able to respond empathically toward a cultural problem or issue.

- Cultural action: Being able to resolve a culturally related issue.

It is important for higher education institutions to foster a diverse environment. Due to the rapid changing demographic in the United States and the workforce leadership, it is important that colleges and universities ensure that diversity in leadership is visible throughout their campuses. Shorter-Gooden (2013) explained that in order for an organization to be culturally competent, it must: (1) ensure that equal opportunities are afforded to all students, faculty, and staff; (2) promote a positive and welcoming environment; and encourage diversity of ideas throughout the organization (pp. 208-209).

This concept was relevant to this study because it helped to understand the experiences of African American women during their ascension to senior academic leadership roles. It also provided a holistic lens for campus leaders in examining institutional policies, procedures, and practices. Shorter-Gooden (2013) further explained that it is not enough to just hire an individual from an underrepresented group, there must be opportunities for them to advance to supervisory, managerial, and leadership positions. Getting them in is one aspect but building them and helping them to grow is another. Access and success work hand-in-hand.

Cultural Leadership

Cultural leadership has historically been a barrier of inclusion and expansion in top leadership. Given the barriers posed against African American women by cultural leadership, more doors of leadership must be opened for African American women. In their book, Black Colleges Across the Diaspora: Global Perspectives on Race and Stratification in Higher Education, Brown and Dancy (2017) reviewed the 2013-14 White House Initiative on HBCUs' report on the status of African American women as presidents at HBCUs. The report indicated that out of the 106 HBCUs (including community colleges), 29 women held the position of chancellor/president; at least 25 were African American women. This indicates that there are approximately 25% African American women are at the helm of HBCUs. Brown and Dancy (2017) also made the following observation about African America women presidents at HBCUs: "No distinct path exists that makes evident the career path or educational background needed to obtain the presidential role." Their statement revealed an opportunity for HBCUs to take a closer look at how African American women ascend to the presidency, but also to become more knowledgeable of diversity of educational experiences they bring to the presidency.

Summary

As this chapter concludes, the researcher has identified some challenges African American women have encountered as they advanced to leadership positions in higher education and the strategies, they used to overcome the barriers. Research has showed that over the years that African American women who are qualified are often overlooked or they are not considered for advanced leadership roles, included cultural and leadership barriers encountered by African American women during their ascension and how they overcame those barriers.

This chapter took the readers on a journey that explains the time when African American women fought to receive an education. This literature review addressed historical views of African American women in higher education. Many people advocated to ensure there were educational opportunities available for African American women. Those opportunities turned into policies that not only allowed African American women to become educated, but they also provided them with access to receive a higher education, with degree opportunities. This literature review also discusses barriers that African American women face in leadership in higher education. The researcher described glass ceiling, gender imbalance, cultural competency, cultural leadership which were repeated barriers identified within the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction/Organization of the Chapter

This chapter of the dissertation contains information regarding the research methods used to conduct the study. It covers the research design, population, procedures, data collection, and data analysis. Through the use of open-ended interviews and document analysis the researcher explored how lived experiences of the study participants bring meaning to the research questions that were being addressed. It was the researcher's intention to highlight the experiences of African American women and the ways each of them persevered through the barriers they encountered during their advancement to senior leadership.

Rationale for Research Design and Methodology

The researcher used qualitative research methods in this study, specifically phenomenology. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. This method consists of a set of interpretive components that make the world visible. It can be defined as, "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.3). This method uses the collection of data through the use of case study, personal experience, introspect, life story, interview, observational, historical, document analysis, interactional and visual texts, such as photos and journals (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). There are many advantages to conducting a qualitative study. Maxwell (2013) explained three advantages of conducting a qualitative study include:

- Specificity; keeping generalizations limited to the intended audience.

- Allowance for variance in participant reporting.

- The observance of experiences or phenomena within certain constructs that are predetermined by the researcher.

The literature revealed that researchers have utilized just as many qualitative methods when conducting their studies as those who have utilized quantitative methods. To fully understand the gender and racial barriers encountered by the research participants and the strategies they used during their ascension to senior leadership positions, it was necessary to explore their lived experiences. The researcher used a phenomenological approach for this study. Phenomenology is the first major qualitative research method (Christensen & Johnson, 2017). Founded by philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), phenomenological research is a design of inquiry in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). The purpose of phenomenology research is to acquire a view into the research participants' lives and gain an understanding of what a phenomenon means to them (Christensen & Johnson, 2017). The phenomenological approach was suitable for this study because the researcher sought to understand the personal and professional experiences of African American women who have pursued leadership positions in higher education. The researcher conducted interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the individual lived experiences of the participants regarding their advancement.

Assumptions and Biases

In conducting this research, there were some key assumptions related to the respondents of the study. The researcher assumed that all voluntary respondents participating in this study answered interview questions truthfully and to the best of their ability. In addition, the researcher assumed that the geographic region selected would show enough variation in the

participants' experiences. Finally, the researcher assumed that the use of African American women as the focus of this study would add to the literature and provide new information to the experiences of this particular group.

As with all qualitative research endeavors, bias and subjectivity can affect the reliability and validity of the research. Specifically, since the researcher is an African American woman and the participants were African American women, biases regarding matters such as gender, race, shared cultural beliefs may have emerged. Furthermore, subjectivity regarding the interpretation of participants' responses could possibly hinder the accurate representation of their beliefs. To minimize bias and subjectivity and to improve reliability and validity of the research, the researcher used triangulation, a method in which the researcher obtained multiple sources of data to support interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher employed Moustakas' (1994) model to aid in avoiding any potential bias. Moustakas (1994) recommends the process called bracketing, allowing the researcher to set aside any preconceived notions pertaining to the phenomenon. Additionally, the researcher allowed participants to review the results to verify and/or correct interpretations; a process called member checking.

Limitations

This study focused only on African American women in senior level positions in higher education. However, it did not speak for all African American women in higher education. One limitation of this study was that all the women who were interviewed held a Doctorate degree. Another limitation was that all the women worked in higher education. Therefore, other women with lower positions or women who work in a k-12 setting were not included in this study.

Population/Site Selection

The population for this study was inclusive of African American females at Historically

Black Colleges and Universities across the southeastern region of the United States. The

research focused on a population that experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The

participants in this study had to meet the following criteria:

- Be an African American woman.

- Currently serve or previously served in a senior leadership capacity (titles may vary

    depending on the institution) as President, Vice President, Chancellor, Dean or

    Provost at a two-year or four-year public or private higher education institution that

    was classified as historically black by the United States government (citation needed).

- Available to participate in the study.

Sample Selection

Christensen and Johnson (2017) explained that when conducting a phenomenological

research approach, the primary data collection method should consist of in-depth interviews from

three or more individuals. Therefore, the sample of this study consisted of four African

American women who currently serve or have previously served in a senior leadership position

such as President, Vice President, Chancellor, Dean, and or Provost at Historically Black

Colleges and Universities. There was no restriction on the age of the participant, nor was there a

limitation on the length of time the participant has operated in the executive leader capacity.

Participants did not have to be natives of Louisiana in order to participate in the study.

For this study, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling. According to Creswell and

Plano Clark (2011), the participants in purposeful sampling are chosen because of their

knowledge about the phenomenon being studied. Yin (2010) defines purposeful sampling as

"the selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, their anticipated richness, and relevance of information relative to the study's research questions" (p.311). Therefore, by incorporating this sampling technique, the researcher gained an in-depth understanding about the experiences of the participants. The researcher identified African American women to participate in the study through purposeful sampling. The researcher used university websites, the roster of African American Women in Higher Education (AAWHE), Women in Higher Education (WIHE), and other sources to identify and recruit participants for the study. Everyone received an email requesting consent for their participation. The email also included background information and the purpose of the study and what was expected of the participant. Once the participant agreed to participate in the study, she received information regarding their anonymity throughout the research process.

All participants who agreed to participate in the study remained anonymous. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants could choose to opt out of the study at any time. The university that the women are affiliated with was also anonymous. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the names of the participants. The researcher labelled participants as Dr. Sun (Interviewee 1), Dr. Moon (Interviewee 2), Dr. Star (Interviewee 3), and Dr. Sky (Interviewee 4).

Data Collection

The researcher received approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (APPENDIX C) to conduct the research study. Upon receiving IRB approval, the researcher began the sample selection process by soliciting the participation of African American women who currently hold or previously held a senior academic leadership position at a Historically Black College or University across the U.S. region. The researcher searched the websites of

HBCUs to locate African American women who filled senior leadership positions. Once the researcher gathered the contact information for the individuals, she sent an email requesting participation (APPENDIX D).

Once the researcher received approval via email from interested participants, the researcher sent an informed consent form for their completion (APPENDIX E), which further explained the purpose and goals of the study. Upon receiving the signed informed consent, the researcher worked with the individuals to schedule dates and times that worked for interviews. The researcher requested anticipated participants to also complete a biographical/demographic profile (APPENDIX F) to provide demographic information as well as career information. The profiles had to be returned prior to the interview.

Due to COVID-19, the researcher conducted all interviews via Zoom. Upon confirming the interview date and time, the researcher sent an email with the zoom link, which included the date and time of the interview as well as access for the interview. The researcher scheduled each interview for 60 minutes. However, it was agreed that if they needed more time, that would be fine to go beyond 60 minutes. Some interviews exceeded 60 minutes and the participants were fine. There were some follow up email correspondences for clarity. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher utilized transcription services. Once the transcriptions were complete, the researcher implemented the member checking process. This process consisted of the researcher emailing the transcript to the participant and allowing the participant to provide feedback to the findings for accuracy.

Instrumentation

In order to gain the most in-depth understanding of the study, the researcher used a questionnaire, interviews, and journaling to collect data. The researcher created a

biographical/demographic profile (APPENDIX F) to gain more insight on the participants'

background. This provided information on the participants' length in current role, what/who

encouraged them to become a senior leader, and why they chose to work in administration. The

researcher conducted virtual interviews via Zooms, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A host of

open-ended questions guided the interviews. According to Patton (2002), researchers can

acquire rich information of the participants' experiences when they conduct in-depth interviews.

Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the participant's

perspective of the phenomenon (Christensen & Johnson, 2017). The semi structured interview

questions allowed the researcher flexibility and consistency amongst the interviews. Journaling

allowed the researcher to keep track of information closely related to the subject being

researched.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) describes data analysis as qualitative research that consists of preparing

and organizing the data, reducing the data into themes by coding and condensing the codes of the

data and representing figures, tables, or discussions. The researcher analyzed data through the

six- step process outlined by Creswell (2008):

1. Create and organize data.

2. Read through data. Make note and form initial codes.

3. Note any patterns in data.

4. Develop themes and groups.

5. Determine interrelations

6. Interpret themes.

The data analysis began with the researcher collecting the data by interviewing the research participants who have experienced the phenomenon, followed by the recorded interviews of the participants being transcribed into written scripts. The researcher recorded interviews through an audio recorder software on her laptop. The researcher listened to the audio of the recorded interviews. This step of the transcription process provided the researcher with enough written data to begin coding the data. The researcher identified statements and quotes from the transcripts about phenomenological factors shared by the research participants that contribute to the experiences of African American women in senior leadership at HBCUS (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The interviews were analyzed by a professional transcriber for accuracy. This allowed the researcher to reflect on the information gathered and establish credibility and use of information (Creswell, 2014). This was an opportunity for the researcher to make additional notes. The researcher later utilized a technique called member checking. This process required the researcher to email the participants their interview transcripts to validate the data further, allowing them to provide any feedback or corrections to the transcripts for accuracy (Creswell, 2003). The researcher analyzed each transcript for words and phrases that coded into themes. Once the participants returned their transcripts with their comments, the researcher reread the transcripts to identify any additional codes.

The thematic analysis featured a deductive approach which utilized the theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought. The thematic analysis incorporated the four issues that are relevant to the study's focus on the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership as discussed in the Theoretical Framework section:

- Black women are often marginalized in educational spaces

- Black women often struggle with race and gender in educational spaces

- Black women are often viewed as outsiders in educational spaces

- Black women face systems of power in educational spaces

The level of analysis included sentences and words from the participants' interviews. Sample codes included the following: *marginalized, outsider, invisible, resistance, struggle, self-efficacy, self-definition, empowerment, power, success, and achievement.* Some codes became themes if they appeared very often in the data. On the other hand, some themes may have been generated by combining several codes. For example, the codes *marginalization, outsider, and invisible*, may have been incorporated into the theme, "Hidden Figures in Higher Education." As another example, the codes, *empowerment, power, and success* may have been incorporated into the theme based on the poem by Maya Angelou, "Still I rise" (Angelou, 1994).

The researcher extracted 31 original statements from the four transcripts obtained from the participants. For the purpose of utilizing transcendental phenomenological data analysis, the interview questions were designed to capture "what" and "how" descriptions. The initial codes used for categorization were W (what) and H (how). The researcher utilized a poster board to record the interview questions and each of the participant's responses. After extracting keywords and statements, the researcher then clustered the statements and comments into themes, removing overlapping comments. The researcher established final themes to describe the challenges that African American women encountered during their ascendency to senior leadership in higher education and the strategies that were employed to combat and overcome the following challenges: Racism and Sexism, Organizational Structure, Leadership/Professional Development, Confidence/Authenticity and Mentors/Sponsors.

The data analysis process began with the researcher collecting the data by interviewing the research participants who have experienced the phenomenon, followed by the researcher

transcribing the recorded interviews of the participants into written scripts. The researcher

listened to the audio of the recorded interviews. This step of the transcription process provided

the researcher with enough written data to begin coding the data. The researcher identified

statements and quotes from the transcripts about phenomenological factors shared by the

research participants that contribute to the experiences of African American. The themes that

emerged are presented in Chapter Four.

Summary

This chapter aimed to outline the research methodology used to answer the research

questions that guided this study. This chapter included the rationale for the research design and

methodology, assumptions and biases, limitations, population/site selection, sample selection,

data collection and instrumentation, and the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The chapter uncovered the findings from the research conducted. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenon of the professional and personal challenges relating to race and gender experienced by African American females at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as they ascend to senior academic leadership positions. This study adds to the limited body of knowledge regarding African American women in leadership positions in higher education. Additionally, this research offers the African American female leaders' perspectives on the challenges they encountered during their ascension and their coping strategies.

This study did not focus on the effectiveness of the leaders' performance, rather, the study focused on their perspectives and meanings of the events that have helped in their advancement to senior leadership (Alexander-Lee, 2014; Oikelome, 2018). Wilson (1989) explained that women of color are faced with limitations rooted in the history of America. Therefore, emphasis of the study shows the need to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts for African American women in higher education administration. With a single-sector framework, this study highlighted the intersectional issues of race and gender for African American women as they ascend to senior leadership positions in academia. The goal of this research was to understand how African American women navigate the higher education system as they ascend to their senior leadership positions. This study aimed at providing information to African American women who are rising in their careers as senior leaders in institutions of higher education as well as those interested in pursuing a career in higher education.

Table 1 *Interview Schedule*

Participant	Interview Date	Scheduled Time	Length of Interview in minutes
Dr. Sun	1/11/2021	3:30 PM	61mins
Dr. Moon	1/16/2021	11:00 AM	83mins
Dr. Star	1/21/2021	12:00 PM	93mins
Dr. Sky	1/25/2021	1:00 PM	54mins

Source: Interviews

Participant Profiles

The four African American women who participated in this research study are and were senior-level administrators at Historically Black Colleges & Universities. All participants have experienced the phenomenon of the professional and personal challenges relating to race and gender experienced by African American females at HBCUs as they ascend to senior academic leadership positions in colleges and universities located in the southeastern United States. Altogether, the women have 10 years of administrative experience. Each have fulfilled various roles and encountered many barriers as they ascended to senior leadership positions. For the purposes of this study, the researcher assigned the following pseudonyms to conceal the identity of each participant: Dr. Sun, Dr. Moon, Dr. Star, and Dr. Sky. Table 2 provides some educational background on each of the participants. All four of the participants have terminal degrees in their fields. The length of time each participant has been in senior leadership varied between 5 months to 10 years. Two of the participants have worked outside of higher education and none of the participants planned to work in higher education administration.

Table 2 *Biographical Profiles*

Biographical Background Information on Participants

Name	Age	Born	Level of education	Current Position	Length
Dr. Sun	69	TN	Pharm D	Dean, College of Pharmacy	10 Years
Dr. Moon	57	VA	Ph.D.	Dean, A&S	2.5 Years
Dr. Star	52	Missouri	Ph.D.	Vice Chancellor, Institutional Advancement	5 Months
Dr. Sky	63	LA	Ph.D.	Provost & VP for Academic Affairs	2.5 Years

Source: Demographic Profiles

Dr. Sun

Dr. Sun is a 69-year-old African American woman who was born in Nashville, TN. She earned a degree in Pharm D. After spending time in the corporate world, Dr. Sun decided that she preferred academia. Following the encouragement of a supervisor, Dr. Sun decided to apply for an administrative position where she could have an opportunity to contribute to the professional development of students. Later, she became interested in a position as an Associate Dean. After completing several leadership training programs, she decided to apply for the Dean's position when it became available. Dr. Sun has held the position as Dean for the past 10 years.

When asked about her childhood education, Dr. Sun mentioned that she attended an elementary school founded by St. Katharine Drexel. When it came time for her to attend high school, Dr. Sun faced a situation in which there were no public high schools with college preparatory programs that accepted African Americans. Her only recourse was to attend a

Catholic high school with a college preparatory program. While attending the Catholic high school, Dr. Sun took a career assessment and discovered that her career interest aligned with Pharmaceutical Sciences. Dr. Sun began applying to colleges that had pharmacy programs. She was accepted to a college in Midwest but decided to stay in her hometown to attend a university in the south.

As a pioneer in her journey to obtain higher education, Dr. Sun was the first in her family to graduate from college. After graduating from the university with a terminal degree Dr. Sun applied to the School of Pharmacy at the university located on the west coast. After Dr. Sun completed the requirements for the degree and was in residency, one of her residency mentors said, "You would really be good in academia." Following the mentor's suggestion, Dr. Sun accepted academic position at a private institution in the southeast in 1979. While serving full time in this position at the university, Dr. Sun also worked at a local hospital. She later was nominated to serve in her first leadership and management role as the new director of pharmacy operations at the hospital. She then was appointed as the Director of Pharmaceutical Services at hospital. She described how she was suddenly responsible for managing 99 employees and a substantial budget. Dr. Sun recalled how this position was a tremendous undertaking for her because she had no training in hospital pharmacy management. To gain management experience, Dr. Sun participated in a management training program conducted by one of the drug companies.

Dr. Sun recalled several turning points in her career. While she was working as the Director of Pharmaceutical Services, she was still serving as the director at the university. After working for six years as the Director of Pharmaceutical Services, Dr. Sun was recruited to work for a pharmaceutical company. She decided to leave the university and work for the pharmaceutical company as a medical liaison. Within a few years, Dr. Sun was promoted to a

management position with the pharmaceutical company. In this position, Dr. Sun gained nearly nine years of management and leadership experience.

While serving in the management position at the pharmaceutical company, Dr. Sun learned that the Associate Dean of the College of Pharmacy was leaving the private university where she was previously employed. She applied for the position and was rehired as the Associate Dean. Later, Dr. Sun served as the Interim Dean while a national search was conducted. She was appointed the Dean of the College of Pharmacy in 2010. In her role as Dean, she oversees 77 students in the Physician's Assistant Program and 585 students in the Pharmacy School. Dr. Sun is also responsible for ensuring that the Pharmacy School meets 30 standards required by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education. One of her responsibilities is to maintain the pharmacy school's competitive rankings by meeting the standards for re-accreditation.

Dr. Moon

Dr. Moon is a 57- year-old African American woman who was born in the south. She has a doctorate degree and currently serves as the Dean of Arts & Sciences at a liberal arts university, a position she has held for 2 ½ years. When asked about her educational background, Dr. Moon mentioned that she received an undergraduate degree in Biochemistry from a university in the south. Dr. Moon chose to major in the field of Biochemistry because, from her perspective, she believed she would be seen through the objective lens that is often associated with the natural sciences. She elaborated on her perspective with the following remark: "Meaning that if you could balance the equation, you could do the mathematics, no one could say that your answer was wrong. It was less subjective." She did not pursue a master's degree

because as an undergraduate, she had already earned sufficient credits which allowed her to bypass the master's degree. From this unique situation, Dr. Moon became one of the first doctors to earn a Ph.D. in Plant Physiology and Biochemistry without earning a master's degree.

When asked about her current position as the Dean of Arts & Sciences, Dr. Moon remarked that she saw the position as an opportunity to help shape the narrative about students' development at a liberal arts university. She described herself as a data-driven researcher who uses multiple streams of information to make decisions. She also described herself as a good listener who is agreeable to considering diverse ideas and seeking majority agreement. Regarding her leadership capabilities, Dr. Moon sees herself as a conduit to help others to make the college and university exceptional. Dr. Moon later described a series of positions she acquired as she entered academic administration. First, she served as a department chair at a public HBCU on the east coast. She later served as an Endowed Chair at another public HBCU. In that position, Dr. Moon had to work with faculty to develop a strategic vision for the university.

