Underrepresentation of African American Female Senior Administrators in Southeastern Colleges and Universities in the US.

A Dissertation Submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development of
The Dewar College of Education and Human Services

[December 2022]

Annie L. Curtis

MBA, Albany State University, 1999
B.A. University of Florida, 1996

This dissertation, "Underrepresentation of African American Female Senior Administrators in Southeastern Colleges and Universities in the US," by Annie L. Curtis, is approved by:

Dissertation Committee Chair

DocuSigned by:
Rudo Tsemunhu
2FC1CC33B9014D9...

Rudo E. Tsemunhu, Ph.D.
Professor of Educational Administration and Foundations

Dissertation Committee Co-Chair

DocuSigned by:
Nicole Gunn
D4C8A6A504EA473...

Nicole, Gunn, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Adult Education & Workforce Development

Dissertation Committee Member

DocuSigned by:
Josphine Chaumba
018B0965A8C74FE...

Josephine, Chaumba, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Social Work

Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research

DocuSigned by:
Becky da Cruz
84AFF646370449F...

Becky K. da Cruz, Ph.D., J.D.
Professor of Criminal Justice

Defense Date

November 14 2022

FAIR USE

DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature 

I refuse permission for this dissertation to be duplicated in whole or in part.

Signature _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This research investigated four African American females' comprehension of their life and career trajectories in senior administration jobs. I explored how the race and social status of women influences and shape their leadership roles as practicing female senior administrators. This study highlights the women's efforts to excel with a focus on the influence of their race and gender as senior administrators. Based on the literature review, I outlined some of the main trends of the intersection of race and gender in female senior leadership. The analytical framework used to frame the data comprised four conceptual strands: 1) advisors and mentors, 2) increasing visibility in the work place, 3) Black Tax, and 4) beating the odds. The findings suggest that African American senior administrators will likely succeed because they devised survival strategies to help them overcome racial and misogynistic challenges in America. The data revealed the women's struggles to stay visible and essential. Through the study, I demonstrated that African American women's leadership isn't just about their strength and resilience. It is about how consistently they rise to overcome challenges for the good of all. The data from the participants show the strategies to address the social, political, and economic challenges they face being Black and female in White male-dominated spaces. I describe the nature and type of research that can raise awareness of the need to level the playing field for African American women in leadership, which can form the basis of further research. My study was based on data collected from African American female senior administrators. Future studies need to extend the database by studying other stakeholders involved in administration: White male and female leaders and Black male leaders to broaden the context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people along the way provided the support, encouragement, empowerment, and love that sustained me throughout my doctoral journey.

Foremost, I simply thank GOD for getting me in and through this entire process. My faith and strength may have wavered, but thy faithfulness, promise, and love are unwavering!

I am grateful to Dr. Rudo Tsemunhu, my dissertation chair, for teaching me to discern and discover my voice among the mountains of literature on the history of African American women leaders in academia. I will be eternally grateful for all your time, influence, guidance, and advice throughout this dissertation journey. You stayed with me until the end!

To my dissertation committee: Dr. Nicole P. Gunn (Co-Chair) and Dr. Josphine Chaumba thank you for your time, interest, and belief in the significance of this work.

To Dr. Emily Bell, who deserves special recognition: I could not have completed this without your writing expertise and ability to assist me in putting all this research together. You are awesome!

To my loving husband, Ricardo M. Curtis: thank you for everything. There is no better blessing than having you in my life. You've given your all so that I can provide mine. I shall always and forever love you.

To my son, Darius J. Curtis: You are the reason I work so hard. Momma will always love you, and I want you to know that you can be whatever you want to be in life if you prepare and work hard enough. You are going to be the GOAT!

To the research participants, thank you for sharing “our” story with me. You are remarkable leaders, and your willingness to share your experiences brought my research to life.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to four African American women who significantly impacted my life and helped shape me into the woman, and professional I am today. My mother, Mrs. Lucy I. Hamilton-Butler; my aunt, Mrs. Dorothy A. Hamilton; my grandmother, Mrs. Annie Lee Hamilton; and a beloved family friend, Mrs. Eva W. Ingram. I love you all, and even though neither of you are here to share this special moment with me, I know you are all celebrating in heaven.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

I am an African American female working in higher education, aspiring to advance professionally into a senior administrative position. I have worked in higher education for approximately 14 years and managed my way up to a middle management position. However, through determination and the decision to attain senior leadership, I returned to school to earn a doctoral degree in leadership. After all, most of the leaders in that position hold a terminal degree or equivalent. As I looked at the leadership team at my institution and others within southeastern colleges and universities in the US, I noticed that most senior leadership people did not look like me. With that in mind, I wanted to find out why? Stories I have heard and lived experiences made me want to dig deeper and better understand what was happening. As an African American female going through twists and turns in my higher education career, I became curious about the underrepresentation and career experiences of African American female senior administrators in senior administrative positions in higher education. I am intrigued by their ability to navigate and attain senior administration positions in institutions of higher learning.

African American women have been severely overlooked in Senior-Level Administration positions (SLAs) in U.S. post-secondary education institutions since Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act prohibited gender and race discrimination in hiring, promotions, and firing (American Council on Education [ACE], 2017; West, 2017b). Women of all ethnicities, particularly African American women, continue to be significantly underrepresented in SLA positions (ACE, 2017; West, 2017b). As of 2017, the most recent year for which statistics are available, women presidents led only 8% of U.S. doctorate-granting institutions and 30% of U.S. post-secondary institutions (ACE, 2017). Other SLA positions, such as Chief Academic Officers and board of governors, were held by women in 40% and 32% of instances, respectively (ACE, 2017). Only 4% of

U.S. post-secondary institutions' presidencies (ACE, 2017) and fewer than 6% of SLA positions are by African American women (West, 2017b). For comparison, White women form 62% of the total U.S. female workforce, yet they occupy 83% of SLA positions in U.S. post-secondary institutions (ACE, 2017). African American women are among U.S. University SLAs' most underrepresented demographic groups (Dunn, Gerlach, & Hyle, 2014).

African American women lack mentorship, the most crucial factor for advancing post-secondary education (West, 2017b). Therefore, the underrepresentation of African American women in U.S. university SLA positions is self-perpetuating. This problem causes a shortage of same-race, same-gender mentors to guide rising African American women leaders (West, 2017b). Thus, harmful practices and biases against African American women force them to leave academia or fail to advance because they lack the mentorship and other supports that men and the majority of women are more likely to receive (Bakker & Jacobs, 2016; Dunn et al., 2014; Washington Lockett et al., 2018; West, 2017b). Therefore, African American women's under-representation in SLA positions partially drains the pool of leadership talent from which U.S. universities can draw, both in the present and the future (Bakker & Jacobs, 2016; Dunn et al., 2014; Washington Lockett et al., 2018; West, 2017b).

Statement of the Problem

African American female senior administrators are underrepresented in US colleges and universities compared to their White female counterparts. (ACE, 2017; West, 2017b). This societal problem is significant because it artificially excludes qualified African American women leaders from serving in academia and reduces the pool of talented future leaders by depriving rising African American women students and professors of mentorship and other supports (Bakker & Jacobs, 2016; Dunn et al., 2014; Washington Lockett et al., 2018; West, 2017b). Existing research on African American female administrators' experiences in U.S. post-secondary education institutions is "scant" (West, 2017b, p. 340). It indicates a need for additional studies to explore those experiences further,

including the barriers African American women administrators have encountered and the strategies they have utilized to overcome those barriers (Allen, 2018; Banks et al., 2018; Hague & Okpala, 2017; Howard, 2017; West, 2017b).

Purpose

This study explored female African Americans' life and professional experiences in senior-level academic administration positions within southeastern colleges and universities in the US. I gained deep insights into the obstacles, institutional policies, and positive and negative practices African American senior administrators experienced while pursuing careers in Southeastern Colleges and Universities in the US.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are African American females' life and career experiences who have attained Senior-Level Administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

RQ2: What do female African American senior-level administrators at a public four-year state university believe are strategies for attaining leadership positions in Academic services at public institutions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

Study Significance

African American women have made modest professional advancements in the last decades of the 20th century (Washington et al., 2018). Findings from this research may be significant in closing the knowledge gap on this topic (Allen, 2018; Banks et al., 2018; Hague & Okpala, 2017; Howard, 2017; West, 2017b). Additional research on the experiences of African American women SLAs may potentially address the societal problem of racial and gender impurities in SLA positions by contributing to a roadmap for rising African American women leaders to follow (Allen, 2018; Banks et al., 2018; Hague & Okpala, 2017; Howard, 2017; West, 2017b). The women's experiences in this

study may help overcome barriers to advancement and provide much-needed guidance to rising African American women's SLAs. Furthermore, the study findings may help reduce racial and gender inequalities in U.S. post-secondary education leadership and encourage qualified and talented potential leaders to realize their possibilities (Allen, 2018; Banks et al., 2018; Hague & Okpala, 2017; Howard, 2017; West, 2017b). A more in-depth understanding of African American female SLAs' experiences may also ease the development of helpful guidance for university human resources departments to improve those women's experiences and promote racial and gender parity in senior administration.

Conceptual Framework

Race, gender, and class are a "triple whammy" when African American women seek upward professional mobility (Robinson & Nelson, 2010). African American women are severely underrepresented in educational leadership ranks, such as principal, superintendent, and other senior leadership positions (Agosto & Karanxha, 2012). Because of the intersection of race, gender, and social class, African American women still have a long way to pursue their personal career success goals in education. According to Khosrovani and Ward (2011), advanced job training and mentoring are the springboards for promotion. Employees who do not receive advanced job training or mentoring will not move up within the institution or organization.

I used the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Theory (BFT) to examine African American female senior administrators' career trajectories and lived experiences and give them a voice. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), the CRT movement is a group of scholars studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power. Croom and Patton (2011) regarded "CRT as an oppositional framework geared toward naming and disrupting white supremacy in legal, educational, and social institutions." Three central conceptual contracts characterize CRT: discrimination from people of color; elimination of racial domination while recognizing that race is a

social construct; other areas of differences such as gender, class, and any other inequities experienced by individuals (Creswell, 2011). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Dixson et al. (2006) showed the usefulness of critical race legal theory's application to education. CRT is grounded in five principles that potentially influence educational research, curriculum, and policy formation, which are: (1) race and racism are central, domestic, permanent, and fundamental in understanding and explaining how society functions, (2) it challenges dominant ideologies and claims of race impartiality, objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness and equal opportunity, (3) it is activist and propagates a commitment to social justice, (4) it centers the experiences and voices of the marginalized and the oppressed, and (5) it is inevitably interdisciplinary in scope and function (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). CRT was an appropriate conceptual lens to investigate my research questions because it helped contextualize African American women's lived experiences plated to institutional racism. Institutional racism is pervasive in the United States. Racial bias and discrimination are so ingrained in institutions' structure that they are self-perpetuating, even when the individuals who perpetrate them by serving the existing system are not racists themselves (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Collins (2002) developed Black Feminist Theory (BFT) as a critical social theory. She provided BFT to understand African American women's everyday experiences defined by race and gender. BFT has three key characteristics. First, African American women's life experiences shape the framework. Second, although African American women are unique, their experiences intersect. Finally, although commonalities exist among African American women, they have different classes, religions, ages, and sexual orientations, which play out differently in their lives. I used BFT to understand how African American women relate, navigate, and advance in their careers. Collins (2009) found that BFT allows African American women to tell their stories. Furthermore, it enables them to define their self-identities based on their experiences. Most importantly, BFT unites African American women through their struggles against sexism, racism, and classism.

Summary of Methodology

I deemed a qualitative research approach best suited for this study's inductive nature. I sought to make meaning from the experiences and perceptions of participants' trajectories to senior leadership positions. Specifically, I used a basic interpretive study design to understand how people interpret and assign meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2002). I collected data through interviews, document analysis, and memoing from four female African American senior administrators in Academic Affairs in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. I chose the vice president, associate provost, interim associate provost, and associate dean. For my data analysis, I used multiple strategies such as coding, categorizing, and reflective writing. I took necessary precautions to ensure the validity of the findings, including collecting rich, thick descriptions, triangulation of data, identifying researcher bias and reactivity, and increasing the generalizability of the results to enhance this study's credibility. Finally, all data were thematically analyzed and presented in chapters four and five.

Limitations

Limitations associated with the qualitative method in this study included the potential for researcher bias that may weaken the study results' confirmability. Based on my small study sample, I did not generalize my findings to a broader population. I cannot guarantee the credibility and dependability of my results as this depended on the honesty and accuracy of participants' interview responses. I only explored African American female SLAs' experiences in southeastern colleges and universities in the US, and transferability to other samples and populations was limited.