Another step in Dr. Moon's leadership development was being nominated to serve as a fellow for the American Council of Education by the university's president. It was through her participation as an ACE Fellow that she gained insight into higher education administration as well as an opportunity to look closely at higher education leadership. Initially, Dr. Moon recalled that she did not desire a leadership position. Rather, others recognized her leadership potential and encouraged her to seek leadership opportunities.

Dr. Moon has served as the Dean of Arts & Sciences for a little over two years but decided she wanted a position with more authority as part of her leadership role. She foresees that she will be transitioning to another HBCU in the near future. Dr. Moon noted that although

deans oversee their college, they are the lowest in the hierarchy for higher education leadership. She described the hierarchy the following way:

> Usually, the deans are like the mini-presidents of their college, then the provost oversees all the colleges. You've got the president, the vice president of academic experience and provost, and then you have your deans. But it depends on how large or small the institution, the role of the provost, but usually the provost doesn't micromanage the deans. The deans have some autonomy and can make decisions.

Dr. Star

Dr. Star is a 63-year-old African American woman who grew up during the 1960s era of the segregated south. Her maternal lineage, which features a college educated family, includes teachers, preachers, and social workers. Of note, her maternal grandfather was a teacher who later became a principal. Her maternal relatives acquired wealth and status as college educated professionals. On the other hand, her paternal lineage was less educated and poor. Dr. Star followed her maternal relatives' tradition of pursuing a college education and earned a doctorate degree. Dr. Star recalled how she noticed differences in financial status and material wealth between her maternal and paternal relatives during Christmas time. While her maternal relatives enjoyed luxurious homes, her paternal relatives were using outdoor toilets.

As another turning point for her at age 12, Dr. Star recalled that she wanted to be a psychologist. She believed that by becoming a psychologist, she would gain an understanding of the psychological underpinnings of white racial intolerance, a practice that impacted her negatively as a child and prompted her to dislike white people. She began her college career at a university in south where she completed 50 hours of study during her first summer of attendance.

By the following year she became a sophomore student. It was during this time that Dr. Star realized that she had to resolve her dislike of white people to become a psychologist, a career that would involve her in working with white people. On route to resolving her perspective of white people, Dr. Star became an exchange student at a prestigious predominately white university in the Midwest with not many blacks. The experience was a culture shock for Dr. Star.

Dr. Star was now in a new region that she was unfamiliar with. She was surrounded by more whites than blacks at school. While in class, she felt like based on the conversations, blacks did not exist in the world. She graduated in three years and later was accepted to a university on the East coast on a full ride scholarship. Like her experience at the university in the Midwest, attending the predominately white university on the East coast was also culture shock.

After completing her studies on the East coast, Dr. Star was accepted at a university in south to pursue doctoral studies and earned her PhD. During this time, Dr. Star recalled how the chair of the department, a white professor, recruited her to be his assistant because he was impressed by her maturity and knowledge. Dr. Star described how she and the department chair developed a mutually respectful relationship from their spirited conversations. In her role as the assistant to the chair, Dr. Star presented ideas for how to diversify the department. Although he understood her interest in wanting to be a community psychologist and her desire to change the world, the department chair suggested that she consider pursuing a career in academia because she was so influential as a student leader at the university. She heeded his suggestion and the decision to become a part of academia opened doors for future positions.

Along her academic career path, Dr. Star established a reputation as a determined and committed professional in academia which she believed opened the door for her to be a part of the faculty at a medical college in the south. Later, while attending a conference hosted by the

American Education Research Association, (AERA), a senior administrator from a university on the East coast recruited her. He was there to recruit African Americans to diversify the staff at the university. After she learned that other African Americans were being recruited, this solidified her decision to accept the position. She was the first African chair at the university.

When asked about her time at the university, Dr. Star recalled that she started as a department chair which was her first administrative position. She discovered that the university never had an African American department chair. Furthermore, she was the only African American in the department. She served as the department chair for 4 years. A turning point came in her career in which she decided to leave the university after a recruiter asked her to apply for a position as Associate Provost at a university in the south. After serving there as the Associate Provost for three years, Dr. Star later returned to the university on the East coast where she started as Chair and served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs for 16 years. Later, Dr. Star moved to a university in the south, where she worked for 2 ½ years. She is currently in the midst of another transition in her role in higher education.

Dr. Sky

Dr. Sky is a 52-year-old African American woman who was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Her highest level of education is a doctorate degree. She currently holds the position of Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement, a position she has held for five months at a university in the south. Dr. Sky recalled a series of experiences that lead to her current position. She decided to become an administrator after accelerating through the ranks at an institution in the south and acquiring years of professional fundraising experience. At one point, she was working as the Director for Corporate and Foundation Relations at a university in the south. She also

served as the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at a university in the south. Dr. Sky mentioned that she wanted a stronger voice on matters related to development. Therefore, she applied for the position as Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement because she was ready for more responsibility and greater challenges as well as a desire to change the course of Institutional Advancement and university policy.

Dr. Sky began her administrative work at a technology firm. Later, she worked as an Executive Assistant for a nonprofit organization where she assisted in creating policies and benchmarking procedures for job training for several nonprofit organizations Louisiana. Dr. Sky recalled that it was from this position that she discovered her interest in administrative work. She described how she enjoyed contributing to conversations about how to better shape organizational planning for nonprofit organizations. Dr. Sky later seized an opportunity to serve in the community resources division of a private national non-profit. Some of her duties included helping nonprofit agencies better communicate their activities as well as helping them to create measurable objectives for volunteers to make informed decisions about monetary donations. From these duties, Dr. Sky developed an interest in fundraising. She applied for a position in the campaign division of the private national nonprofit organization and began what would be an extensive career as a fundraiser. She became interested in a position as a Major Gift Officer at an institution of higher education in Southeastern Louisiana. This position opened the door to a series of positions that allowed her to climb the administrative ranks at the institution. These positions included serving as the Director for Corporate and Foundation Relations, and the Assistant Vice President to the Vice President and the Vice Chancellor. Dr. Sky shared why she maintained her commitment serving in higher education:

…being on a college campus where you see the students and you're around them every day; you see the impact that you're making every day and that's been her motivation. You're just surrounded by the motivators that you're working for. That's what landed me in higher education and why I stayed here.

Returning to her current role as Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Sky described her responsibilities which include securing private financial resources for the institution and helping to position the institution for contributions and major gifts. She shared how she learned about differences between institutional advancement organizations of public and private institutions. While public institutions write their budgets based on what the state is offering them, private institutions are driven to raise unrestricted money to support their budgets. Dr. Sky described activities that she is involved in to help the fundraising efforts of her institution:

> …what we're doing is in lagniappe and helps to support the institution in other areas. That is what I do. Forging relationships with alumni, making sure that they have opportunities, meaningful opportunities to stay engaged with the institution and private fundraising.

During her five months as Vice Chancellor of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Sky described an ever-evolving list of responsibilities. When asked about her day-to-day activities, she shared the following:

So, you asked about what my day looks like. I really will come in early to try to deal with some things that I know once the day gets started will be impeded upon. That's just the nature of the beast in higher education-you just never know what the sense of urgency is

going to be on that day, in that moment. But for the most part, setting strategy, and I'll

talk a little bit about that. I guess because as a new administrator, coming in for the first

time, the first two months I spent doing a comprehensive assessment of my unit. I

interviewed 47 people, inclusive of my staff, to get a feel for the culture of philanthropy

on campus and to make sure I had a good understanding of the processes, procedures that

were in place here, to determine where there may be some needs for improvements or

enhancements, or if things were even in place at all.

Dr. Sky later described some of the broader, long-term responsibilities of her position:

> So, my role as an administrator is to set strategy and vision, and ensure adequate
>
> processes and things are in place. Then I staff the chancellor, who is our lead
>
> fundraiser. So, I'm the chief professional officer fundraiser on campus, but he is
>
> technically, the chancellor or president is the lead fundraiser for the institution.
>
> So, then I'm working with the chancellor, developing, and staffing his portfolio as
>
> well as my own portfolio, while directing strategy for alumni relations,
>
> development, advancement services. Right now, marketing and communications
>
> is not under our umbrella, but it had been some years before, and there's some
>
> talk about putting it back under advancement again. Right now, I don't have
>
> communications and marketing.

Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to interview African American women in senior

leadership positions in higher education to explore the personal and professional challenges they

encounter as they ascend into senior leadership positions. A variety of themes emerged among

the participants as they shared the personal and professional challenges they encountered. The themes for challenges included: *Racism and Sexism* and *Organizational Structure Issues*. The themes for strategies to overcome challenges included: *Leadership and Professional Development, Authenticity and Confidence; Mentorship and sponsorship;* and *Religious Faith*. The following section presents the findings of the study in conjunction with the primary research questions.

Findings of the Study

Research Question 1: What personal and professional challenges do African American women encounter while ascending and advancing to senior leadership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities?

The following challenges that derived from the research included racism and sexism and organizational structure issues. The commonalities that were shared by the research participants were that they felt like the men, they worked with undermined their ability to properly execute their jobs. There decisions and actions were often second guessed, either in the workplace or during meetings. Men receive higher compensation than women and the women are doing most of the work. As far as organizational structure, the participants expressed, in summary, that in some instances they are often micromanaged. They aren't given full autonomy to make decisions for the departments they head. Instead, they are given instructions that are not always clear and aligned with their departmental goals.

Racism and Sexism

By the time she had started her academic career, Dr. Star had experienced several incidents of racial segregation and had been involved in social activism. These experiences would prepare her for similar encounters in her academic career. She was one of seven students

to desegregate her junior high school. She was an activist who believed in nonviolent change. Dr. Star was one of the only African American females in her Ph.D. program. She shared that her white colleagues would make racist comments in her presence as if she did not exist. Although she encountered racist individuals at the university where she worked, she never allowed these incidents to force her to quit. However, at one point in her tenure, she reached a breaking point in which she no longer ignored racial hostility in her workplace. She filed a grievance against a colleague, a white woman. To her surprise, the woman approached Dr. Star and told her she was proud of her. The woman later retired. This incident represented one battle within the larger war of dismantling racism at the university. To this point, the top administrators wanted to diversify the university, but some faculty and staff were not onboard with the initiative.

For Dr. Moon, sexism and racism were ongoing battles in the workplace. She recalled one incident in which she discovered that one of the male coworkers was making $5,000 more than she was despite handling a greater share of the work. When Dr. Moon discussed this situation with her superior, she was told that men receive more pay because they have families. She was also told to bring her husband to court. Dr. Moon found no resolution to what she believed was a sexist situation working against her and decided to leave her job. Ironically, years later, the male co-worker who was receiving more pay than her asked her for a job because he had gotten fired. In an unexpected reversal in roles and power, Dr. Moon hired him.