Chapter Summary

Women account for more than half of the U.S. population but are still behind lag men in leadership positions. For African American women, the leadership gap is even more expansive (Warner & Corley, 2017). According to Johnson (2017a), the glass ceiling is a deep-rooted analogy

that serves as an invisible barrier that prevents women from obtaining senior-level positions despite the number of female graduates available for leadership positions. For African American women, the barriers are even more complicated. African American women face a concrete ceiling, meaning they face even stricter obstacles than their white counterparts (Barbers, 2016).

I explored African American females' experiences in senior administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Race Feminism (CRF) formed the theoretical framework and supplied the data analysis lens. I used a qualitative interpretive approach to analyze African American women administrators' experiences. This study's results will contribute to a better understanding of African American female senior administrators' career trajectories and experiences and provide them with a voice. Furthermore, findings may inform policymakers and employers to increase diversity in their leadership or executive committees. Lastly, this study may start a dialogue between African American females aspiring to become senior administrators. The validity of the findings was ensured through member checking, bracketing to monitor personal bias and triangulation.

Definition of Terms

African American woman. An "African American woman" is a subcategory of Black women, where "Black woman" may refer to any woman of African descent, including first-generation immigrants. I define African American women as American parents (Dunn et al., 2014).

Black Feminist Theory (BFT). BFT focuses on empowering African American women within the context of social injustice by intersecting oppression and supporting broad principles of social justice that transcend Black women’s particular needs (Collins, 2009).

Black woman. I used "Black woman" to refer to any African descent woman, including first-generation immigrants (Dunn et al., 2014).

Concrete ceiling. Like the "glass ceiling," which is defined later in this section, the "concrete

ceiling" refers to the effect of intangible, systemic barriers to women's career advancement (Johns, Fook, & Nath, 2019; Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). The glass ceiling phenomenon is associated with White women, while African Americans face a concrete ceiling, a more impenetrable barrier (Johns et al., 2019; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT indicates that racism is deeply embedded in the structure of American society, such that the normal functioning of U.S. institutions is to the detriment of persons of color, even when the individuals and policies governing those institutions at any given time are overtly liberal about race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Faculty. Any university employee who teaches courses, including part-time and full-time instructors, assistant and associate professors, and tenured faculty (USG, 2020b).

Glass ceiling. I used the term "glass ceiling" to refer to qualified women's inability to rise to organizational leadership positions that fairly represent numbers at lower employment levels. This is due to intangible, systemic barriers to women's career advancement, including but not limited to gender-based prejudice, bias, and discrimination (Banks et al., 2018). I use the glass ceiling phenomenon associated with White women and the term "concrete ceiling" with struggles related to African American women (Johns et al., 2019; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008).

Intersectionality. "Intersectionality" refers to the condition of having multiple, overlapping social identities associated with personal characteristics such as ethnicity, gender orientation, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic class, and ability status and to the effects of the compounded, socially constructed perceptions of those identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Post-secondary education institution. A post-secondary education institution grants any or all post-secondary degrees: associates, bachelor's, master's, doctorate, or professional degree (NCES, 2018).

Senior-level administrator (SLA). For this study, and in alignment with the definitions used

by ACE (2017) and Washington Lockett et al. (2018), SLA positions will include executive director, dean, vice president, vice-chancellor, CIO, CAO, CFO, or higher (e.g., president and members of the board of governors). SLAs provide leadership and guidance to the senior staff and faculty at a university, represent the institution at public events and through public statements, and are focused on daily tasks associated with managerial and strategic functions for the institution (Washington Lockett et al., 2018).

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

African American women have made slow gains toward fair representation among Senior-Level Administrators (SLAs) in U.S. post-secondary education institutions. The passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited gender and race discrimination in hiring, promotions, and firing (American Council on Education [ACE], 2017; West, 2017b). However, discriminatory practices continue under institutionalized cultural bias.

Mentorship that includes emotional support and career guidance is one of the most pertinent factors for promoting African American women's advancement to leadership positions in post-secondary education (West, 2017b). I explored African American females' experiences in senior-level administrator (SLA) positions in higher education institutions to understand their challenges during their rise to leadership positions and their strategies to overcome those barriers.

In this chapter, I summarized the literature search terms used to identify the literature for review. Critical race theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Theory (BFT) conceptual frameworks were presented as a lens to understand the complex context affecting African American women in or seeking SLA roles in higher education. This chapter denotes studies addressing African American women as explicitly focused on these groups. I used the term “African American women” to mean an ethnic group of Americans with total or partial ancestry from any of the Black racial groups of Africa. I used the most up-to-date research on the state of African American women in higher education and the barriers they experience on the path and in SLA positions.

I identify these barriers as institutionalized racism expressed through discriminatory hiring practices, granting tenure, and maintaining the concrete ceiling. The discriminatory impact of intersectionality and the force of the cultural and risk task African American women experience as they seek and work in higher education leadership positions. A review of the scholarly literature

dealing with the impact of social perception on African American women in leadership provided context. I explored the social perception that impacts African American women's self-perception, interaction with other women, and its impact on leadership skills and opportunities. I examined the life and career experiences of African American women seeking SLA positions. The strategies used and suggested in the research to support African American women to reach and work in SLA positions will be presented. Furthermore, I examined the rising need to recognize and act on the value of minority teachers/leaders in education in the context of student outcomes. Finally, I presented the essential role of mentoring.

Literature Search Strategy

The following topics covered all pertinent scholarly literature relevant to this study.

1. Barriers of African American Females in Senior-Level Administration positions
2. Intersectionality of race and gender
3. Life and career experiences of African American Females in Senior-Level Administration
4. Professional experiences of African American Females in Senior-Level Administration higher education
5. Discriminatory hiring practices of African American Females in Senior-Level Administration higher education
6. Discriminatory Granting of Tenure.
7. The concrete ceiling minority women administrator's higher education.
8. Strategies to improve opportunities for African American Females in Senior-Level Administration higher education.
9. Social perceptions of African American women in leadership.

My literature search yielded over eighty sources that fit the inclusion criteria for the review.

Conceptual Framework

I used CRT and BFT theories to examine African American women's career trajectories and experiences in senior administrative positions in higher education institutions. CRT focuses on race and how racism within the structure of American society. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), a group of scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power founded the CRT movement. Institutional racism is pervasive in the United States. It occurs when racial bias and discrimination are so ingrained in institutions' structure that they are self-perpetuating, even when the individuals who perpetrate them by serving the existing form are not racists themselves (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT's application is "an oppositional framework geared toward naming and disrupting white supremacy in legal, educational, and social institutions (Croom & Patton, 2011, p. 21)." The four primary aims of CRT are to (1) offer stories of discrimination, (2) present opportunities to reduce racial domination, (3) emphasize the social construction of race, and (4) address class and gender inequalities that transect with race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

BFT was created to place the “African American women’s experiences in the center of analysis without privileging those experiences” (Collins, 2000, p. 228). African American women are positioned in a way that they stand at the central point of two dominant systems of oppression: race and gender. Understanding the intersection of gender and race is called intersectionality (Collins, 2000). BFT acknowledges the impact that race, gender, class, and politics have on the lives and experiences of African American women (Collins, 1990, 2000, 2009) and is a vital resource for those who are interested in “understanding, learning, and valuing the multiple aspects of their identity, leadership styles, and influences” (Scott, 2016). Since Black women account for an oppressed group, Black feminism will remain important (Collins, 2009). According to Simien (2004), Black feminist consciousness arises from understanding intersecting patterns of discrimination. Simien underscores

the importance of studying Black feminist voices in politics by highlighting the limited available data and quantitative approaches used by political scientists.

However, BFT's overarching purpose is to resist the practices and ideas of oppression (Collins, 2009). African American women cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppression is eliminated (Collins, 2009). BFT, as a critical social theory, focuses on empowering African American women within the context of social injustice by intersecting oppression and supporting broad principles of social justice that transcend Black women's particular needs (Collins, 2009). BFT developed independently of CRT precisely because CRT under-represented females in the sociological assessment of racism's impact. Simultaneously, the feminist discussion of similar issues excluded African American women (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Addressing the double effect of being an African American woman, BFT also addresses issues dealing with intersectionality. Intersectionality examines how race, sex, class, and sexual orientation play out in different situations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Distinct from but related to CRT, BFT fills in the gaps institutionalized racism enables.

Critical race theorists believe that a woman's social location and individual experiences can help understand education's social and political landscape and that her experiences can help reveal the effects of racism and sexism (Croom & Paton, 2011). Simien (2004) uses BFT to defend the character of Black women from racist, misogynistic attacks and stereotypes for political ends. She rejects many artistic images supporting negative stereotypes about intelligence and innate ability. Simien argues that African American female intellectuals readily recognize disadvantage and discrimination due to their "dual identity" and their "politicized group consciousness" stemming from day-to-day encounters with race and gender oppression (p 423). Furthermore, she alleges that interlocking systems of oppression (racism and sexism) predispose African American women to double consciousness. This notion of double consciousness connotes an acute sense of awareness at the center of my study.

Collins (2000), Jones (2000), Almquist (1975), and Simien (2004) contend that double consciousness makes African American women see themselves through the eyes of others and measure their self-worth in a society that supports negative stereotypes of Black women for political ends. Given that African American women suffer discrimination based on race and gender, Simien thinks that many likely possess a sense of group consciousness derived from their unique disadvantaged status in the United States.

In this study, BFT added a conceptual basis for understanding African American women's compounded discrimination and intersecting oppressions. African American women are subject to socially constructed perceptions of their intersectional identities. BFT considers the impact of intersectionality, where CRT does not differentiate between the compounding effects of discrimination. The result of institutionalized racism is supported by both paradigms, as it overlaps between genders and races.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

African American Women in Higher Education

African Americans possess unique leadership approaches that do not lend themselves to being easily understood (Chuang, 2019). African American women are creative leaders and natural risk-takers who engage in boundary-spanning behavior and divergent thinking (Barnes, 2017). Behavioral complexity lies at the root of African American women's leadership approaches, rooted in authenticity and informed by the cultural pressures that helped them hone their unique determination. However, these traits are often at odds with the dominant organizational style present in many higher education institutions. People who lack cultural competency perceive confident African American women through a prejudicial lens as aggressive (Barnes, 2017).

Understanding the various contextual factors affecting African American women in higher education is needed to grasp this sector's barriers. Many African American women working in higher

education work in HBCUs, and as of 2008, African American women only held 1% of faculty at PWIs (Wright & Salinas, 2016). These factors create a negative feedback loop. Many students are rarely exposed to an African American faculty, resulting in the few African American women in higher education consistently receiving lower teaching evaluations from students and coworkers. This "cultural taxation" whereby African American women work in higher education simultaneously held to higher behavior standards while being expected to fail. Many SLA positions are held by Whites, acting as gatekeepers to tenure and leadership positions. Of the 26% of women serving as higher-education presidents, less than 4% are African American women. However, becoming leaders and achieving tenure is still a clear goal for 81% of African American professional women. The investment of time, energy, and money African American women have put into their higher education careers is expected to return higher salaries and leadership opportunities. As a result of continued barriers and discrimination, most African American women in higher education report extreme frustration in their careers (Wright & Salinas, 2016).

Barriers of African American Females on the Path to and in Senior-Level Administration

Many higher education researchers perceive SLA candidates' supply problem as most of those holding positions are reaching retirement age (Smith, 2016). While more minorities are gaining higher education experience and degrees, fewer are looking for and gaining administrative leadership positions. The need to increase diversity in higher education leadership is rooted in the fundamental diversification of the United States, the need to support minority students through exposure and increased expectation, and the overall demand to compete in international businesses while maintaining national security (Briggs, 2017). As of 2020, White people make up approximately 49% of the U.S. population, making this demographic, for the first time in America's modern history, a minority population (Smith, 2016). Researchers emphasize utilizing diversity to strengthen organizations as it supplies a more profound and broader range of perspectives, backgrounds, and

skills to address problems (Liu, 2016). Higher education policies may help reflect the population's new demographic makeup, values, and abilities.

African American women have an established history of rising to high leadership positions in their community, establishing schools for Blacks, and writers, achieving an advanced degree, and becoming leaders in government, nonprofits, and human rights activists (Simms, 2018). However, the rise in African American female representation in SLA does not match their initiative or qualifications. A lack of diversity in this position can lead to policies and organizational culture that undermines the equal opportunities of all minority students. Due to a lack of accountability to shareholders, higher education lags business contexts in promoting leadership diversity (Simms, 2018).

Utilizing in-depth interviews, Webster (2019) presented African Americans' experiences and perceptions of barriers to SLA advancement. A common theme uncovered is the perception that African American women observe that they must work twice as hard to be considered equivalent to white coworkers (Webster, 2019). This finding is one of the dominant results of the compounding prejudices inherent in intersectionality. To be thought half as good as males, Women must work twice as hard (Logan & Dudley, 2019). The double standard of paying minorities less than White majority workers ($.63 of the dollar) nurtures resentment and exhaustion in hard-working minorities (Hollis, 2018; McChesney, 2018). Researchers have recorded African American women's perceptions that no matter their qualifications or achievements, there is always the perceived need to prove themselves (Webster, 2019). Promoting many Caucasians to SLA positions without experience or qualifications increases pressure on African American women. This duplicity erodes the academic institutions' dedication and trust in ways that undermine job and student performance (Lomotey, 2019; Webster, 2019).

The context that enables these complex formations of barriers to African American females

attaining and maintaining senior-level administration is the convergence of institutionalized racism, discriminatory hiring practices, discriminatory granting of tenure, and the impact of the concrete ceiling, all overlaid by the pressure of intersectionality (Bhopal, 2019; Carroll, 2017; Davis & Brown, 2017; Patel et al., 2018; Smith, 2016; Smooth, 2016). In the following sections, I examine how the scholarly literature quantifies and categorizes these factors' impact on African American women's opportunities and lives.

Institutionalized Racism

Within the higher education culture, the discussion of institutionalized racism is more difficult to pin down, as it hides insidiously in plain sight behind "color muteness" and social subtleties (Cole & Harper, 2017). As such, "cultural taxation" has become a stand-in for institutionalized racism in higher education (Cleveland et al., 2018). Cultural taxation assumes a natural role of service and dedication to employees. When measured against the weighted tax, a minority suffers (emotionally, psychologically, and energetically), which represents an unequal distribution of demand on minorities and women in higher education. Examples of cultural tax are the assumption that minority faculty members will research "exotic communities" or participate as the only minority member on committees dealing with diversity. The socio-cultural processes force minority members into token positions representing their institution. They often do not come with the support and prestige (networking power) Caucasian members would receive from the same service (Cleveland et al., 2018). Simultaneously, supervisors expect minority members to act the token while carrying the same course/publishing load and receiving little institutional support. As a result, many minority faculty members report elevated occupational stress levels, health complications, being kept busy, and being excluded from networking opportunities at their institution.

In this context, cultural taxation is a form of institutionalized racism, keeping minorities spinning their wheels while staying in their lane. This situation is complicated by a colligating

preoccupation with their hairstyles, eating habits, and clothing choices for African American women. As a result, African American women working in higher education experience their interactions as psychological minefields in which it is challenging to persist, let alone succeed. African American women are held to unrealistic standards and expected to fail while lacking support (McGee & Kazembe, 2016). At the same time, these women stand as pillars of the community, which overall is an overwhelming and frustrating experience (McGee & Kazembe, 2016). The United States' diversity is changing, making Whites a minority group for the first time (Cole & Harper, 2017). This change reinforces institutionalized racism as those in positions of power become more resistant to change (Cole & Harper, 2017). Institutionalized racism has transformed to hide behind "color muteness," which is the false belief that higher education culture has passed beyond racism into a state of equality. Also, culturally competent buzzwords shield racist organizational culture as a form of simultaneously silencing and disempowering minorities (Ford, 2016). African American women experience all the micro-aggressions of color muteness while simultaneously experiencing the frustrating duplicity of gender blindness and sexual objectification (Carroll, 2017). This situation amounts to a perfect storm of discrimination for African American women seeking or holding SLA positions in higher education.

Researchers at every stage of studying African American women in higher education admit there is limited research on this topic. One reason may be institutional betrayal victims remaining silent out of preservation (Carroll, 2017). African American women experience discrimination in higher education contexts throughout their lives and across their entire culture, further leading to silence towards discrimination and institutional racism (Carroll, 2017). Victims of institutionalized racism and betrayal may feel they have nowhere to turn for accountability, redress, or have their voices heard. For some African American women, attempting to address these issues may also result in pressure or punishment by the culture, social systems, and institutions they turn to for help (Carroll,

2017).

Institutionalized racism in the higher education context shields Whites through discriminatory behavior in ways that nurture attributional ambiguity (Brower et al., 2017). Attributional ambiguity occurs when a marginalized group member cannot tell if things happen to them because of their minority status or other pervasive reasons. Furthermore, this ambiguity and the pervasive confusion accompanying it form social distancing and deflecting behavior from exact causes. They concluded that this is another way that discrimination goes underground.

Discriminatory Hiring Practices

African American women experience the convergence of many forms of discrimination expressions while searching for employment in the modern workforce. Using the critical race theory (CRT) epistemological approach, Smith (2016) examined the impact of distinct levels of racism (personal, institutional, and cultural) on the hiring and promotion of SLA positions. Integrating and synthesizing relevant literature, he historicized the knowledge used to generalize themes concerning the impact of racism in SLA hiring and promotion. Smith emphasized the role of history as, "In many ways, workplace organizational structures replicate the social hierarchies that lay at the foundation of wider society, with careers and professional positions becoming synonymous to racial and culturally determined social positioning and stratification" (p. 126). Asking organizational structures to change independently or counter culture's overall movements is an irrational and futile approach.

Smith's (2016) argued that racist policies are expensive to maintain, as they create unequal wealth distribution chains undermining systemic growth. He determined that this cost is felt energetically through minorities having to work more for less pay, thus having less energy, resources, and time to invest in themselves and their community. He suggested these systems support a culture of poverty or, at best, wage slavery. Those subjected to discriminatory practices are forced into a victim mentality that saps confidence, feeds anger, limits opportunities, and informs the next generation of

practical limitations. Smith coined the notion of "color muteness" to refer to a false flag of peace used by higher education organizations to cover discriminatory hiring practices that broke no discussion. This practice has the double shield of (1) claiming exemption from racism while (2) accusing those who bring up the subject of race as racist. In effect, this tactic silences those who experience discrimination, and discriminatory hiring practices shield employers from being accused of violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Hiring is often subjective and closely related to networking processes (Brower et al., 2017). The absence of WOC in hiring committees affects hiring decisions (Brower et al., 2017). Vick and Cunningham (2018) used a multilevel perspective informed by the prejudice-distribution theory to consider the complex relationships between Caucasian bias and African American women's hiring rates. They examined three domains influenced by bias: (1) suggested salary, (2) work attributions, and (3) hiring recommendations. Vick and Cunningham (2018) found that those considering applicants did so from a clear foundation of racial-identity assumptions, which resulted in lower ratings and suggested salaries. Vick and Cunningham found underlying assumptions on racial identity that address sociocultural hierarchies by analyzing White groups' privilege. White groups with freedom and power are less likely to respond favorably and punish minority groups (Vick & Cunningham, 2018). These findings emphasize the cultural pervasiveness of institutionalized racism that undermines the ability of African American women to be fairly assessed during the hiring process

Discriminatory Granting of Tenure

Institutional leaders express discriminatory granting of tenure in many subversive ways. The most dangerous and uncontrollable of these is the subjectivity and biases present in the tenure evaluation process (Corneille et al., 2019). Inherent to this subjectivity is the unspoken and unwritten rules influencing this process, often understood through subtle cultural signals that African American women are not privy to by design. The subtle mechanisms of discrimination make it impossible for

African American women to prepare, measure up, or address systematic racism in the tenure process.

Corneille et al. (2019) found that many discriminatory institutionalized racism factors impact African American women's ability to engage in networking and preferential research applications related to a successful tenure. Corneille et al. (2019) posited that "Many of the tenure requirements mirror this enduring preference for laboratory and bench research and are less tailored for individuals in STEM education, service and community engagement, areas that have a higher representation of WOC faculty" (p. 15). Institutional leaders sideline subtle social networks that support African American women seeking tenure. Also, unlike a culture that promotes male confidence, women are discouraged from making their accomplishments known. Lack of comfort with self-promotion leads many African American women to remain silent and miss valuable networking and collaboration opportunities (Brower et al., 2017).

Gonzales and Terosky (2016) identified tenure as granting legitimacy for continued employment in higher education institutions. Legitimacy through leadership and tenure is a form of social capital and actualizes greater autonomy and standing within an organization (O'Meara et al., 2018). Researchers noted that attempts to garner legitimacy must come from higher education facilities and associated faculty and staff (O'Meara et al., 2018). Institutional leaders deny WOC legitimacy through the discriminatory convergence of the distribution of resources, social interactions, and institutional policies (O'Meara et al., 2018). One such policy is the social expectation of faculty to dedicate themselves 100% to their institution. WOC often have challenges embracing because of their desire for work/life balance and dedication to their community (Dear, 2016).

Discrimination of The Concrete Ceiling

The phenomenon of the concrete ceiling is also known as the "Black ceiling." It relates that African American women have a more difficult time breaking through the glass ceiling of an upper management than Caucasian women, representing only 1% of CEO positions (Sims & Carter, 2019).

African American women also risk taxation as they attempt to break through the glass ceiling. Glass and Cook (2019) coined the term "glass cliff" to represent the tendency to appoint women and African American women to leadership positions during periods of crisis. Promotion is a dual-edged sword that makes leaders work miracles during times of crisis while at the same time risk being fired and blamed for the failure to solve the situation. The concrete ceiling reflects the converging pressures of institutionalized racism, intersectionality, and gender bias (Barnes, 2017).

Under institutionalized racism, duplicitous legitimate organizational policies hide the concrete ceiling support struts (Akkaya, 2020). Throughout the pipeline of education culture, the decision-makers are consistently male Caucasian, leaving African American women out of influencing decisions all along the way. Institutional leaders have established international conventions to help balance this bias. However, these conventions have not been integrated into the higher learning culture (Akkaya, 2020). Many African American women desire to break through the glass ceiling to attain the SLA positions they have prepared for, "In the academic staff, 5,337 (30.20%) of 17,670 professors, 4,017 (34.06%) of 11,791 associate professors, 9,786 (37.6%) of 26,017 assistant professors, 21,565 (51.72%) of 41,691 research assistants are women" (Akkaya, 2020, p. 77). Even though the percentages improve each decade in the above domains, they remain stubbornly low, between 1-5% for the highest positions in higher education.

The Impact of Intersectionality

Smooth (2016) defined intersectionality as the double impact of prejudice African American women experiences in American culture through the complex interactions of identity and culture. He argued that women experience more discrimination than men, and minorities experience more discrimination than Caucasian individuals. Combined, African American women experience a double dose of bias, making their lives more difficult and complicated (Razzante, 2018).

According to Kimberle Crenshaw in Harris and Patton (2018), intersectionality emphasizes

U.S. structures, such as the legal system, and discourses of resistance, such as feminism and anti-racism, often frame identities as isolated and mutually exclusive. This situation creates 'theoretical erasure' of African American women who hold multiple minoritized identities" (p. 1). Racial ethnicity compounds discrimination against women (Crenshaw, 2018).

Since this introduction into the national discussion, the theory of intersectionality has traveled through all academic disciplines that discriminatory culture touches. Harris and Patton (2018) warn against the light use of intersectionality that over-intellectualizes the concept, limiting the scholarly discussion's impact. Harris and Patton (2018) contend that racial intersectionality, rather than solving problems, focuses on minor histories and origins, methodologies, efficacy, politics, relationships, identity politics, and connection to 'Black woman' and Black feminism. This practice is a shield to the reality of intersectionality's daily experience and renders scholarly debate meaningless. In addition to its social justice roots, it creates equality for African American women.

Using a triangulated methodological approach analyzed through critical race theory and Black feminism, Curtis (2017) examined how intersectional complexities affected African American women's leadership experience in higher education. Three main themes came out of the triangulated interview and focus group approach: (1) echoes of being a silent presence, (2) personal driving factors to remain leaders despite challenges, and (3) the role of collective identity and communal kinship (Curtis, 2017). Curtis emphasized that culturally competent (CC) organizational culture was missing from African American leaders' institutions. However, if academic institutions' CC culture were present, these leaders would not have felt as lone and silent voices working in a void, drawn together to form a sisterhood against the dominant male perspective's violence. When CC culture is present diverse leaders are an extension of living values, not working in opposition.

The Impact of Social Perception of African American Women in Leadership

The agentic social cognition theory helps supply insight into how within culture, people are

both creators and the products of the cultural and social system they live in (Rosette et al., 2016). Women's overarching social perceptions directly influence their self-perception and the opportunities available to them. Related to how closely a woman abides by the status quo, they will be supported or penalized by their community of loved ones, friends, coworkers, and the law. Even as there has been much progress in America for women, the nation remains fundamentally patriarchal, and women's perception as leaders remains a hotbed of emotions (Rosette et al., 2016). However, keeping intersectionality in mind, research has found that while the impact of gender discrimination may be lessening in today's culture, the result of race discrimination is not (Oikelome, 2017).