While working at another small graduate school Dr. Moon experienced discrimination when she challenged prevailing sexist beliefs about workplace roles for women. She was the only African American female on staff at the school. Although she saw wearing dresses and makeup to portray herself as the Ph.D. professional she desired to become, she was discriminated

against for her efforts because the prevailing perception was, she was better suited for a role as a secretary. She described how she challenged this discrimination in the following manner:

> I did have an incident when I was in graduate school because I liked to wear dresses all the time, where my major professor told me that if I liked to wear dresses and have make-up on all the time, I should be a secretary. I told her I had already done that job, that's why I was in graduate school to get a Ph.D. I already done that. You're right, I could be a secretary, but that's not what I'm doing, you know.

Dr. Moon also challenged stereotypical beliefs that African American females were not expected to pursue graduate studies, nor were they expected to be scientists. She continued: "I don't have to look like "a guy" or your perception of what a scientist should look like. A scientist should look like whatever I decide to look like that day."

Organizational Structure Issues

In addition to racism and sexism, the participants encountered organizational structure barriers in the form of policies, practices, and procedures instituted by the predominately male-dominated leadership at the institutions. Dr. Moon described men in higher education administration as "…very pragmatic and they think that being highly obstinate is the way to do things. Just bullying people. I don't do well with that. I never have liked bullies." She also expressed how these men would reinforce their positions of power and authority by emphasizing the status quo: "They liked to tell me what used to be… I can't tell you what happened before I got here, I can't talk to that, I can't speak to that. I can listen to it, and I have some appreciation for it, but we have a new vision and new goal, and now we need to follow those things we've all agreed to." Later, Dr. Moon shared how she attempted to address inconsistences in the execution of institutional objectives outlined by her male colleagues:

… having clear goals and visions and understanding so people don't feel like they're being ostracized. So, if there are real clear objectives and you're not just giving busy-work, if the job description says that you're supposed to do fundraising and programming and recruiting of faculty, yet you're not allowed to do those things, that's incongruent. To me that's a barrier when what you say you want doesn't line up with what you actually want, and that doesn't mean that things can't change, but you have some obtainable goals and objectives that you have people working for, so they don't feel like they're just doing busy work, because you're not growing.

In Dr. Sky's experience, structural barriers emerge when those in positions of leadership resisted change:

This is the way we've done things, and this is how we're going to continue to do them. Structure and policies and things. That can be very limiting. People not understanding their roles has been an issue. People not functioning in their roles has been another. When you've got a college president who is not fully functioning in his or her role. That's a problem and has been a problem for me. When the board doesn't understand their role, that's also been a problem for me. Then it's not only understanding their role, but people overstepping their boundaries.

Research Question 2: *How do African American women overcome the challenges they encounter while ascending and advancing to senior leadership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities?*

Despite encountering racism and sexism and structural issues, the four African American women advanced as leaders at their institutions. This research question was highly important because it helps us to understand ways that African American women remain resilient and continue to persevere in higher education leadership although they have to encounter racism and sexism and deal with structural issues. The following sections present their leadership styles in their own words:

Dr. Sun:

> I definitely am not an autocratic person. I try to be a listener and I like structure to some extent, but I'm not overly structure. But I do like to be organized. One of mine is to continue to be a learner and achieve those kinds of things. So, my leadership takes those things into consideration. I try to hear what people are saying and to reflect on how that might work, ideas, take in their ideas and see how that might work.

Dr. Moon:

> I'm a collaborative leader. I also like to lead by example. I don't want to ask people to do stuff that I'm not willing to do. So early on, people were trying to say, well how did she know how the university does this? She never taught here. So, I taught a class. So now what. I think lead by example is very important to me. I also don't like micromanagers. I'm not interested in micromanaging

people, but I also believe there's accountability. That's the biggest part. Some people don't want to be accountable; they just want to do whatever it is they want, and they want you to look the other way.

Dr. Star

I consider myself a servant leader. This is not about me, it's not about oh, your president, oh, you're provost. That's not what that's about for me. If I can't impact change, or make a place better, it's not a place I want to be. So, it's not for me. So, it's really not about me because everybody now feels like I should want to be a president. And I really don't want to be a president, and I keep telling people I don't want to be a president. People keep nominating me for presidencies. Until God shows me that—I'm not going to say that I never want to be because God may reveal something to me, but at this point, He or She has not done that. So, I know people think that when your provost, the next step is you want to be president, but that's not true for everybody, and that's not true for me. That's especially not true right now, at this point in my life, this is not what I want to do. If it had been 15 years earlier, maybe. My leadership at HBCUs is to still advance that philosophy, because I really believe as I go back to my grandfather, I know what education can do. I know how we can transform lives. So, our family motto—I think I didn't tell you this, which is important as well—is not for ourselves but for others. That's from my grandfather and my grandmother, and that's been a part of my DNA as well.

Dr. Sky:

> You got to believe in what you're doing to the point where you see the mission in
> it. It's just a servant leader and you've got to be able to love people in order to
> lead people, and I lead by example. You've got to be mindful to do what you say
> is important, and to know what's important, and to understand. Setting vision and
> strategy and being able to communicate that. To value your team's input, because
> everyone has an opinion, and everyone has a right to be heard. You have people
> with great ideas. It's just making sure the people understand how they have a
> responsibility to steward what they have. If this is not what you want, or what
> you have is not what you want, then you need to do what you need to do. But you
> need to do with what you have at the moment.

Leadership and Professional Development

Each of the interviewees spoke highly of the importance of leadership and professional
development. They felt that the different leadership and professional development helped to
enhance their knowledge on new policies, issues or trends that was going on within higher
education. The leadership and professional development also helped them become better
professionals and leaders. The leadership and professional development is also an opportunity
for the women to network and meet other professionals.

Dr. Sun relayed her belief in the importance of staying abreast of developments in her field of
expertise. She recalled how she participated in the American Association of Colleges of
Pharmacy fellowship program as a graduate student. She later described her experience as a
graduate student in a Harvard Fellows program:

Well, I think it's very important. I learned a lot from that Harvard program. Then, it was interesting that next summer, I did the fellows program using the same skills I learned I got from the Harvard program. But I think that's very important to especially someone new who's coming up, who wants to have a leadership position that you get that experience. And the good thing about the one that I went to, because it's middle management, so management development, people in similar positions, they have one. They have one for higher level like presidents or maybe provost level.

Later in the discussion, Dr. Sun recommended that pharmacy students should pursue graduate programs that offer leadership training:

So, if that's what you want to do as a goal, you might want to look into some of those graduate programs. I think that you have to be recommended for some or you have to have a certain level position before they will accept you into some programs. But it's something worth looking at. When I mentioned a mentor, the first one was that at the school I worked at, the person who recruited me to UCSF because at that time, he was trying to increase the diversity in pharmacy. He was always a mentor, always very positive.

Like Dr. Sun, Dr. Moon agreed that professional development is very important:

Professional development is very important, especially when you have people doing the same role. Higher education is changing, so you need to know what the new trends are, you need to be abreast of what other people are doing, so going to the meetings and being parts of listeners, knowing what the literature says, contributing to the literature, those are all part of your professional development. I think it's very important.

For Dr. Star, professional development allowed her to build her reputation by networking as well as open doors for professional opportunities:

> I guess in the higher ed. world, it's very important to be a part of national organizations. I'm a part of a lot of different higher education organizations. Being a part of different organization, people learn your name and your reputation gets out, so it's good to have those larger networks and I do have those. I've been called about opportunities for [other universities in the South] because they know I'm here and they'll be able to depend on me to do some things. As it relates to on campus, I think it's very important, but you can't always control that.

Dr. Sky shared how she saw professional development as offering opportunities for self-assessment and personal development:

> Professional development is important. You can't have the attitude that you know everything. You may be really good at what you do, but you have to be open to professional development, and you have to be honest with yourself about what areas need attention. Like for me, when you worked for me, I knew what my issues were. I had no time management sometimes. And especially, as an administrator and you've got all these things, you've got to be honest about what you need. It could be something not necessarily directly related to your function or your specialty, but you've got to sneak that in. You've got to network. The professional development and the networking, that's where all that good information comes from. You can't feel like you know everything to elevate.

Authenticity and Confidence

The subject authenticity and confidence emerged as participants described interpersonal issues with colleagues and the culture of their institutions. Authenticity developed as the interviewees expressed how they remained themselves in every situation they encountered and didn't change under no circumstances. They remain professional at all times. The theme confidence stood out as the women shared how they never gave up and always worked harder. They hold themselves to a high standard. They remain true to their passion for serving others and being the best leader they can be, which is why they always take advantage of an opportunity for professional and leadership development. Dr. Moon described how she established her position as a leader by treating others with dignity and respect:

> Just be myself, and treat people how I want to be treated, and value people, and say a simple thing as thank you, I see you, I appreciate you, how you [are] doing. Just small things. One of the things that used to bother me was that people would say we're the nation's only Black and Catholic institution. Well, I know what a HBCU is, I can probably figure that out, but what makes us Catholic? And the way we're Catholic, they'll know us by our work, they'll know us by what we do, so treating everybody like they're somebody, and being just and humane, modeling that when you tell students we want them to be just and humane. Can't be asking them to be just and humane if I'm not just and humane.

Mentorship and Sponsorship

For all participants, mentoring and sponsorship were pathways for their personal and professional relationships as well as their career advancement. Mentorship has opened doors for the participants, and they often encourage their students to seek a mentor; someone to provide

personal or career guidance. While the sponsor provides recommendations on your behalf for opportunities. Although she personally did not have a mentor, Dr. Sun saw the value in mentorship:

> I think it's very important. I have not really had a mentor like some people do. It's interesting because we just hired the CEO for the Louisiana Public Health Institute last year, and I was chair of the search committee and now I'm chair of the board. But one of the things that she really insisted on was having a mentor and someone that she could talk to on a regular basis.