Ultimately all stereotypes are superficial shortcuts to objective thinking complex phenomenon. (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). The fact that culture still relies unconsciously on stereotypes to determine their emotional relationships with the phenomenon emphasizes that beliefs held for a long time in the reptilian brain are slow to change. Brescoll (2016), Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2017), and Rosette et al. (2016) perceived women as passive, kind yet incompetent, easily overwhelmed, shortsighted, with choices led by emotion and not reason, and fearful and not confident. However, Rosette et al. (2016) emphasize that stereotypes of minority women are distinct from many Caucasian women's stereotypes. As a function of the intersectionality of prejudice, minority women face heightened stereotypical scrutiny when they attempt to challenge the status quo. This prejudice is rooted in the discriminatory social contract inherent in creating the Declaration of Independence. Women were not allowed full citizenship participation with the right to vote or own property (Hollis, 2018). The social contract continues to be enforced daily through the perception and behavioral reinforcement of the status quo and remains a powerful force.

Women often experience the social backlash of exclusion, gossip, and lack of cooperation when assuming acceptable male leadership traits such as self-promotion and confidence (Brescoll, 2016). While men, as allowed to express anger as an ancient representation of strength, women who

express anger are often characterized as irrational, untrustworthy, or crazy (Coleman, 2019; Kubu, 2017; Rahman et al., 2016). In this way, the status quo limits a woman's ability to act effectively as a leader, doubly so for minority women (Davis & Brown, 2017). Employers reinforce this double standard when more women are in higher education and are consistently paid less than their male counterparts (Macais & Stephens, 2017).

African American women are often presumed incompetent in leadership (Ndebele, 2018; Selzer & Robles, 2019). This problem is partly due to the collective cultural perception of women as predominantly maternal and having their role as children's leaders and not men's (Gatrell et al., 2017). As a critical aspect of feminist thought, this represents woman as the "maternal body" and deals with a woman's inherent ability to generate life. This aspect is often seen as a liability within career contexts, as a pregnant woman/mother may have divided loyalties where a man may not (Carli & Eagly, 2016). This phenomenon is known as the fatherhood bonus and the motherhood liability in business scholarship. In this double standard, society considers men trustworthy if they are family men, while women are considered a risk (Pulido, 2016).

Due to the impact of social prejudice, researchers have found that ethical leadership behavior is often judged differently according to gender bias (Marquardt et al., 2016). The status quo behavioral patterns allowed for a Caucasian (assertiveness, hypocritical, ambition) to be less favorably received when acted by African American women. This gender bias poses ethical challenges to gauge behavior through a foggy filter of intersectional prejudice. Since leadership style impacts follower outcomes, this confusion may have unwanted consequences for followers (Sulastri et al., 2020). While polls consistently indicate that integrity is the highest value an ethical leader must hold, how the public allows leaders to express goodness as a process inherently without integrity. Contradictions like these are rife in the intersectional debate on the relative value of behavior in the face of discrimination (Harris & Patton, 2018).

Women's Perspective Skewed by the Impact of Social Perception

After overcoming the many challenges to reach SLA positions, many African American women find resistance and resentment from other women in their work environment (Allen & Flood, 2018). In African American women, institutions often punish leaders for actively advocating diversity and inclusion (Heckman et al., 2017). Researchers Allen and Flood (2018) performed a qualitative phenomenological study to understand this case of relational aggression. This phenomenon was dubbed the "queen bee syndrome" in the 1970s when women held a larger workforce presence. The syndrome reflects the scarcity inherent in patriarchal work environments. Women feel psychological pressure to emulate those who undermined their success when they are in a position of power. In this context,

> Far from nurturing the growth of younger female talent, queen bees push aside competitors by chipping away at their self-confidence or undermining their professional standing. It is a trend undergirded by irony: the women who have complained for decades about unequal treatment from men perpetuate many of the same problems by turning on other female colleagues (Allen & Flood, 2018, p. 12).

Researchers have speculated that this form of relational aggression is more harmful to women because they place a higher value on relationships and emotional support. Performing semi-structured interviews with 34 women who experienced relational aggression, Allen and Flood (2018) found that female leaders' bullying responded in four keyways. Self-blame practices, defiance, focusing on the goal (displacement), and avoidance were the coping methods found here. This study's participants suggested that these female leaders may have felt insecure in their position and sought to feel secure by dominating another. However, this study did not provide enough investigation or reflection on why women in leadership exhibit relational aggression (Allen & Flood, 2018).

Seeking to understand female leaders' motivations who use relational aggression to distance

themselves from junior women has been performed more in-depth by others. Derks, Van Larr, and Ellemers (2016) postulate that the queen bee phenomenon reflects gender discrimination at work and is rooted in social identity threats. Female leaders often engage in masculine self-presentation, feeling pressure to conform and even erase their gender. They emulate the aggressive and risk-taking behavior stereotypically associated with male leaders. Researchers have found that more junior female leaders are not afraid to take risks. (Derks et al., 2016). Female leaders have found they gain more status with males in power by distancing themselves from other women to present a threat to masculine culture or work opportunities. Female leaders create social identity threats when they believe their femininity is a liability to their success. The consequences of the queen bee phenomenon are that organizations with a female leader (in business) often exhibit fewer opportunities for other women. In this case, the organization opted for a female leader who could protect the male status quo, acting both as a token and a dam (Derks et al., 2016). However, not all research supports the queen bee theory, as much support has been found for the power of sisterhood and in-group favoritism with women (Vial et al., 2016).

Identity Shifting and Role Incongruity

Identity shifting is one of African American women's coping mechanisms to maintain a presence in higher education's positively charged discriminatory atmosphere (Dickens & Chavez, 2018). This phenomenon is known as identity negotiation and involves changing one's appearance, speech patterns, and behavioral traits to fit a perceived norm. Role incongruity is a common problem for African American women. Their unique leadership approach is often at odds with the agentic prescriptions of the communally held perception of a leader (Zheng et al., 2018). African American women may engage in identity shifting to navigate these contradictions. African American women are often perceived as unprofessional and incompetent by the Caucasian majority organizational culture when they exude confidence in expression and dress. (Dickens & Chavez, 2018). However, there are

psychological backlashes for African American women who engage and succeed through identity shifting. Women become invisible to shield themselves from scrutiny, a form of psychological betrayal of the authentic self, creating a subconscious backlash of anger and shame (Dickens & Chavez, 2018).

Life and Career Experiences of African American Females Seeking and in Senior-Level Administration

One of the damaging aspects of limiting the voice of African American women is that the dominant narrative often becomes the only narrative (Motha & Varghese, 2016). The complexity inherent in intersectional discrimination makes understanding African American women's plight even more challenging for the public attuned to simplified, polarized narratives. Informed by CRT and Black feminist theory, Hiel (2016) investigated intersectional challenges in working as educational administrators' through in-depth interviews. This study's thematic finding was that African American women had to fight the stereotype of being perceived as angry Black women daily. White people often associate African American women’s confidence, assertiveness, and direction with unreasonable anger. This stereotype undermines African American women's ability to act as decisive leaders, undercuts networking capacity through the social contract, and ignores the passion that must fuel social justice work (Hiel, 2016; Davis, 2016).

African American women experience barriers to success in SLA throughout becoming leaders and maintaining this role. Through the lens of autoethnographic research, analysts Warren-Gordon and Mayes (2017) invited two African American women to express the barriers they have experienced in their positions within higher education. One of these participants emphasized the social isolation that results from being one of the only minorities in the institution. As a form of attributional ambiguity, this participant expresses, "My isolation from faculty is not an indicator of the department's isolation. They continue to work on collaborative projects with each other, just not me. Our limited interactions are brief and mostly restricted to faculty meetings (Warren-Gordon & Mayes,

2017, p. 2361)." This ambiguity is a constant but undefinable presence of otherness that undermines minority women's ability to network, collaborate, mentor, know of opportunities, and work as leaders.

The other participant of the Warren-Gordon and Mayes (2017) autoethnographic research has achieved the rarer position of tenured professor for a minority. She expresses that only from this position does she have the confidence to speak her truth without career-damaging ramifications. This participant ignored the warning and navigated her SLA to create mentoring programs. She also admits to feeling isolated but can develop and engage in service opportunities that expose her to more networking from her position. She admits to having difficulty teaching a class on racial inequality in a department with only her as a member of a minority. She used more than charged words in this example. This participant admits, "for many Anglo students, I'm the first person of color in a position of authority they have encountered. As a result, students often feel threatened and are unprepared to discuss topics of race and inequality (Warren-Gordon & Mayes, 2017, p. 2362)." Students linked their outcomes to the prevailing social contract and its exposure in response to their exposure to minority leaders' emphasis.

Research slowly focuses on African American women's voices and experiences in higher education concerning advancement that honors the impact of intersectionality (Medina et al., 2020). Researchers Hauge and Okpala (2017) used a transformative worldview perspective to listen to African American women's voices in the context of the social justice needed to improve opportunities and equality. In many cases, African American women admit that they resign from higher education once they see clear evidence that they will never be allowed to attain the highest leadership positions. Their experience and pedigree qualify them. Still, their race and gender exclude them. The very few African American women who manage to advance to the highest SLA positions must possess all the traits of experience, pedigree, the ability to seek out mentors, network, increase visibility, and participate in continuous training and publishing (Hauge & Okpala, 2017; Wollen, 2016). As such, it

is questionable if these women can attain a work/life balance concerning the incredible amount of time needed to achieve each of these elements.

Understanding the motivations for African American women seeking to rise to SLA positions is critical for appreciating their perspectives and using a phenomenological qualitative interview method informed by critical race feminism, Baylor (2016) investigates why African American women seek to become leaders in higher education. A key theme revealed a deep belief in social justice, in which African American women aspire to provide inspiring examples for others in their community. Actualizing this inspiration is done through networking and establishing relationships they hope to usher in proactive change for African American women leaders' next generation. A secondary motivation underneath social justice is the sisterhood component in which African American women desire to support other African American women's opportunities. The pressure of intersectionality is felt heavily and pushed against the passion for excellence these women exhibit. The perception of Caucasian hegemony in higher education culture ignites the desire for change that motivates African American women to address discrimination head-on (Baylor, 2016).

Making the successful career transition from K-12 teaching into colligate professorship is especially challenging for African American women. Analyzing African American women's factors to translate K-12 education into a collegiate professorship, Johnson (2017) used interpretive narrative analysis to understand African American women's experience. Those who successfully made this transition emphasized the need for social support within and outside the institutional context. The key to this social support is finding and maintaining a mentor. Another key finding to this transition's success is that African American women always maintain professionalism, especially in the face of conflict. In keeping with other findings in this review, this study found that social justice motivation to make way for the younger generation was a salient motivational factor for successful African American women (Johnson, 2017). As a disenfranchised minority group, African American women

do not separate their success from its collective support.

Under the STEM education and leadership domain, African American women receive the counter spaces to provide safe areas outside the traditional academic environment (Ong et al., 2018; West, 2019). There is a notable lack of African American women in the education faculty and SLA roles of computer science, engineering, physics, and astronomy. The gatekeepers of Caucasian leaders in these fields have been most resistant to admitting diverse members' voices, research, and presence. The other participant of the Warren-Gordon and Mayes (2017) autoethnographic study has achieved the rarer position of tenured professor for a minority. This faculty expresses confidence to speak her truth without her career-damaging ramifications only from this position. She also admits to feeling isolated, but she can develop and engage in service opportunities that expose her to more networking from her job. She admits to having difficulty teaching a class on racial inequality in a department with only her as a member of a minority. This context damaged her words more than charged. This participant admits, "for many Anglo students, I'm the first person of color in a position of authority they have encountered. As a result, students often feel threatened and are unprepared to discuss race and inequality (Warren-Gordon & Mayes, 2017, p. 2362)." Student link outcomes to the prevailing social contract and its exposure per the research on the importance of being exposed to minority leaders emphasizes.

According to Sang (2016), different people experience social isolation when confronting social norms and inherent bias. While this has been an issue when feminist women encounter gender inequality, it is doubly an issue when African American women engage intersectionality in the higher education context that prefers to remain color mute. African American women experience the chilly climate as freezing out of networking opportunities through social isolation, experiencing a cultural tax through being identified with their gender cause, and being excluded from critical organizational opportunities (Cleveland et al., 2018; Warren-Gordon & Mayes, 2017). Successful WOC in SLA roles

prepares for the chilly climate through parents who teach them to disregard outside influences and focus on what they value in themselves (Huang, 2016).

> As academic and social safe spaces that allow underrepresented students to promote their learning wherein their experiences are validated and viewed as critical knowledge; vent frustrations by sharing stories of isolation, microaggressions, and overt discrimination; and challenge deficit notions of people of color (and other marginalized groups) and establish and maintain a positive collegiate racial climate for themselves. (Ong et al. 2017, p. 209)

While this strategy has been moderately successful at encouraging African American women to persist in STEM careers, there has been no crossover between counter spaces and the academic institutions/culture these marginalized group members hope to integrate.