Dr. Moon described mentorship as a strategy that grooms African American women for professionalism and visibility within their network whereas sponsorship facilitates career advancement:

> You're an African American woman with an advanced degree and no one can ever take that from you. There's value in that. But part of it is the network, which goes to your research question as to why you don't see us in other areas, it's because you don't have the network. You have to create your own network. You have to have people to be sponsors as well as mentors. Mentors are the ones who tell you, now baby don't do that, that's not going to get you somewhere. Sponsors will be the ones to say well give me your resume, let me see if I can pass it along to this person, and that's what's missing in our community, from my perspective. One of the things I worry about is I've been in situations where I've not been treated, I would think the most fairly, but I've had that happen by white people and Black people, right. I think you need a mentor, someone who sees your potential and can help you develop in that area. But when you get to a certain level, you need a sponsor. The level I am now, to get to the next job level, you

need somebody almost who's like an agent, who's out telling people about you who will sponsor you. They're doing a little bit more than a mentor. A mentor is pretty much a personal relationship, whereas a sponsor is making your credentials known outside of your immediate circle. I think those things are very important. Mentors also can be younger than you. A mentor is just somebody who has that experience, or who you can bounce ideas off.

Dr. Star described how her mentorship not only supported the admission of Black students, but also changed the culture of her institution:

Mentoring is very important to me. If God calls me home this afternoon, I have mentored many people that I know will continue to carry the torch. I think that especially—well, I think it's important everywhere—but in predominantly white institutions, you need to really be a certain kind of mentor. I'll tell you a story one of the professors told me. He was department chair, then when I became department chair, he was next door to me. He said, you know, I used to always think that you just pampered Black students and that you wanted them in because they were Black. I said, well, you really don't know me very well. So, he said, but when I was next door to you, I would hear you light into those students, and talk about their responsibility and blah blah blah. He said, and then I would look at them when they came out of your office, they held their heads up and went to do their work. I said yeah, and that's the way we do it. I said you think that I'm going to stick my neck out for people, and they have no responsibility? I said, you don't know me. He said I just couldn't make it out. It was because I was there so many Black students were admitted. We changed the atmosphere and all that. I would end up of course mentoring them, but then it got so big people across campus heard about me. I

had to start renting a place at Applebee's to have these group mentoring sessions. Just to talk and you know because it got to be too many people. I just think it is so important that when I became department chair to keep having time to mentor, I had research teams and then we would continue to mentor and help them get some publications.

Similar to Dr. Star, Dr. Sky sees the value of mentorship. However, as opposed to being assigned a mentor, she described how she received mentorship indirectly from participants through her dissertation research:

Mentorship is awesome, and fortunately, for me, I was able to elevate without the benefit of a mentor. I did my dissertation on the impact of mentorship on women of color in higher education, and I felt like I was being mentored with each interview, because I never had the benefit of that.

Religious Faith

For all the women, relying on their religious faith was an important strategy for overcoming the challenges they faced on their way to advancement. Dr. Sky described how her faith instilled confidence in her as she encountered opportunities for new positions:

Even in my position, when you ask me if me being African American kind of prevented me from getting to where I am, I've never interviewed, I've always been called for jobs. It's like God just told this person to call me, that's your next person. I've not gone through these intensive interview processes until this position here. I've been really faithful, and I've been stewarding and God just been moving me, and He'll also remove me to the next place. Had I had the benefit of mentors, I would have been able to navigate some things—just looking back—I would have been able to navigate things differently. Anticipating some things or expecting some things that I wasn't prepared to

anticipate or expect. Knowing how to react to certain situations, having someone to

present situations to, or circumstances. I didn't have the benefit of that, so because of

that, I've been really, mindful to be that for someone else.

Dr. Moon shared how using her faith encouraged herself and made a positive impression on

those around her:

My faith. I have a strong faith and people will say, just like in this situation, well, how're

you? Then people start saying, you really do seem fine, and I said I am fine. I am better

than blessed.

Dr. Star shared how her faith helped her maintain confidence in herself and the capacity of her

position:

So, my faith. I'm glad you asked. It's very important in these positions. I don't take it

personal, because I know what I have, I know what I bring. I tell people, everything I

brought here, I'm going to take it, plus some. You see what I'm saying? But if you

know who you are, and whose you are, this stuff doesn't do—and the good thing about it,

my parents, especially my dad, he was a businessman, he had three daughters. He would

sit us down, he always talked to us about being able to take care of ourselves if you need

to. Luckily, I don't have to be at a job that I hate at this point in my life. I've worked

and I've saved. That's a blessing. I'm glad you asked, for my faith. I don't see the end,

but I know I'm covered, so I don't worry about it. I don't let people jerk me around,

because some people will just do it. So, I'm good.

In closing, for these participants, as proposed by Mathis (2002), religious faith may be

considered as a means of negotiating "issues, struggles, and forms of oppression" (p.42) as part

of their day-to-day experiences on route to leadership.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION

Overview of Study

This qualitative dissertation examined and identified barriers that African American women encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome those barriers while ascending and advancing to senior leadership positions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In summary, Chapter One introduced the problem of the underrepresentation of African American women in positions of higher education leadership and the unique challenges they experience related to their race and gender. Later, Chapter One presented Black Feminist Thought as the theoretical framework for the dissertation. Chapter Two, the literature review, presented a survey of accomplishments of African American women in higher education leadership in the 20th century and a discussion of the higher education pipeline theory for African American women. Critiques of the pipeline theory indicate that it has failed to systematically facilitate the movement, promotion, and establishment of African American women in positions of senior leadership in higher education. Chapter Three discussed the phenomenological approach as the method to elicit a clearer understanding of the experiences of African American women as part of their advancement in higher education. Chapter Four presented the findings from in-depth interviews of four African American women in senior leadership positions. Findings indicate that these women have encountered barriers in the form of racism, sexism, and organizational structure.

Chapter Five, the final chapter of the dissertation, returns to Black Feminist Thought (BFT), the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter begins with a discussion and analysis of the findings in the context of the theory. Following this discussion, the chapter closes the study by presenting a story of empowerment for the participants.

Black Feminist Thought is a consciousness that explains the social locations and identities of African American Women. Encompass the intersection of influences on African American administrators. The thematic analysis incorporated the four issues that are relevant to the study's focus on the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership as discussed in the Theoretical Framework section:

- Black women are often marginalized in educational spaces

- Black women often struggle with race and gender in educational spaces

- Black women are often viewed as outsiders in educational spaces

- Black women face systems of power in educational spaces

Black women are often marginalized in educational spaces

As noted by West (2017), marginalization is frequently associated with the underrepresentation Black women in higher education. This marginalization may be characterized as situations in which Black women face subtle and not-so-subtle acts of oppression from their colleagues that isolate them and make them feel invisible (Thomas and Hollenshead, 2001; Hinton & Patitu, 2003; West, 2017). To this point, the participants described situations in which their personal or professional standing was regarded as inferior or in some way less significant than their colleagues. In these cases, these experiences of marginalization involved their race, gender, or both. As an example, Dr. Sun recalled how she was challenged by her male colleagues to prove that she deserved the respect owed to her as the dean of the College of Pharmacy. As another example, Dr. Moon described how her white colleagues constantly mentioned "how things used to be," presumably a reference to a time and situation when the educational spaces were predominately controlled by white men. These experiences point to the struggles Black women face regarding their race and gender when it comes to fitting into

educational spaces and exhibiting leadership in academia (Glazer-Ramo, 2001 Pitt, Vaugh, Shamburger-Rousseau, & Harris, 2015; West, 2017). In summary, referring to Hooks (1990), these marginalization experiences for Black women in educational spaces may be described as "being part of the whole but outside the main body" (p.149).

Black women often struggle with race and gender in educational spaces

Like their experiences with marginalization in educational spaces, several of the participants struggled with the "double bind" experience for being female and of color (Hinton & Patitu, 2003). As a reflection of the broader societal context that situates them as second-class citizens, Black women frequently face a myriad of interactions with colleagues that undermine their value, worth, and credibility. In some cases, the interactions are intra-racial points of tensions between Black women and Black male colleagues. As a first example, Dr. Sun shared how a black male provost questioned her educational qualifications for a leadership position. In other cases, Black women may experience interracial oppression, namely from white women. To this point, Hooks (1981) describes that as white women have faced sexist discrimination from white men, many have adopted the racist ideology of their oppressors and have exacted oppression against Black individuals. As example, Dr. Star described how she filed a grievance against a white woman colleague for acts of racial hostility in her work environment. Black women are also often devalued for their contributions to the work environment as well as for their financial worth in the workplace (Gibleman, 2003). To this point, Dr. Moon shared how she discovered that a male co-worker was paid $5,000 more than she despite having the greater workload.

Relating to their interracial and intra-racial struggles, Black women are often viewed through racial and gender stereotypes that are used against them (Collins, 2000). Some of these

stereotypes portray Black women as "loud, tough, angry, and domineering" (Donovan, 2011, p.460). As mentioned by Dr. Sky, Black women in academia frequently find themselves fighting against being perceived as "angry women" while attempting to show the assertiveness that their leadership positions require.

Black women are often viewed as outsiders in educational spaces

Howard-Hamilton (2003), in reference to the "outsider within" status coined by Collins (2000), elaborated on the isolation and invisibility experienced by African American women in educational spaces controlled by a dominant group:

> …they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue
>
> commences. A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural
>
> fit between the experiences of African American women and the dominant group (p. 21).

In the cases for two of the participants, the dominant group shared social and cultural norms that excluded them from belonging to their educational spaces. For example, Dr. Sky mentioned having to navigate a "Good Ole Boy" network, which may be broadly characterized as a system of power among elite, white men that favors, supports, and promotes elite, white men (Lapan, 2013; Mainah & Perkins, 2015; Shahid, Nelson, & Cardemill, 2017). As mentioned earlier, Dr. Moon described how her white colleagues constantly mentioned "how things used to be." This type of reference has the effect of creating a non-inclusive environment that keeps Black women on the periphery of meaningful and constructive dialogue with their white colleagues.

In summary, the racial biases and sexist perspectives frequently upheld by dominant groups (e.g., elite, white men) in higher education not only keeps Black women on the outside of collegiate environment but strains their ability to execute the authority associated with the positions that

they attain in higher education leadership. More details regarding the systems of power Black women face as well as their acquisition of power is described in the next section.

Black women face systems of power in educational spaces

One of the aims of Black Feminist Theory is to address the importance of Black women acquiring positions of power (Collins, 2000). On their way to acquiring positions of power, Black frequently encounter systems of power as well as power struggles with dominant groups. As described in the previous section, one example of a system of power encountered by the participants is the "Good Ole Boy" network. Regarding power struggles, the participants described bullying, verbal microaggressions, and other acts of oppression by dominant groups. For example, Dr. Moon described men in higher education administration as "obstinate and bullies." As another example, Dr. Sky described her experience of constantly being talked over or silenced by male colleagues when attempting to assert her knowledge and expertise at the meeting table. Sometimes, the power struggle is an act of oppression between two oppressed groups, as was the case for the white female colleague and Dr. Star and her white female colleague. In summary, these experiences illustrate the concept of intersectionality described by Collins (1990, 2000), a unique system of power and oppression that targets the race and gender of Black women.

Just as the experiences intersectionality varies in its displays against Black women, so were the strategies used by the participants to fight it. As discussed earlier, all the participants championed professional development, mentorship, and sponsorship. These forms of personal and professional investment may not have only been beneficial for their career advancement but may be regarded as strategies that disrupt the grip that dominant groups hold in institutions of higher education. To this point, Davis and Maldanado (2015) recommended that African

American women establish strategic relationships in academia to gain access to higher-level promotions and career opportunities. Another strategy for acquiring power, personal empowerment, is discussed in the following section.

A Story of Personal Empowerment

As discussed earlier, a primary aim of Black Feminist Thought is to achieve empowerment that is reflective of a collective voice and sense of consciousness among African American Women. Collins (2002) articulates a standpoint for African American women which may be understood as the product of the "experiences and ideas shared by African-American women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society" (p. 155). Like trailblazers like Mary McLeod Bethune and Fanny Jackson Coppin, the four participants may be regarded as trailblazers in their own rights. Their collective voice is one that emphasizes maintaining authenticity despite pressures to succumb to marginalization, racism, sexism, and "outsider-within" status. At various points, the participants turned to their religious faith to develop confidence to navigate their ascension to leadership. Whether leadership meant being the first Black woman to hold an administrative position in a department's history or making themselves heard at a white-male dominated meeting table, these women acquired the responsibilities for becoming leaders despite the institutional milieu that did not readily embrace or accept them.

Black Female Leadership and Black Feminist Thought: Resistance as everyday leadership

In her research of Black female leadership, Allen (1995) emphasized the following standpoint: "It is not enough to define Black female leadership from a perspective of race in isolation of gender, nor gender in isolation of race" (p.19). Allen (1995), who concurred with Black Feminist Thought as proposed by Collins (1990), argued that Black female leadership must be defined in relation to the many dimensions of oppression and domination. As consequences from the dimensions of oppression and domination, Allen (1995) posited that "Resistance to systems of oppression is the basis for everyday leadership" (p.20).

To examine the leadership experiences of the participants in the context of resistance to systems of oppression, the discussion returns to the following themes of BFT as proposed by Collins (2002): *self-determination and self-valuation* and *specialized knowledge*. As discussed earlier, Collins (2002) described self-determination and self-valuation as abilities in which Black women paint their own image of their realities rather than images constructed from their oppressors. As example, despite facing ostracization, Dr. Moon's decision to wear makeup and dresses represented an expression of self-determination and self-valuation as she chose to paint an image of herself as a Ph.D. professional and not a secretary, a role that was prescribed by her graduate school employer. While attaining her goal as a scientist, Dr. Moon expressed how she defied racial and gendered images of scientists: "I don't have to look like a guy or your perception of what a scientist should look like. A scientist should look like whatever I decide to look like that day."

For other participants, self-determination and self-valuation were expressed by how they defined their leadership. In brief, characterizations of leadership have often involve comparing racial and gender tendencies. For example, men are often characterized as having direct,

competitive, or autocratic leadership styles whereas women are characterized as having collaborative, cooperative, or democratic leadership styles (Chin, 2011). As white males have occupied leadership positions, discourses about effective leadership have been typically dominated by highlighting characteristics that favor their leadership styles (Chin, 2011). As a result, perspectives that include the leadership styles of women and racial/ethnic minorities are often overshadowed, or in some cases, biased against (Chin, 2011). Returning to resistance to systems of oppression, the participants prevailed over racial and gendered norms of leadership by defining their leadership styles. For example, Dr. Star described herself as a "servant leader." She preferred to define her role as president as an exercise in personal humility rather than opportunity for personal acclaim. Along similar lines, Dr. Sky also described herself as a "servant leader." She saw her position as provost as serving others to lead them toward a unifying strategic vision. In summary, the participants employed self-determination and self-valuation as strategies to thwart attempts by their oppressive situations to prescribe their identities and dictate their leadership styles as Black women.

As described earlier, the participants experienced situations in which either their personal or professional standing was regarded as inferior as a condition of their race and gender. These experiences reflect prevailing societal norms which regarded them marginalized members of society. Moreover, their individualized experiences may be considered as creating specialized knowledge for them as Black women leaders. In other words, as proposed by Moorosi, Fuller, & Reilly (2018), their experiences with overcoming barriers of their own racialized and gendered histories have provided them with the skills necessary to practice leadership that is inclusive, fair, and just. For example, Dr. Sun began her foray in academia as an assistant to the chair in her department. Drawing from her experiences as a Black woman, an individual marginalized by

race and gender in society, Dr. Sun was in a unique position to offer insights on how to give voice other marginalized individuals as she assisted with efforts to diversity her department. As another example, Dr. Sky, drawing from her experience of being talked over or silenced by male colleagues, pursued a position as Vice Chancellor to have a stronger voice on matters related to development. In summary, these participants may be viewed as drawing from their specialized knowledge as marginalized individuals to overcome the confines of the status quo in higher education administration and leadership.

Recommendations

After conducting this study, the researcher proposes two comparative studies for future research. One example of future research is a comparative study that focuses on African American women in senior leadership at HBCUs and PWIs. As discussed in the literature review, African American women have low representation in senior leadership at both HBCUs and PWIs. By using the methods and findings of this research as a guiding template, a comparative qualitative study may yield important information about the lived experiences of African American women at HBCUs and PWIs for the following areas: 1) racism, sexism, and organizational structure, 2) the relative importance of mentorship, sponsorship, and professional development for African American women as they ascend to senior leadership; and 3) an opportunity to explore Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as it relates to African American women acquiring senior leadership positions at HBCUs and PWIs. Findings from such a comparative study may reveal important insights on black female leadership as well as strategies to improve the representation of African American women in positions of senior leadership at HBCUs and PWIs.

As another example of future research, a closer examination of race and gender may yield important information regarding strategies to secure African American women in positions of senior leadership at HBCUs as discussed in the section, *African American Women in Higher Education Leadership,* African American men were able to develop a pipeline that assured that they would continue to serve as presidents at HBCUs. On the other hand, African American women have not been successful with developing a pipeline for senior leadership positions at HBCUs. A comparative qualitative study of senior leadership advancement for African American men and African American women may reveal insights into this situation for African American women. To this end, a comparative qualitative study may seek answers to questions such as:

1) What role does race and gender play when comparing senior leadership advancement for African American women and African American men at HBCUs?

2) What strategies do African American men use to overcome barriers during their ascension to senior leadership positions at HBCUs?

3) What strategies do African American men use to build a pipeline for ascension to senior leadership at HBCUs?

Findings from such a comparative study may offer possible strategies that African American women may consider or adopt to promote their movement, promotion, and establishment in senior leadership positions at HBCUs.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Further Research

This research study has provided insight into some challenges that African American women encounter while ascending to senior leadership and strategies they have employed to

overcome those challenges. Given that the four participants faced racial and gender discrimination as part of their ascension to senior leadership, the researcher proposes that policies which respect the racial and gender diversity for African American women be implemented through training and workplace diversity initiatives. Additionally, practices that help African American women build strategic relationships in academia as recommended by Davis and Maldonado (2015) may be considered. One potential strategy to build these strategic relationships is through cross-cultural mentorship- that is, the mentorship of African American women in higher education by non-African American professionals in positions of leadership. Researchers have reported that cross-cultural mentorship has offered benefits such as alleviating isolation and exclusion as well as enabling greater persistence and attainment of African American women in higher education administration and the professoriate (Davis, 2009; Ballenger, 2010; Louis et al.,2014; Lloyd-Jones, 2014; Bartman, 2015). In a similar fashion, African American women may benefit from programs in which they are paired with senior leadership administrators as they pursue senior leadership positions.

Conclusion

This research was intended to highlight the barriers African American women encounter while ascending and advancing to senior leadership in higher education at Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the U. S. and the strategies they employed to overcome the barriers. Historically, African American women have served in college and university presidency positions since the beginning of the 19th century (Coleman, 2012; Gaston, 2015). However, there has been little research on their leadership experiences and factors that impact their advancement. Despite the evidence that indicates African American women have leadership capacity for higher education, they are constantly overlooked. This is a problem for two reasons.

One, from an income equality standpoint, the persistent underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions means the potential loss of earnings and possibly decreasing their chances for upward mobility. Two, as a matter of diversity and inclusion, the persistent underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions means lost opportunities for diverse thinking that facilitate groundbreaking programmatic initiatives that advance the quality of academic programs and operations at institutions of higher education.

This study proved that, yes, African American women do encounter barriers; however, through faith, perseverance, and dedication, they overcome those barriers and keep it moving. The researcher believes that this study adds to the current literature on women, especially African American women in senior leadership or higher education, in general. It can also help any individual interested in pursuing a career in higher education leadership. African American women, especially, are constantly being overlooked and not considered because of their race and gender. No thought is being given to the level of education or their experience in the field and this is happening by white males and females as well as black males and females.

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APPENDIX

A. CHRONOLOGY OF THE ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

1850 - Lucy Session earned a literary degree from Oberlin College, making her the first

Black woman in the United States to receive a college degree.

1862 - Mary Jane Patterson earned a B.A. degree from Oberlin College, making her the first

Black woman to earn a bachelor's degree in the United States.

1864 - Rebecca Lee [Crumpler] became the first African American woman to graduate from a

U. S. college with a formal degree, and the first and only Black woman to obtain the

Doctress of Medicine from the New England Female Medical College in Boston,

Massachusetts.

1865 - Fannie Jackson Coppin became the second Black woman to earn a bachelor's degree

from Oberlin College.

1866 - Sarah Woodson Early was appointed preceptress of English and Latin, and lady

principal and matron at Wilberforce University, making her the first African American woman

on a college faculty.

1867 - Rebecca Cole became the second black woman to receive a medical degree in the

U.S., graduating from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in

Philadelphia.

1869 - Howard University Medical School opened its doors to women both black and

white; by 1900, 103 women had enrolled, 48 of whom – 23 black women and 25

white women had graduated. Fanny Jackson Coppin was named principal of the Institute for

Colored Youth in Philadelphia, making her the first black woman to lead an institution of higher

learning in the U. S.

1873 - Lucy Laney was one of the first African American women to graduate from Atlanta University.

1879 - Mary Eliza Mahoney graduated from the School of Nursing, New England Hospital for Women and Children in Boston, and became the first African American in the U. S. to receive a diploma in nursing.

1883 - Hartshorn Memorial College for Women was founded in Richmond, Virginia, and became in 1888 the first educational institution in the U. S. chartered as a college for Black women.

1884 - Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida Gibbs (Hunt) graduated from Oberlin College in 1884.