Strategies Utilized to Improve Opportunities for African American Females in Senior-Level Administration

Many strategies are proposed within the scholarly community to support African American women in or seeking SLA positions. Researcher Razzante (2018) utilized co-cultural theory, intersectionality, and dominant group theory while performing five African American women interviews in SLA positions. This researcher's central question was how African American women in SLA classes advocate diversity and inclusion while navigating their position's intricate discrimination patterns. The key to this analysis was identifying communication styles that seek to mitigate racial conflict when a minority SLA interacts with a dominant group member.

Table 1

Preferred Outcome Communication Approaches

		Preferred Outcome		
		Separation	Accommodation	Assimilation
Communication Approach	Nonassertive	Avoiding Maintaining Interpersonal Barriers	Increasing Visibility Dispelling Stereotypes	Emphasizing Commonalities Developing Positive Face Censoring Self Averting Controversy
	Assertive	Communicating Self Intragroup Networking Exemplifying Strengths Embracing Stereotypes	Communicating Self Intragroup Networking Utilizing Liaisons Educating Others	Extensive Preparation Overcompensating Manipulating Stereotypes Bargaining
	Aggressive	Attacking Sabotaging Others	Confronting Gaining Advantage	Dissociating Mirroring Strategic Distancing Ridiculing Self

Note, Taken from Razzante, R. J. Intersectional agencies: Navigating White institutions as an administrator of color, 2018.

As seen in Table 1, African American women SLA leaders use diverse communication methods when interacting with dominant group members to navigate the complex webs of institutionalized racism, intersectionality, and bias. These communication methods serve three objectives: assimilate, separate, or accommodate. Successful leaders may use all these methods when navigating organizational

politics (Razzante, 2018). The African American women in SLA positions interviewed in Razzante's (2018) study used preferred outcome communication to improve their situation and participate in diversity advocacy through co-cultural praxis.

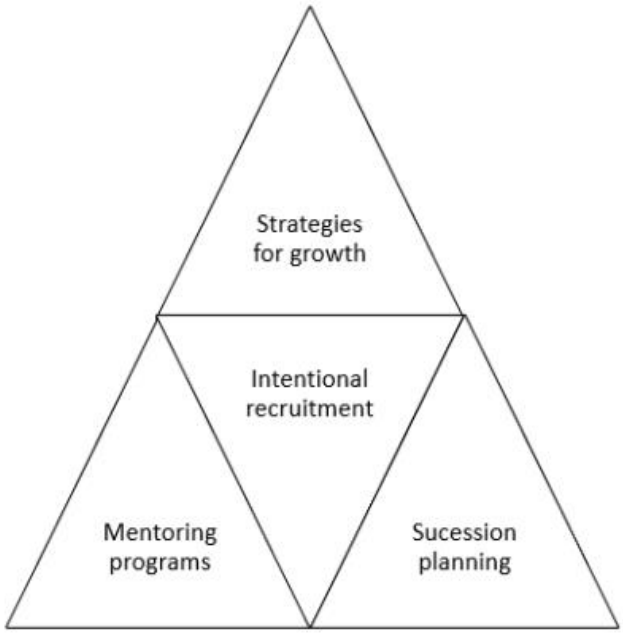
A professional development summit, the African American Women's Summit (AAWS), was created to address African American women working as student affairs administrators (West, 2017a). African American women for African American women developed this strategy to support them in SLA positions and validated their experience as "outsiders within" predominant white institutions (PWI). Since this is not socially acceptable to discuss in higher education contexts, African American women created a context to work with those struggling within it. West (2017a) performed a qualitative interpretive study of the AAWS, and through an interview, observation, and document analysis, the study identified three beneficial results of the conference. The first was validation and support of the difficulties of being an African American woman SLA in a PWI. The second was a discussion of strategies to manage discrimination, and the third was strengthening the African American women's perspective West (2017a).

Strategies to resist discrimination offered proactive ways for African American women in SLA positions to manage their outsider status's psychological stress. These strategies were gleaned from participants and leaders of the AAWS conference and reflected lived experiences. A key strategy was reframing negative contexts with the outsiders-within perspective. Asking oneself how to see something negative in a positive light emphasized the need to address the isolation of being an outsider within by strengthening a sisterhood of supportive relationships both on and off campus. In this way, the AAWS conference is a powerful networking force that African American women SLAs in PWIs can use as psychological support all year. Another strategy was using the places for information and support available that many African American women SLAs may not be aware of and the information handed out at the summit (West, 2017a).

Researchers have found that minority workers in education perceived their academic institutions to promote diversity leadership diversity in a small number of cases. Razzante's (2018) model aligns institutional goals with hiring programs, successional planning, and mentoring to secure leadership diversity. This strategy relies on active diversity recruitment rather than passive hiring policies.

Figure 1.

Strategies for Growing SLA Opportunities for Minority Women



Note. Taken from Webster, 2019, Enablers and barriers influencing African American administrators' career advancement at predominantly white institutions of higher learning. (Doctoral Dissertation).

This method requires recruitment personnel to search out candidates who would otherwise not learn of the position or perceive themselves as able to gain it (HBCUs). However, even in successful strategies, these were not necessarily official protocols but more reflections of the CEO or superintendents' values (Webster, 2019). For best-evidenced-based methods to gain ground across

many institutions without compassionate and aware leadership already in place, official policy implementation is needed.

Researchers advocate that in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), leaders must hold themselves accountable to ensure that their language and actions do not reinforce institutionalized racism to support African American women. Corneille et al. (2019) emphasize that to do this, leaders must ask themselves before making a request, "Could the request be related to stereotypes about WOC in service and secretarial roles or perception of limited power to say no? Does the request benefit the faculty member in terms of opportunities for advancement?" (p. 15). When CC organizational culture is not present or even aimed for, it is up to individual faculty members to create it within themselves if African American women will not remain outsiders.

Corneille et al. (2019) emphasized the need to counter institutionalized racism and bias that, rather than subjectivity in the process, means making the process transparent, accountable, and able to fall under the lens of objective assessment. This method must be supported by cultural competency training so that leaders in PWIs may come to realize their privilege and counteract their unconscious bias. Aligning organizational culture with CC training is key to maintaining the hierarchal support that will enable real organizational change (Corneille et al., 2019). These methods will increase the trust between faculty and leadership through the technique, "Institutional transparency consists of ensuring that the expectations and evaluations for promotion and tenure process are transparent, consistent and equally accessible to everyone (Corneille et al., 2019, p. 16)." One method to support this transition into transparency is training human resource personnel to oversee the tenure process. By providing objective assessment, HR leaders can help ensure fair practices.

Policy changes surrounding pausing the tenure clock for pregnancy, caring for aging parents, or the infirm are other strategies that improve African American females' senior-level administration opportunities. Greater flexibility in the tenure track will ensure organizational loyalty, save on

expensive personnel training, and build on skills over time. Researchers emphasize that gender inequality could be supported by extending this policy change for both women and men, decreasing the risk of women experiencing higher penalties for utilizing this flexibility (Corneille et al., 2019).

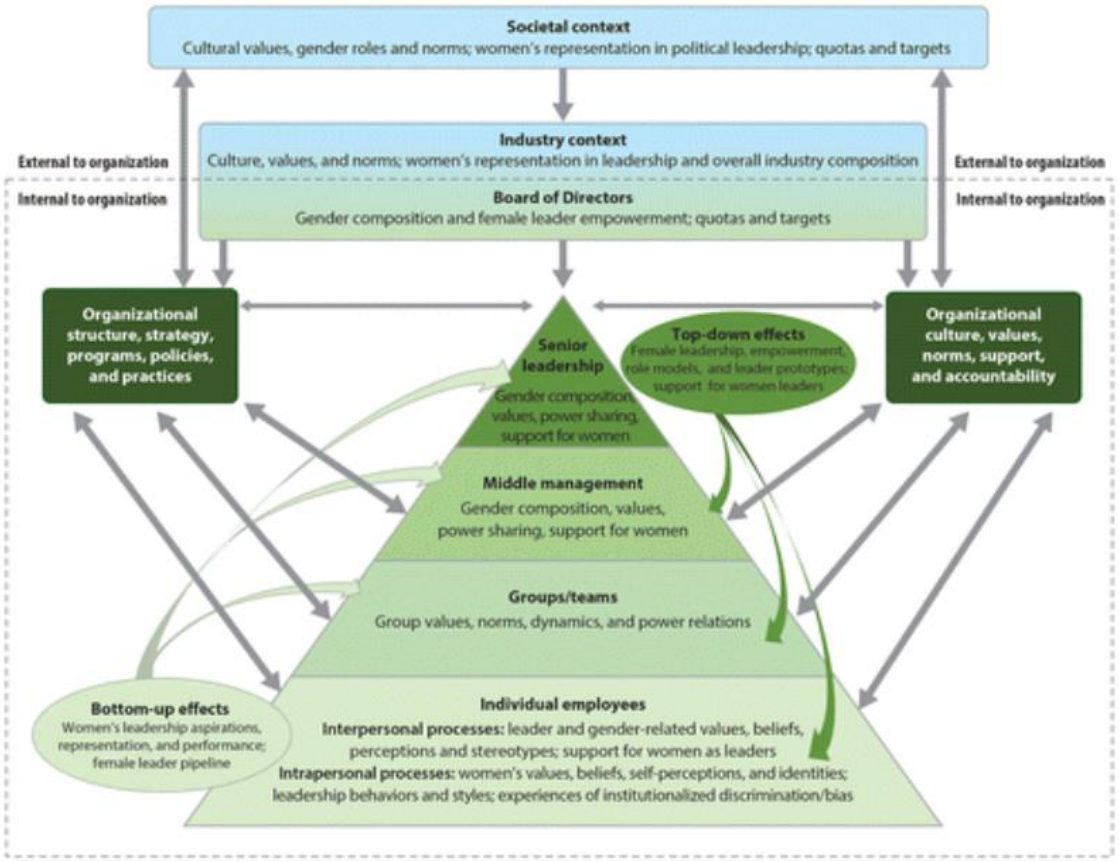
One strategy for promoting the long-term sustainability of African American women in the SLA position is ethnic training programs. In one program, African American women are sponsored by their institution for three days over three months. African American women are exposed to mentoring and reflective practices in three two-day workshops in another program in higher education. To understand how these programs benefited African American women, Bhopal (2019) conducted 30 interviews. While many participants enjoyed the programs, a small percentage found them too essential to meet their desired career trajectory's complex needs. The respondents agreed that the programs' mentoring aspect was the most beneficial, emphasizing the relational value inherent in this process. Mentors helped participants see and understand the importance of networking and develop strategies for improving career projection through visibility. Many African American women found their experiences with micro-aggressions validated. However, one respondent emphasized that the programs supported a Caucasian hegemonic leadership style that did not appeal to this African American woman. This respondent felt the program was attempting to whitewash African American women to assume leadership in the institution's dominant manner, undermining the unique value people of color bring to leadership styles (Bhopal, 2019).

A strategy being used to support African Americans who gain and keep SLA positions is faculty learning communities. Learning communities are higher education faculty groups with similar links (either in the same organization or sharing similar values). These communities offer to mentor and networking opportunities while increasing faculty members' sense of engagement with the district. Such communities support women faculty as they face intersectional challenges. Often coming together once a month for an evening discussion, such learning communities offer a safe

space to confide in challenges and brainstorm solutions (O'Meara et al., 2018).

Figure 2

T*he "BAFFLE" Model: "Barriers and Facilitators of Female Leader Empowerment"*



Note. Lyness, S., and Grotto, A.R., 2018. Women and Leadership in the United States: Are We Closing the Gender Gap? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*

Strategies that seek to advance African American women attaining and retaining SLA positions must deal comprehensively with the complex web of organizational and cultural factors maintaining discriminatory patterns (Lyness & Grotto, 2018). The complex model BAFFLE shows correlations and coexistence of intersectional factors influencing discrimination. In contrast, many

strategic models only account for one at a time. The BAFFLE model focuses on gender discrimination but is flexible enough to allow for the intersection of racism in analyzing societal, industrial, and cultural factors. Identifying intersection points along these dynamic lines of interaction allow for creating specific strategies for managing intersectional discrimination. However, identifying these impact points is much simpler than implementing proactive change. Researchers have found that the scholarly literature supporting leadership development in higher education is often theoretically weak, fragmented, outdated, and does not address the impact of intersectionality (Dopson et al., 2019).

Recognizing the Value of Minority Representation in Student Outcomes

One strategy to improve the representation and support of African American females in SLA positions is recognizing and studying the value of minority representation for student outcomes. A fair amount of current research has documented the importance of exposure to minority leaders (teachers, administrators, principals, superintendents, etc.) on minority student outcomes. The impact of being exposed to diversity in K-12 and beyond has far-reaching implications on discipline rates, social-emotional development, the relationship between teacher and student self-expectation, perceptions of the value of educators, the representation of minorities in gifted programs, early adjustment, and on overall academic outcomes (Downer et al., 2016; Egalite et al., 2015; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Grissom et al., 2017; Gershenson et al., 2016; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Wright et al., 2017). Many teachers in the U.S. are white, but as the population grows, more diverse minority teachers are dramatically increasing their presence in this role, 18% improved from 1988 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This research affirms the commonsense supposition that if minority students do not see anyone who looks like them in positions of authority, they will unconsciously receive the message that this track is not open to them (Fuller et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2017).

The research on the importance of increasing students' exposure to diverse leaders during the formative years of education has deep-reaching roots in the self-image, goal setting, and expectation

capacity that will influence the opportunities minority students make for themselves (Gershenson et al., 2016). Researchers point out that many SLA positions, including notable superintendents, are coming up for retirement, and the choice to promote diverse women will help close this achievement gap (West, 2018). Improving diversity at every level of education influences the overall cycle of minority women attending and excelling in college and seizing SLA positions. Recently, this research has made it into the news and is supported by the scholarly community; this data has a chance to affect hiring and tenure directly.

The Role of Mentorship

Research on the value of mentoring on SLA achievement has led researchers to advocate for national and state mentoring programs to redress minority leadership advancement (Webster, 2019). Mentoring arose from a networking system that extended beyond academic institutions' relative context and drew upon connections from families and broader cultures. Historically this has further disadvantaged minorities from securing mentors as they are often culturally excluded from such networking contexts (Webster, 2019). Mentoring does have the limitation of not being able to affect organizational policy directly. Therefore, without oversight and administrative support, mentoring programs are helpful only to the range of individuals who make through personal passion and dedication (Corneille et al., 2019).

The report, *Accelerating Change for Women Faculty of Color in STEM: the Institute for Women Policy Research, created policy, Action, and Collaboration*. One of their chief recommendations to support African American women in SLA positions through mentoring is to create an assessment and monitor institutions' efforts towards diversity inclusivity. Publishing these metrics will engage community shareholders, create local transparency, and hold institutions accountable for their PR messages and mission statements. In support of this effort, researchers call for targeted research of academic support and SLA programs to develop best-evidenced-based

practices (Corneille et al., 2019).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have traditionally been where SLAs engage in effective mentoring practices (Washington Lockett, Gasman & Nguyen, 2018). Mentors have played a key role in helping disadvantaged African American students see themselves in a new, empowered light and have led to a strong community and business leaders. To understand SLA mentoring's role in African American women's choice to persist in a STEM degree at HBCUs, researchers Washington-Lockett et al. (2018) performed semi-structured interviews with 71 African American women. The most powerful theme from this study was that African American women mentored by SLA found that the family-like atmosphere of the community of support at the HBCU allowed them to forget past limitations and envision a brighter future. In this study, students were not mentored one-on-one by a particular SLA member but felt encouraged and individualistically supported overall by the climate of vocalized personal encouragement received daily. The SLAs at the HBCUs made themselves available to help students, and this very openness enlarged students' perception of their university experience (Washington Lockett et al., 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

While more African American women than ever before successfully navigated the pathways to achieving success in higher education, they are still conspicuously absent from the highest senior-level administrative positions (ACE, 2017; Dunn et al., 2014; Wright, 2016; Simms, 2018). Due to their unique cultural contexts, African American women have different leadership styles and skills than the dominant culture currently favored in predominantly white institutions (PWI) of higher learning (Chuang, 2019; Barnes, 2017). While this unique approach of actualizing social justice through empowerment may be just what is needed to engage the diversifying student population, African American women's leadership is often perceived as a threat to the status quo and misunderstood by those without cultural competency (Barnes, 2017; Smith, 2016; Liu, 2016).

Entrenched by the gatekeepers of Caucasian male leadership and guarded by institutionalized racism, critical decision-making and policy-enforcing positions are consistently barred to African American women (Oikelome, 2017; Ong et al., 2017).

African American women in higher education face a perfect storm of discrimination that is rooted in the cultural bias of racism and gender discrimination, which results in minority students rarely being exposed to minority teachers and leaders (Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Wright et al., 2017; Grissom et al., 2017; Gershenson et al., 2016; Downer et al., 2016; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Egalite et al., 2015; Rosette et al., 2016; Brescoll, 2016; Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2017; Wright et al., 2017; Fuller et al., 2019). Culture sees women as maternal and passive, thereby not suited for active leadership in serious domains such as higher education and business (Gatrell et al., 2017). African American women are stereotypically perceived as angry and maternal, which carries the double judgment of being unsuited for leadership and furthering violence in their culture (Hiel, 2016; Davis, 2016). Intersectional racism creates respectable fathers, while mothers are an organizational liability (Pulido, 2016). However, this is not always the case, as some women form sisterhoods of support, especially in the African American community (Vial et al., 2016; García et al., 2020). The impact of intersectional discrimination is rife in American culture and strongly evident in the SLA makeup of higher education

Entrenched racism results in chronic discrimination in the hiring and tenure process, further isolating minorities and denying them the fruits of their labor and investment in their careers (Bhopal, 2019; Carroll, 2017; Davis & Brown, 2017; Patel et al., 2018; Smith, 2016; Smooth, 2016). Those African American women who do gain SLA positions often feel they exist in a token function to maintain the status quo and are often limited in their legitimization through being over-busied with diversity-related minutia (Vick & Cunningham, 2018; Gonzales & Terosky, 2016; O'Meara et al., 2018; Razzante, 2018; Warren-Gordon & Mayes, 2017). Many African American women find the psychological pressure of intersectional discrimination too unpleasant to endure. Forcing some to

retire from higher education early once they realize they will never gain the top positions they have worked so hard or withdrawing from SLA positions early due to discriminatory pressure (Webster, 2019; McGee & Kazembe, 2016; Hauge & Okpala, 2017). While some have identified this retirement as a form of self-opting, it results from intersectional discrimination reinforced through the concrete ceiling (Akkaya, 2020; Barnes, 2017; Glass & Cook, 2019; Sims & Carter, 2019). Institutions will deny women's hard work and personal passion (Sims & Carter, 2019).

Brower et al. (2017); Carroll (2017); Cleveland et al. (2018); Cole and Harper, 2017; Hague and Okpala (2017); Ford (2016); Sang (2016) found that matrixes of color muteness and cultural/risk taxation inhibit African American women from addressing discrimination head-on. The chilly social culture within higher education maintains social isolation that limits the networking outreach necessary for social capital. This culture is a form of institutional betrayal, resulting in a lack of legitimizing African American women in ways that limit the inclusion of the strength of diversity's voice in education pedagogy, scholarship, and organizational policy (Lomotey, 2019). One of African American women's critical motivations for seeking SLA positions is the social justice-informed part of making way for the future generation (Ardoin et al., 2019; Baylor, 2016; Razzante, 2018;). To accomplish this, African American women have formed counter spaces and networking opportunities outside their institutions to work towards social justice in dynamic ways (Ong et al., 2017; West, 2019).

Many strategies are suggested in the scholarly literature to support the sustained development of African American women in SLA positions. However, they have not gained sufficient traction in higher education due to the dominant Caucasian male culture's resistance to inclusion (Bhopal, 2019; Corneille et al., 2019; Lyness & Grotto, 2018). Women value relationships to a great degree; thus, mentoring has proven to be one of the essential aspects of sustaining African American women on the SLA track (Jackson & Bouchard, 2019; Webster, 2019). While mentoring has historically been a

strong draw in the HBCU environment, it isn't easy to translate this at PWIs (Washington Lockett et al., 2018). This study addresses one gap in the literature by highlighting the lived experiences of African American women in SLA positions. Understanding how they overcame the barriers that excluded most of their peers is key to supporting growth in this domain. The next chapter will address the methodology and study design to enable the data to shed light on this phenomenon.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This qualitative basic interpretive study aimed to explore the perspectives of African American women senior-level administrators (SLAs) in U.S. postsecondary education institutions. I primarily focused on the barriers they encountered during their rise to leadership positions and their strategies to overcome them. This study included an associate vice president, interim associate provost, associate provost, and associate dean drawn from a population of African American female SLAs in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. I collected data through semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and researcher memos. I transcribed the resultant data and thematically analyzed it through a basic interpretive design lens. In this chapter, I outlined the research design of this study and its rationale. I described participant criteria and sampling procedures. Next, I described the instruments used to collect data, data collection methods, and analysis. Finally, I summarized the main ideas discussed in the chapter.

Research Design

The chosen qualitative methodology is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of African American women senior-level administrators (SLAs) in U.S. postsecondary education institutions. This approach allowed me to analyze gathered data from the participants and present the shared commonality of the participants' perceptions (Patton, 2015). I used a qualitative methodological approach to explore participants' experiences and their meanings to those experiences so unanticipated themes and insights could emerge (Creswell, 2009).

A quantitative methodology is not appropriate for the current study. A quantitative method is focused on objectivity and numeric precision to generalize results, replicate findings, and confirm cause-and-effect relationships (Shank, 2006). However, I did not aim to capture and derive numerical

results; nor generalize my research findings. Instead, my research focused on capturing and following the participants' perspectives based on their perceptions of barriers encountered during their rise to leadership positions and their strategies to overcome those barriers. Therefore, the quantitative method is not suited for the current study.

I deemed basic interpretive research design as appropriate for this study. I used the basic interpretive design to examine participants' perceptions and presented findings through thematic concepts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Sandelowski, 2010). The primary interpretive design was an appropriate choice to examine the participants' perceptions of experiences regarding a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this study, I used the basic interpretive design to explore African American women's perceptions regarding barriers and facilitators during their rise to leadership positions.

Site Selection and Description

I conducted this study at institutions within southeastern colleges and universities in the US. Southeastern colleges and universities in the US comprise postsecondary education institutions, including research universities, comprehensive universities, state universities, and state colleges (USG, 2020a). The Southeastern colleges and universities in this research employed 12,000 faculty, 9.8% Black and 46.4% female.

Southeastern colleges and universities in the US have not published statistics indicating the number or demographic characteristics of its SLAs, nor has it made available faculty demographic data showing the percentages of intersectional groups among faculty (e.g., African American women). According to the National Statistics, African American women remain underrepresented at each stage of academic career advancement. They begin with employment as full-time faculty and proceed through granting tenure to attaining an SLA position (ACE, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018).

Participants

I employed a purposeful sampling strategy to focus limited time and resources on gathering as much relevant data as possible (Palinkas et al., 2015). An intentional sampling strategy is ideal in qualitative research. It allowed me to set and identify inclusion criteria to gather information-dense data from targeted and appropriate participants (Etikan et al., 2016). Furthermore, I used purposeful sampling strategies to focus limited time and resources on gathering as much relevant data as possible (Palinkas et al., 2015). Specifically, I sent recruitment materials to African American women SLAs, who identified as potential participants through their publicly available online profiles on their institutions' websites. This study's targeted population was African American female Senior-Level Academic Affairs Administrators (SLAs) in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. For this study, SLA positions included department heads, deans, associate deans, vice presidents, associate vice presidents, associate vice provosts, or equivalent or higher. I employed both inclusion and exclusion criteria, selected those who met the requirements and willingly volunteered to participate in the study.

A qualitative methodological approach aims to explore participants' experiences and the meanings they assign to those experiences so that unanticipated themes and insights can emerge (Creswell, 2009). Data collection was through semi-structured interviews. To be eligible, potential participants must have met the following inclusion criteria:

1. African American woman;
2. Have served for two years or more as an SLA (department head, dean, associate dean, vice president, associate vice president, associate vice provost, equivalent or higher) in a U.S. postsecondary education institution;
3. Have obtained an educational degree of a Master' or higher

4. Currently employed as an Academic Affairs SLA in southeastern colleges and universities in the US

Before any recruitment of participants, I obtained IRB approval from the university (see Appendix A). After securing IRB approval, I got permission to recruit African American women SLAs eligible to participate in the study. I used researcher-developed recruitment materials to select participants. Thus, after obtaining approval from group moderators, I sent the recruitment information (e.g., contact details, inclusion criteria, and purpose of the study) via email to African American women SLAs, identified through their publicly available online profiles on their institutions' websites (see appendices B, C, D). The recruitment materials contained pertinent information regarding the research study, inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and my contact details. Interested respondents who met the participant criteria were requested to contact me through their email addresses to ensure data privacy.

In line with qualitative research, a small study sample allowed me to investigate the problem thoroughly. In qualitative research, data saturation is critical to ensure that the information from participants reflects the questions examined in a qualitative study and provides knowledge by the end of data collection (Patton, 1990). Etikan et al. (2016) noted that researchers' data saturation refers to selecting more participants would not result in any new data. The sample of this study consisted of four African American female SLAs in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. This small proposed sample size is considered appropriate for a basic interpretive design (Marshall et al., 2013; Sim et al., 2018).