1886 - The first school for Black nursing student was established at Spelman Seminary, Atlanta, Georgia.

1889 - Josephine A. Silone Yates became professor and head of the Natural Sciences Department at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, earning $1,000 per year.

1892 - Mary Moor Booze, Harriet Amanda Miller, and Dixie Erma Williams graduated with B. S. degrees from Hartshorn Memorial College, making them the first women to receive college degrees from a Black woman's institution.
Anna Julia Cooper published book *A Voice from the South*, which championed the cause of Black women's education.

1893 - Meharry Medical College awarded it first medical degrees to two Black women, Georgianna Patton and Anna D. Gregg.

1897 - Elizabeth Evelyn Wright, with the help of Jessie Dorsey, founded the Denmark Industrial Institute School in Denmark, South Carolina, which was later renamed Voorhees Industrial School and is now Vorhees College.

1901 - Spelman Seminary granted its first college degrees to Jane Anna Granderson and Claudia Turner White.

1904- Mary McLeod Bethune founded a normal and training institute for African American girls in Daytona Beach Florida that would later become Bethune Cookman College. Jessie Redmon Fauset was the first woman to gain entry to Phi Beta Kappa and graduate from Cornell with a Phi Beta Kappa Key.

1918 - Nora Douglas Holt became the first African American to earn an advanced degree in music, receiving an M. Mus from the Chicago School of Music.

1921- Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander became one of the first Black women to earn a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania and the first Black woman to pass the bar exam in the state of Pennsylvania. Georgiana R. Simpson, earned a Ph.D. degree in German, from the University of Chicago. Eva Dykes earned a Ph.D. degree in English philology, from Radcliffe College.

1923 - Virginia Proctor Powell [Florence] became the first African American woman to receive professional training in librarianship from the Carnegie Library School in Philadelphia.

1924 - Spelman Seminary changed its name to Spelman College and began to offer college courses on its own campus.

1925 - Anna Julia Cooper became one of the first African Americans to receive a Ph.D. in French from the University of Paris.

1926 - Bennett College, founded as a coeducational institution in 1873, became a college for women.

1929 - Lucy Diggs Slowe convened the first annual conference of deans and advisors to girls in Negro schools, which gave birth to the Association of Deans of Women and Advisers to Girls in Negro Schools. Anna Julia Cooper was named the president of Frelinghuysen University in Washington, D. C.

Jane Ellen McAlister was the first African American women in the United States to earn a Ph.D. degree in education.

1931 - Jane Mathilda Bolin was the first Black woman to graduate from Yale University.

1932 - Hartshorn Memorial College, the first black woman's college, merged with Virginia University.

1934 - Ruth Winford Howard became the first African American woman in the United States to receive Ph.D. degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota.

1935 - Jessie Jarue Mark became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. degree in botany from Iowa State University

1936 - Flemmie P. Kittrell became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. degree in nutrition from Cornell University.

1939 - Tuskegee Institute established a school of nurse-midwifery. Mary T. Washington became the first African American woman Certified Public Accountant, after graduating from Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois.

1940 - Roger Arliner Young became the first black woman to earn a Ph.D. degree in zoology from the University of Pennsylvania.

1942 - Marguerite Thomas became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D.

degree in geology from Catholic University.

1943 - Mamie Phipps Clark became the first black woman to earn a Ph.D. in psychology

from Columbia University in 1943. Along with her husband, Kenneth Clark, Clark's research

into the racial identity formation of black children would be central

evidence cited in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision.

1947 - Marie M. Daly became the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in

chemistry from Columbia University.

1948 - Ada Louis Sipuel, help to set the stage for desegregation of professional schools.

In Ada Louis Sipuel v. Board of Regents, the Supreme Court ordered the University of

Oklahoma School of Law to admit Sipuel, arguing that a state cannot require African Americans

to postpone their education until separate black graduate or professional

schools are established.

1949 - Two women became the first African Americans to earn Ph.D. degrees in

mathematics: Marjorie Lee Brown (University of Michigan) and Evelyn Boyd Granville

(Yale University).

1950 - Norma Merrick Sklarek graduated from the School of Architecture at Columbia

University and in 1954 she became the first woman to be licensed as an architect

in the U. S.

1951 - Mildred Fay Jefferson became the first African American to graduate from

Harvard University's Medical School.

1955 - Willa Player became the president of Bennett College, making her the first black

woman college president of a college since Mary McLeod Bethune.

1956 - Autherine Lucy, help to set the stage for desegregation of public colleges. According to Littlefield, "Under a Supreme Court order and with the aid of Ruby Hurley, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People regional director, Autherine Lucy [Foster] enrolled in the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, only to be expelled days later by university officials, who cited her statements regarding race relations at the school as grounds for dismissal.

1960 - Ruth Simmons became the ninth president of Smith College, and the first black woman to head a Seven Sisters college.

Historian Mary Frances Berry, was the first Black woman to serve as the president of the Organization of American Historians.

1961 - Charlayne Hunter [Gault] and Hamilton Holmes became the first African American woman and man to be admitted to the University of Georgia in the 175-year history of the University.

1970 - Elaine Jones became the first black woman to graduate from the University of Virginia School of Law and in 1993 she became the head of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.

1976 - Mary Francis Berry became the chancellor of the University of Colorado, serving as the first African American woman to head a major research university.

1979 - Jenny Patrick became the first black woman to earn a Ph.D. degree in chemical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

1981 - Mariam Wright Edelman became the first black person and second woman to chair the Spelman College Board of Trustees.

1987 - Johnnetta Cole became the first black woman to head the oldest college for black women

still in existence in the United States, Spelman College. Niara Sudarkasa became the first woman president of Lincoln University, the nation's oldest black college and, for much of its history, an all-male institution.

1988 - Charlayne Hunter-Gault became the first black person in the 203-year history of her alma mater, the University of Georgia, to deliver the commencement address. She was one of the first blacks to be admitted to the university twenty-five years earlier.

*Source: Thompson, K. & Hines Clark, D. (1997). Facts on File Encyclopedia of Black Women in America: Education. New York: Facts on File, Inc.

Please submit your competed IRB application in electronic format to <u>ORSP@xula.edu</u> with (IRB application) in subject line. *NOTE: All submissions should be in MS word format. PDF's are acceptable as long as they can be cut and pasted from.* <mark>*If this is an amendment to a previously approved protocol or revision (changes to a protocol, summary sheets, consent form, etc.), all changes need to be indicated in some fashion, usually by highlighting in another color text.*</mark>

Title of Study: **A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON CAREER ASCENSION AND ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

Principle Investigator's Name: Meka Francis

Principle Investigator's Contact Information:

Address 7640 Branch Drive New Orleans, LA 70128

Email: mafranci@xula.edu

Phone: 504-327-1806

The following summary must accompany your proposal. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience when they take part in your research and about the protections that have been included to safeguard them. (Careful attention to the following may help facilitate the review process).

1. **In a sentence or two, describe the background and purpose of the research.**

   The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the phenomenon of the professional and personal challenges of African American females as they ascend to senior academic leadership positions at Historically Black colleges and universities.

2. **What is the duration of the proposed research?**

The duration of the proposed research is 3 months.

3.	**Who will be the participants in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Participants must be informed about the nature of what they need to do, including a description of anything that they might consider unpleasant or a risk. Please provide an outline or script of the information that will be given to participants before they volunteer. <u>Include a copy of the written solicitation and/or an outline of the oral solicitation. This would include Email solicitations.</u>**

See attached

4.	**Briefly describe the involvement of human participants in the study.**

   Their input on the personal and professional challenges they encountered during their ascension to their senior leadership positions.

5.	**What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaires or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and include a copy for review.**

The researcher will use semi structured interviews along with face to face interviews.

6.	**Will the participants encounter the possibility of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? Yes _____ No__X__ If so, please describe. NOTE: being asked personal questions that elicit strong emotional reactions is considered a potential psychological risk.**

7.	**If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the participants or society? Please explain. (For example, if the participant will receive educational materials concerning their health, this could be a benefit.)** N/A

8.	**Will there be any physical or mental stress on the participants, including a request for information that participants might consider personal or sensitive? Yes___ No__X__ If so, please describe.**

9.	**Will the participants be deceived or misled in any way? Yes ___ No__X_ If so, please describe and include an outline or script of the debriefing where the deception will be explained to them after the study.**

10.	**Will the participants be presented with materials that they might consider to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? Yes ___ No __X_ If so, please describe.**

11.	**Approximately how many participants will take part in the study? Approximately how much time will be demanded of each participant? If participants will be required to attend more than one session, please indicate the total number of sessions and the amount of time demanded by each.**

The researcher will select no more than 10 participants to take part in the research. The researcher plans to conduct one meeting that will last no longer an hour, with 1 or 2 follow up meetings, if needed.

**12.	What steps will be taken to ensure that each participant takes part voluntarily? What, if any, inducements or compensations will be offered to the participants?**

The individuals who meet the criteria will be required to sign an informed consent. Those who agree to participate in the study will also be required to complete a biographical profile. The informed consent will provide a brief description of the study, volunteer participation, study procedures and the researcher's contact information.

**13.	How will you ensure that participants give their consent prior to volunteering?	Will a written consent form be used? Yes __X__ No ___**

> **If so, please include the form. If not, will oral informed consent be obtained? If so, please submit a copy of the script. If neither written nor oral informed consent will be obtained, please indicate why not and complete and attach the *Request for Waiver or Alteration of Requirement to Obtain Informed Consent* form. If either written or oral consent is to be obtained, please complete and attach the IRB *Informed Consent Document Check List.* (These forms are at the end of this Questionnaire.)**

> See attached

**14.	Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the participants? Yes ___ No __X_ If so, please explain.**

All of the participants who are selected to participate in the study will remain anonymous.

**15.	Will the fact that a participant did or did not take part in a specific experiment or study be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with them? Yes___ No _X__ If so, please explain.**

**16.	What steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data collected? Be specific. You should include information about how the data will be stored once it is gathered.**

The researcher will provide a confidentiality agreement for the participant. The confidentiality agreement will explain the purpose of the study and how the information will be used.

**17.	Will any data from files or archival data be used? Yes _X__ No ___ If yes, please explain.**

Information from previous research will be used as references for the study.

**18.	Has this study been considered or approved by any other IRB outside of Xavier?	If so, please indicate which IRB and attach a copy of the approval letter with this	questionnaire. This should facilitate our review considerably.**

No

**19.	Does the research require approval from any of the following Xavier University**

> **Committees: The Animal Care Committee (Yes ___ No_X__); The Biohazards**

> **Committee (Yes ___ No_X__); The Radiation Safety Committee (Yes___ No_X__)? If you answered "yes" to any of the proceeding, has the appropriate clearance**

been obtained'? Yes ___ No _X__   If so, please attach the letter of approval to this questionnaire.   If it has not, when do you anticipate that clearance will be granted?

20.   What are the sources of funding for the proposed research?

N/A

21.   List the clinical sites to be utilized during the investigation (If applicable).

N/A

22.   List the contracted facilities for diagnostic tests and procedures, etc. (if applicable).

N/A

23.   Attach a copy of the 1572 to the summary (if applicable). NOTE: The 1572 is required only for clinical trial studies and/or research involving the administration of drugs. The form and instructions for filling it out can be found at: http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/HowDrugsareDevelopedandAppr oved/ApprovalApplications/InvestigationalNewDrugINDApplication/ucm071098.htm#form 1571

N/A

24.   Attach a copy of the Principal Investigator's resume/CV.

Informed Consent Document Check List

Legally effective informed consent is to be acquired from each research participant or from the participant's legally authorized representative or guardian. The following check list is provided to assist investigators in the preparation of their informed consent forms. In general, all of the following must be present in the document:

 X   **(a) A statement that the study involves research, and an explanation of the purposes of the research,**

 X   **(b) The expected duration of the participant's participation, and the approximate**

      number of participants who will take part in the study,

 X   **(c) A description of the procedures to be followed,**

 X   **(d) The identification of any procedures that are experimental,**

 X **(e) A description of any reasonably foreseeable psychological, physical, or legal**

      risks or discomforts to the participants,

 X   **(I) A description of any benefits to the participants or to others that may reasonably be expected from the research,**

 X   **(g) A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if**

      any, that might be advantageous to the participants,

 X   **(h) A statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying**

      the participants will be maintained,

X **(i) For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation can be expected, and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs, and, if so, what those treatments consist of or where further information may be obtained, including emergency contact numbers,**

 X **(j) An explanation of who to contact for answers to pertinent questions about**

> **the research and the research-participant's rights, including phone numbers of the**

> **principle investigator or their designated representative, and at least one individual,**

> **(usually an IRB representative) who is not directly associated with the study,**

 X **(k) A statement that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate**

> **will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise**

> **entitled, and that the participants may discontinue the study at any time without**

> **penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.**

A completed copy of this checklist should accompany your proposal when it is submitted for review.

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OR ALTERATION OF REQUIREMENT
TO OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT

___ 1) **The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants. "Minimal" risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater than the risks ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.**

___ 2) **The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the participants.**

___ 3) **The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver of informed consent.**

___ 4) **Whenever appropriate, the participants will be provided with additional pertinent information after their participation.**

Please explain in detail in the space below how each of the above conditions is met in your proposal.   Attach additional sheets if necessary.

C. IRB PROTOCOL APPROVAL LETTER

TO: Meka Francis, MA, Principal Investigator

FROM: Charles Gramlich, PhD, Xavier University

IRB DATE: December 1, 2020

RE: Research Proposal entitled: "A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON CAREER ASCENSION AND ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES."

The above-named study poses no more than minimal risk to the participants and is eligible for expedited review. The following actions have been taken regarding this study.

1. The proposed study is approved.

2. The Informed consent is approved.

3. The Request for participation form is approved.

4. The Research Interview questions are approved.

5. The Biographical/Demographic Profile questions are approved.

This study is approved for a period of one year from the date of this memo. Any request to extend this study for more than one year must be made in writing to the Xavier University IRB at least two weeks prior to December 1, 2021. Any changes to the proposal that might affect the wellbeing of participants must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please inform the Chair of the IRB when all data collection has been completed.

This project is assigned study number #813 in the IRB files. It is very important that you refer to this project number in future correspondence regarding the study.

Reviewed and Approved
Charles Gramlich, PhD Xavier University IRB

cc. Kaneisha Akinpelumi, Associate V.P. for Research and Sponsored Programs

D. REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Meka A. Francis
Division of Education and Counseling
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, LA 70125

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Meka A. Francis and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Xavier University of Louisiana in the Division of Education and Counseling. As part of my completion of the doctoral program, I am currently conducting a phenomenological study to explore the personal and professional challenges African American women encounter as they ascend into senior leadership positions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and you currently hold or previously held a position as a Presidents, Chancellor, or Provost. This is a qualitative study using primarily interviews to explore the strategies they employed to cope with barriers they experienced as they ascended into their senior leadership positions. My goal is to share strategies and ideas with other African American women who are aspiring to ascend in higher education administration.

If you agree to participate I am asking for a commitment of at least three interviews scheduled at your convenience. If you agree to participate in the research study, the initial interview about your ascension to the position as an executive will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Your response to this request is important to the advancement of my research on African American women ascending into senior leadership positions in higher education administration. Your participation is greatly needed and valued. Your time and input would be deeply appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please submit a vita/resume and complete the enclosed biographical profile by (date). Shortly after receiving your vita/resume and profile I will call you to set up interview dates and times.

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Dr. Charles Gramlich, chair Xavier University Institutional Review Board at (504) 520-7397 or via email at orsp@xula.edu.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meka A. Francis

E. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Meka Francis
Division of Education and Counseling
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, LA 70125
(504)327-1806
mafranci@xula.edu

A Phenomenological Study on Career Ascension and Advancement of African American Women in Senior Academic Leadership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the phenomenon of the professional and personal challenges of African American females as they ascend to senior academic leadership positions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The research will involve African American women who currently hold or previously held a senior leadership position as a President, Chancellors, or Provosts at any Historically Black College or University. This study will involve the collection of research materials, the outcome of which will be utilized toward the completion of a Doctoral Degree for Meka A. Francis in Educational Leadership from Xavier University of Louisiana.

STUDY PROCEDURES

This study will employ qualitative methods, specifically open-ended interviews and observational sessions in order to obtain an understanding of the experiences of African-American women in higher senior leadership positions at Colleges and Universities in Louisiana. If you agree to participate, three interviews will be scheduled at your convenience. The interviews will consist of a series of questions on topics related to, but not limited to your personal quest as an administrator, the role of race and gender in your job as an administrator, leadership strategies, professional development, mentoring and the role of family in your success.

BENEFITS

This study may not have a direct benefit to you. However, we hope the information obtained from this study will serve as a guide for African American women who are aspire to obtain a senior leadership position in higher education.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Interviews will be conducted utilizing audiotape equipment. In addition to the audio recordings, notes will be taken. The notes and tapes will be kept confidential. All data with the potential to identify participants will be held in confidence. Participant's names will not be utilized in the

study. Instead, pseudonyms will be assigned to each participant. However, quotes from the interviews will be utilized to support general themes.

RISKS

There is no foreseeable risk or financial benefits to the participants.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and if you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact Dr. Charles Gramlich, chair Xavier University Institutional Review Board at (504) 520-7397 or via email at orsp@xula.edu.

CONSENT

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information and willingly signed this consent form. By signing this form, you agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researcher's obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

_____

Participant Name (Printed)

_____

Participant Signature   Date

F. BIOGRAPHICAL/DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Meka A. Francis
Division of Education and Counseling
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, LA 70125

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON CAREER ASCENSION AND ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN SENIOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

1. What is your full name?

2. What is your age?

3. Where were you born?

4. What is your level of education?

5. What is your current position?

6. How long have you been in your current position?

7. What encouraged you to apply for a senior leadership role?

8. At what point in your professional career, did you decide to become an administrator? Describe that decision making process.

Meka A. Francis
Division of Educations and Counseling
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, LA 70125

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON CAREER ASCENSION: ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A. General

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, including your education and professional career.

2. What are your roles and responsibilities in your current position?

3. How long have you been in your current position?

4. Describe your day-to-day activities?

5. What encouraged you to apply for a senior leadership role?

6. At what point in your professional career, did you decide to become an administrator? Describe that decision making process.

B. Institutional Barriers and Strategies for success towards ascension

1. Have you encountered any barriers getting to your present leadership position? If so, what barriers have you experienced? What did you do to overcome them? If not, why not?

2. As you try to lead effectively to maintain your success, what institutional barriers (implicit or explicit) have you encountered? Please identify two to three barriers or obstacles that have hindered or delayed your effectiveness and success.

3. What strategies have you employed to deal with these difficult situations? Did they work? Please explain how and why.

4. What are some advantages you've experienced during your transition into your role as a senior leader?

5. What strategies have you utilized to gain acceptance and inclusion with major male and female stakeholders? Have the strategies you used differed based on the gender of the stakeholder?

6. Have you had difficulty getting needed resources or support to get things done effectively? If so, why? What strategies have helped you overcome these barriers to achieve desired goals? If not, why not?

7. What do you like most about your current position?

C. Family and/or Personal Barriers and Strategies for Success

1. Have you experienced family and/or personal struggles in your path to success and effectiveness as a female administrator? If so, how have these barriers affected you personally and professionally? If not, why not?

2. What strategies have you developed along the way to handle family and/or personal issues?

3. If you could change something with your life and your career, what changes would you make? Why?

D. Impact of Gender Imbalance

1. Tell me if you think gender has played any positive or negative role for you in your pursuit of career success in higher education administration.

2. What do you think are the general advantages and/or disadvantages to being a woman in the profession?

3. From your perspective, had you been a man, would the institutional, family, and personal barriers you just described have been different? If so, how?

4. What are your greatest challenges; personally and professionally? Do you view these challenges as a form of oppression?

5. What do you see as factors that serve as obstacles to African American women's full and equitable participation, such as structure, policies, and informal practices, etc.?

E. Leadership Barriers

1. What issues, if any, are you confronted with as African American woman at this leadership level?

2. What coping strategies do you utilize in your position?

3. How would you describe your leadership style?

4. How important is Professional Development?

5. How important is the role of a mentor as it relates to career advancement?

F. Insights/Advice

1. What insights have you gained about women in leadership over the years? What pitfalls should women avoid and what choices can they have?

2. What skills, strategies, or support are most critical if women are to succeed as top level decision makers in academia? How can aspiring women leaders better prepare themselves to obtain such skills, strategies, or support?

3. What advice would you give to women who want to have a career in higher education administration?

4. In your opinion do you think African American women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions in higher education?

5. If so, what are some of the reasons you think they are underrepresented?

6. From your personal and professional experiences during your ascension to senior leadership, what advice would you offer to institutional leaders?

7. What can institutional leaders do to better prepare African American women for senior leadership roles?

8. From your perspective, how does an African American female administrator add value to the academy?

Closing Questions

Are there any other questions or comments you would like to add?

Would you mind if I contact you for more information or clarification?

Thank you very much for your participation.