Instrumentation

The semi-structured interviews served as the primary form of data collection to explore African Americans' experiences and perceptions of SLA advancement barriers. The instrumentation for this study included a pre-developed interview guide for the semi-structured interviews. I

developed and used a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix E) based on the literature review's insights and in line with the study's research questions. The semi-structured interview protocol consists of questions based on the following themes: a) life and career experiences of African American females who have attained SLA positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US, b) and recommendations to improve the success of African American female SLAs in rising to their current positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

I employed three expert researchers to ensure the robustness of the semi-structured interview protocols in answering the research questions. Two expert researchers conducted a pilot study field test of the interview guide for the semi-structured focus group interviews. My chair, a university professor and expert in qualitative research, reviewed the interview questions. This process ensured that the interview questions were easily understood, free from bias, neutral, and worded (Kallio et al., 2016). After gathering feedback from the chair, I refined the semi-structured interview questions to use in this study.

Data Collection

I scheduled individual interviews via email, where each participant provided a suitable time for the interview session. Before starting the interview, I checked to ensure my recording devices were working. I also kept a journal and pen ready to make notes throughout the interviews.

I interviewed four participants in an online Microsoft Team format. I first established rapport for interviews by making the participant comfortable with the session. This process was vital as the focused phenomenon deals with personal experiences that the participants identified as challenges, barriers, and obstacles. Thus, making the participants feel comfortable may promote enhanced honesty and willingness to respond to all interview questions (Janesick, 2011). During this time, I reminded each respondent of their rights as voluntary participants and study consent, as explained in the study's interview research statement (see Appendix F). Any questions from the participants were also

encouraged and addressed during this phase. The interviews focused on participants' identified barriers and obstacles related to situations that made them feel challenged or uncomfortable. Acknowledging this possibility, I reminded each participant of their right to freely withhold an answer to a specific question or to withdraw their participation at any given time without penalties or consequences.

I obtained verbal confirmation from each respondent regarding their consent to participate in the study with audio-recorded interviews. It was also possible that African American females who have attained SLA positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US participants would not consent to be audio-taped due to the sensitivities about their life and career experiences and barriers they faced. If the respondent(s) declined to agree to be audio-taped, I made verbatim notes throughout the interview process. I transcribed interviews into electronic word files. I took strict measures to maintain confidentiality and protect participants' privacy throughout the study. Thus, all interviews were conducted via videoconferencing applications such as Microsoft Teams using participant code names to ensure protection and maintain participant confidentiality.

Utilizing video conferencing applications such as Microsoft Teams enables seamless muting and unmuting participants without displaying the individual's face per video. Further, Microsoft Teams' quality of voice response is adequate for me to audio-record the sessions, specifically for participants who consent to the audio recording. With my developed interview protocol (see Appendix E), I asked all participants the same set of semi-structured, open-ended questions. The key research questions include:

1) What are the life and career experiences of African American females who have attained Senior-Level Administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?
2) What do female African American senior-level administrators at a public four-year state university believe are strategies for attaining leadership positions in Academic services at

public institutions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

I also asked follow-up questions to clarify any responses, if necessary. I asked participants to review their interview transcripts to enhance the accuracy of the data. I used participants' feedback to update my transcripts as needed. I allowed seven days for participants to respond with their suggestions or alterations. Reviewing and confirming field and interview notes helped ensure the quality and validity of the data gathered throughout the interview process. Interviews last approximately 60 to 90 minutes, yielding 15 to 20 single-spaced, typed transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data runs concurrently with data collection and starts with the first interview and documents accessed (Merriam, 2009; Merriam, 2002). I managed and analyzed the data collected while allowing major research themes to emerge as I conducted the study. The primary goal of data analysis is to make sense of or make meaning of the data. Merriam (2009) suggests that the task of data analysis should involve "looking for recurring regularities" by comparing one unit of data with the next (p. 177). Data analysis was ongoing throughout the study and deductive to identify themes, patterns, and questions. Interacting with data through personal transcription and hand-coding allowed me to see patterns and categories more readily.

I used the inductive analysis steps to analyze my data (Percy et al., 2015). I examined and reread the information I had gathered to obtain a better understanding. During this stage, I highlighted specific words, phrases, or paragraphs that could be relevant to the research topic and responded to the research questions. I reviewed the highlighted information (words, phrases, or paragraphs) and removed those deemed unrelated to the two research questions. I also changed the color of the omitted data to make it easier to track information. I assigned and coded a distinct number for each data part. I organized and classified all the coded data and categories. The patterns arose during this process, and I defined and appropriately labeled each theme as it emerged from the data. I analyzed and

investigated each emerging pattern linked to the data as it formed, examining and integrating direct quotes from the participants' interview answers. I allocated a unique identification to each emerging pattern to keep track of information. After finding emergent patterns, more extensive categorization of patterns occurred. The overarching themes were formed by organizing these bigger categorizations. In a column, I categorized each overarching theme, the corresponding patterns, and direct quotes from the participants' comments. Each data group was represented by a code and a full description in the column. I thoroughly examined each overarching theme, outlining the scope and contents of each emerging theme. I repeated the first steps for all research participants. I summarized and analyzed pertinent data to identify common patterns among all participants. I summarized the final themes and ensured they aligned with the research questions that guided this study.

Validity

Maxwell (2013) used the term validity to refer to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or any other account of findings that follow a research study. I collected rich, descriptive data, triangulated the data and validated the data analysis with participants to establish credibility. I spent several months gathering data. Seidman's (2013) three-series interview protocol allowed me to check and confirm observations and inferences and rule out premature assumptions (Maxwell, 2013). The observation was limited due to recovering from COVID-19, and I did not have the opportunity to view these women in their offices; however, through video conferencing, I observed gestures and demeanors when they talked about certain experiences. Also, since the participants participated in at least one or two interviews while they were in their offices, I was able to see fragments of their offices, such as a book arrangement, decorations on the wall, and pictures of loved ones which alluded to a small glimpse of their personality and work environment. However, I know that the true observation would have been easier if I had visited them in their natural setting. I collected rich, descriptive data through interviews, documents, and memos.

Throughout the study, whenever I had any ideas or things that occurred to me associated with the research, I wrote them down in a research journal. This journal helped me identify any subjectivity. For example, Annie Lee talked about how she felt when she thought she was looked over for a position. I connected with those feelings because when I started working in education, I also experienced being passed over for a higher position. Or, When Eva was frustrated with her pay and how she was not compensated for all her work duties and responsibilities. I also connected with her because I believe my current salary does not reflect my current duties and responsibilities. Recording these thoughts and feelings helped me remain objective and not tarnish the data. I conducted member checks following the interviews to rule out misinterpretations and misunderstandings. At the end of the data analysis, I provided all participants with a rough draft of the findings of their perceptions and had them provide feedback for accuracy. This respondent validation helped to identify potential researcher biases.

Triangulation through multiple data collection methods is a strategy that researchers use to ensure validity (Merriam, 2002; Maxwell, 2013). I coded, categorized, and memoed following each data collection. To triangulate the data, I created a matrix of pattern codes developed from the research questions and data samples across the three data collection methods (interviews, documents, and memos). This process and reflective writing allowed me to identify recurring themes.

Maxwell (2013) identified researcher bias and reactivity as significant threats to validity. Researcher bias can occur through data selection when the researcher chooses data that fits pre-existing theory, goals, preconceptions, or data that may stand out to the researcher (Maxwell, 2013). Personal experiences and identity are potential validity threats I counteracted through memoing (Maxwell, 2013). It is important to note that I have worked in higher education in the Financial Aid office as a Financial Aid Administrator. I was extra careful not to misinterpret the data due to my prior experiences. Conversely, as an Assistant female Director of Financial Aid at higher learning

institutions, I understand that female African American leaders sometimes form perceptions without knowing the whole picture. Thus, my ability to see both sides of the issue may prove the data collection and analysis strength.

Reactivity was my influence on the setting or participants (Maxwell, 2013). Because eliminating my impact is impossible, my goal was to "understand it and use it productively" (p. 125). To reduce reactivity, I avoided leading questions that may have influenced the participants' responses to interview questions.

Transferability

When I think about what I can learn from an in-depth analysis of a particular situation and transfer the knowledge to another similar situation, I can generalize the research (Merriam, 2002). I utilized two strategies for increasing transferability: research site selection and rich, thick description (Merriam, 2002). First, I selected a research site with characteristics like other colleges in the southeastern region of the US. My study sites were public institutions with demographics that included many female African American faculty. I provided a database with rich enough, thick descriptive findings and information to allow readers to determine transferability to their situations.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the process of authenticating the results of the study. In this process, I ensured that participants could address the questions and accurately represent the results (Cope, 2014). For this purpose, I used purposive sampling alongside detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria before data collection and analysis. Purposive sampling and inclusion/exclusion criteria ensured that participants addressed the research questions.

Conformability

Conformability in research refers to researchers' ability to confirm the study's findings (Cope, 2014). For this purpose, I used well-developed interview protocols reviewed by an expert panel to

ensure the provided questions' validity and clarity to ensure conformability for my study. The interview and focus-group guide ensure conformability by aligning the questions provided in data collection with the proposed research questions.

Dependability

Study dependability refers to ensuring the consistency of the data (Cope, 2014). I used three data sources (semi-structured interviews and documents) to enhance my study's reliability. I used audit trails to anchor my findings in the collected data.

Transferability

Transferability is the generalizability of the findings to other contexts (Cope, 2014). For this study, transferability was extended through a thick description of chapter four findings and multiple sources of data collection (semi-structured interviews).

Ethical Considerations

I collected data from willing participants through interviews and documentation in an established college setting. Working with human subjects is a sensitive process regulated by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. At Valdosta State University, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that research participants are treated ethically and comply with federal and state laws and regulations. I conducted this study according to IRB policies and procedures. The study was eligible for exemption under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) part 46 regulations (Office for Human Research Protections, 2017; see Appendix A).

The ethical considerations included ensuring IRB approval, site approval, and providing participants with informed consent forms for this study. Firstly, I obtained permission to research from the institution's IRB review board. I got approval to conduct the study from southeastern colleges and universities in the US. After the IRB and site approvals, I provided participants with informed consent forms that detailed the study's purpose, ensured the participants' confidentiality, and

documented the participants' ability to leave the review at any point if desired. To further ensure ethicality, I kept all data on a private USB drive that was password encrypted and kept in a locked office cabinet when not in use. I also used pseudonyms to ensure the participants' confidentiality. After three years, I will permanently destroy all data per IRB requirements.

Summary

The underrepresentation of African American women in senior leadership positions in higher learning institutions is cause for concern. I seek to explore African American women's experiences to achieve senior administrative positions in Southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

I used basic interpretive study with the guidance of Merriam (2002), Maxwell (2013), Seidman (2013), and Saldana (2013). I chose the research site because it fits the criteria associated with stories of African American women who strive to attain senior leadership positions in their institutions. I used purposeful sampling to select participants who have achieved senior leadership positions in their institutions. I collected data through multiple forms (interviews, documentation, and memos) and analyzed it using various strategies such as coding, categorizing, and reflective writing. I ensured the validity of the findings using detailed, thick descriptions, triangulating data, and identifying researcher bias and reactivity.

I took the necessary measures to conduct an ethical study in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. Following the IRB procedure, I obtained informed consent for interviews with participants and institutional policy documents. I also worked hard to develop productive, ethical researcher-participant relationships.

Chapter IV

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Narratives of African American female senior administrators.

African American female senior administrators are underrepresented in US colleges and universities compared to their White female counterparts. (ACE, 2017; West, 2017b). This societal problem artificially excludes qualified African American women leaders from serving in academia and reduces the pool of talented future leaders by depriving rising African American women students and professors of mentorship and other supports (Bakker & Jacobs, 2016; Dunn et al., 2014; Washington Lockett et al., 2018; West, 2017b). I explored female African Americans' life and professional experiences in senior-level academic administration positions in southeastern US colleges and universities. The following research questions guided this research:

RQ1: What are African American females' life and career experiences who have attained Senior-Level Administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

RQ2: What do female African American senior-level administrators at a public four-year state university believe are strategies for attaining leadership positions in Academic services at public institutions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

I purposefully selected four participants for this study. The female senior administrators in this study participated in three interviews that followed a modified version of Seidman's (2013) three-step interview model. In the first 90-minute interview, I asked participants to describe their life and career journey related to their career advancement to the senior administrator position. The following section provides an overview of the four participants' career and life experiences that led them to their current jobs in southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

I named my research participants in honor of four African American women who significantly impacted my life and helped shape me into the woman and professional I am today. Lucy was my

mother's name. I thought this name was fitting for the youngest participant because of her direct but very soft-spoken personality. She had a very caring and sweet spirit like my mom and took pride in helping others become successful. Dorothy represented my aunt's name. Dorothy was my oldest participant because she is very outspoken like my aunt was, and she had this "let's deal with this now" attitude. Dorothy's words about people and unfair treatment reminded me of what my aunt would say or do. Like my aunt Dot (Dorothy) was to my mother Lucy, Dorothy was the big sister you wanted to be around. If anything was about to go down, she was ready to handle it. Annie Lee was my grandmother's name and the mother of my Aunt Dot (Dorothy) and mother, Lucy. Annie Lee was next to the youngest participant because of her motherly spirit and the importance that she placed on the family. My grandmother was a great mother to her children and other children in her community and believed in family sticking together. Annie Lee displayed that motherly love when she talked about her daughter, her close-knit family, and even when she needed to fix anything that got broken. Lastly, Eva reminded me of a beloved family friend and a close friend of my grandmother, Annie Lee.

As I called her, Mrs. Ingram (Eva) was a school librarian and always wanted things to be done "decently and in order." Eva's name was given to the next oldest participant because of her need to be organized and to know the plan and the schedule. In one of our interviews, she appeared to be sitting in a library, ready to take in all its information. The name Eva was perfect for this participant.

The pseudonyms I gave my participants not only gave my study character but also made it more substantial.

Table 2 Includes basic demographic data for the four research participants.

Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age	>10 Years in Education	Years in SLA
Dorothy	Female	Black	53	Yes	6.5
Eva	Female	Black	52	Yes	5
Annie Lee	Female	Black	48	Yes	6
Lucy	Female	Black	43	Yes	2

All four participants in this table were African American females ranging from 43 to 53 years old. They had all worked in education for more than ten years. Finally, their senior-level administrator experience ranged from 2 to 6.5 years. It is worth noting that all participants began their careers as faculty members before becoming senior-level administrators in higher education. In addition, Eva, Annie Lee, and Lucy worked in the K-12 education system before pursuing higher education. Dorothy, the oldest participant, did not have any prior k-12 experience and was not introduced to teaching or working in higher education until she decided to return to school for a doctoral degree. As a result, she took a nontraditional approach to education, whereas the other participants were more traditional.

Eva

I met Eva via Microsoft teams due to the current pandemic surrounding COVID-19 restrictions. Eva is a 52-year-old wife and mother and has been Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at her University for four years. Eva was born in Minnesota but attended a college in Florida. After graduating, she began a career in teaching. Eva comes "from a family with a lot of hard knocks." Even though she faced challenges growing up, she "always felt capable" and "was always successful in school." Eva's father passed away when she was nine, and her mother successfully raised three

children independently. Although working in Higher Education was not her first career choice, she ended up there through various mentors and staying open-minded. Eva's grandfather and others along the way inspired her career choices to become who she is today.

Eva's grandfather wanted her to become an entrepreneur like him. She fondly shared an anecdote about her grandfather's aspirations for her: "When I would visit my grandfather, he always said to me. What are you going to do with your life? He wanted me to be a business owner like him. He was old school, so he did not see me as an engineer or college professional. He wanted me to open a boutique and own a boutique."

On the contrary, Eva wanted to become a teacher. But her grandfather thought that a career in teaching or nursing was good for women who relied on husbands in the upper echelons of the local chamber of commerce. He thought Eva was too smart to depend on a husband. She said: "My grandfather was on the chamber of commerce in Fort Lauderdale for African American businesses." He earned a college degree in Minnesota and started his funeral home and real estate businesses. Eva admired her grandfather's rise from humble beginnings working in the cafeteria to pay his way through college.

Eva's parents had "some college education but no degrees." Her father attended the same college in Minnesota as her grandfather but dropped out due to alcohol abuse and other misdemeanors. Her grandfather was very disappointed with her father's failures and moved him to live with her aunt. He wanted him to " straighten up and fly right." So, he disowned her dad and cut him off his will.

On the other hand, Eva's mother attended junior college but had to drop out due to becoming pregnant with Eva's brother. At thirty, Eva's father's death forced her mother to raise three kids by working as a sales clerk at a local retail business. She shared: "here I am, nine years old, and my dad was an alcoholic all my life, and then my dad dies because he has complications related to all of that."

Eva was an outstanding student through school and college. She excelled in academics and sports and posed to succeed. As a student, she transcended race and benefitted from her White teachers. She shared the following anecdote about her educational achievements at the hands of a White teacher: "my whole bedroom was filled with the student of the month certificates. So, you figure, I've had affirmation from other races about my capability." A female African American teacher inspired Eva to become a teacher. She said: "it was a respectable career for an African American Female." Eva's scholarship to attend college required her to maintain a 3.5 GPA. Unfortunately, she lost the scholarship after two years as she struggled to transition from high school to college. She resorted to the Pell Grant and student loans to complete her education because her parents could not afford college. After graduating from college, she started teaching at an alternative school where most students struggled with behavior problems. Eva felt like she was doing more counseling, advising, and mentoring than teaching at that school. So, she decided to go to graduate school and get a degree in counseling but double majored in School Counseling and Health and Human Rehabilitative Services.

After getting her Master's degree, she worked in the field for about 2-3 years before getting her doctoral degree. Talented and super-smart African Americans inspired her to reach for great things. She learned to focus on critical educational matters to survive in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

Eva decided to go back to college for her doctorate, where she became an instructor. From that point on, Eva got many opportunities to expand her career in higher education. Within a few years as a faculty member, she became the Program Director of a grant. She moved on to become the Program Coordinator before she even received tenure. She increased student enrollment while serving in this role for 12 years. She used this position to become department chair. She had a strong program she had built for the last 12 years. Her program won the Best Departmental Program for the system and got the attention of the President. The provost asked Eva to apply for the Associate Vice President of

Affairs position the following year.

Eva's ascension to the top job was almost like a twist of fate because she did not seek opportunities. Instead, these opportunities presented themselves to her. However, she knows this is not the case for most top African American top college administrators who must climb the ladder to break the proverbial ceiling. She said: "So, I was given many opportunities, and I want to tell you other African American females in the college were not treated that way. When I went up for promotion, I had articles, chapters, and grants that I had not initiated. I had big helping hands from others along the way. I had been helped along and mentored along and all that. Eventually, you learn how to do it on your own, and I did learn how to do it on my own, and I've had quite a lot of support, and I've had successes."

Eva captured the power of mentoring in the following anecdote:

> No one gets anywhere on their own … mentors for African American females are significant as you're still navigating prejudice, especially at a PWI. I didn't get here on my own, and I think that when you're navigating a world that's not your home, you may be uncomfortable.

Eva had many people helping her from grade school to college and in her career. However, mentorship relationships are memorable to this day. She said, "They were just a phrase or something that resonated with me, and I ran with it." One of her professors in college thought she was well suited to be a teacher because she was very opinionated and would not be content sharing her opinions. Eva's principal, an old Jewish guy, would help me grow as a woman. He mentored her about relationships and making good decisions. The two spent quality time together like a daughter and father helping her self-actualize. She owes her success as a professional to this man. This mentorship made prospective employers see value in her. Eva believed the chairperson who hired her, a White male at [college], had much faith in her. According to Eva, "he was very supportive." The provost, who hired her, affirmed her potential as a leader. She said, "I guess I've had these professional fathers

who believed in me."

Contrary to the kind mentor principal, Eva's had different experiences navigating her career as an African American woman. She recalled a mean experience as a teaching intern with her supervisor. The supervisor embarrassed her in front of the class instead of in a private setting. She captured one of these embarrassing moments in the following anecdote: "We were doing lessons on greater than or less than, the textbook might say greater than or less than. Because the children come from different backgrounds, you know which is larger and bigger. I used synonyms, and she said you must say greater than or less than every time." Eva thought the supervisor "was condescending, attacking and undermining [her] authority with students." Eva complained about the supervisor and received a brief meeting with her university chair and supervising teacher. The letter was pulled from under that teacher, and Eva was given a new placement. Eva's thought this supervisor's animosity was race-driven. She found it "extremely upsetting to be in the face of racism like that."

Eva excelled in her college job and helped her program win an award despite supervisor problems. She successfully executed challenging projects in record time. She, however, felt slighted when the white lady sitting up front, answering the phones, got the same accolade. She lamented:

> I was so mad. What more could I do than be a leader of the program that won an award for the college? If that does not exceed expectation…. So anyway, I went to HR about it. I …. I talked to my mentor about it. I went to HR because I said there's no way I did not exceed expectations, but you want the white ladies upfront to feel valued. You want everybody to feel the same, but minimizing my career achievements that year was devastating. I think if I had been a male because I feel like there's much male favoritism around here, or if I had been a white female, I probably would have gotten at least a little more merit than the people answering the phone and typing out memos. Not that work isn't valued, but my job was exceptional that year.

Eva believes race and gender have impacted her career experiences in higher education.

Eva is very proud of the difference she has made in people's lives, helping them achieve their career dreams to become college professors, principals, and superintendents. Her students owe their success to her. She shared the following about one of her students:

> One of my students told me he did not like math and would now be a math professor. I was so proud of him because he didn't like math, and I made him realize he could.

Eva was born in Minnesota, with very few black people around her. Growing up, she has always been in the minority. She stated, "I've never lived in a 100% or 80% minority community. I've never been to a 100% or 80% minority school". This background made it difficult for her to blend in a predominantly White institution where she stuck out like a sore finger. As a bilingual person, she used codeswitching to coexist with her White male counterparts. She shared:

> I think that code-switching must be developed. And I don't have to create them. I get along very well with the males, although I see when they behave out of their biases. But I know how to navigate them. I've guided white men my whole career.

Eva understands that as a minority, she needs to work harder than her White counterparts to be successful. She warned that failure to excel above the fray led fellow African American females not to find success. She shared her thoughts in the following vignette:

> They needed a quick study and couldn't be a quick one. Unfortunately, they were viewed as more expressive than needed, or people would say they were pulling out the race card even when they weren't. In other words, you must know how to communicate so you don't even give them the impression that you're trying to make it a conversation around race or diversity. If that is not the case, there's a skill in being able to do that.

Eva thinks that many talented African American females have been "non-renewed and asked to leave the university" because of their inability to traverse White spaces. She gave an example of one

Caribbean lady the college asked to leave in the middle of the semester because students complained about her, yet she was no different from many White coworkers.

Eva is painfully aware of her difficult position as an African American woman on campus. She neatly captured her challenges in the following vignette:

> We only get a few opportunities to mess up. If I had a mess up comparable to some other people's, they would find a way to get me back to faculty regardless of all I've done. So, we are more expendable. Unless you are a token, and I don't mean it in a little way, you can't these days…. You can't be an incompetent token. It would be best if you were a competent, capable token. But if you're a token, then they don't have to look around the room and see no black females, or they feel like, oh my goodness, I guess we not as equitable and inclusive as we think we are, or we're not as diverse as we think we are. Sometimes I recognize that I have a seat at some of these tables because it's not a good look for me not to have a seat. I also know I'm doing my job well. But I also know I must do my job well because I'm expendable, right? And they'll find another face to make them feel good about how the room looks.

As the Associate Vice President, Eva is responsible for academic planning, program planning, and academic assessment. She is the provost designee for many things, such as comprehensive program reviews, faculty senate committees, student grievances, academic policies, etc. She has many direct reports, including the Registrar's office, the Ombudsman Office, and the provost's fellow over education. Eva felt the need to emphasize that she got this job on merit and not as a Black quota: She explained:

> They did interviews, and I came prepared, and I, you know, they asked good questions. I felt I had good answers. And, you know, you don't know it now, but they told me after the interview that it was one of the best interviews some committee members had ever had in their entire leadership experience. And I think it was because part of it was because I had good questions

for them. Part of it was that my skill set aligned with what they were looking for, making it easier for my questions to mark high on their rubric or whatever they had. So, it was a good experience.

I did have to deal with people even within my department because my department, some of the faculty in my department who were full professors, or whatever season, wanted me to be the dean. They didn't want me to come to the provost's office. And I remember it, you know, they're like, you need to be a dean. And why do I need to be a dean and not a provost? I often wonder how much race and gender affected their perspective that I needed to be a dean and not a vice president, Associate Vice President, and I still wonder about that. But they were like, you know, you're a good fit because they need diversity in that office. And so, some of them looked at my hire and my being a successful candidate, partly because I fit the diversity bill they needed. But that bothered me greatly because I felt like I was the strongest candidate, regardless of my race or gender.

Although Eva plays an integral part in the Department of Academic Affairs, she still thinks she could have more impact on the department if she were White. She feels constrained and unable to express herself freely. She explained, "We have leaders who don't necessarily want to know your unfiltered thoughts and opinions." She complained of unfair treatment when she did not receive the merit pay she believed she deserved because she is Black. Eva also lamented about junior White staff asking her to do work below her pay grade – a phenomenon she aptly referred to as the "black tax." Something that wouldn't happen to a white male to be asked to do something that wasn't in his job description. She sees no recourse to address this issue as she cannot go to her boss to complain as "the last person on the totem pole."

Eva believes her race and gender impact her relationships with faculty and staff. She is concerned that racial prejudice makes people lose confidence in her ability to do her job effectively.

She gets upset when her boss assigns her and several other employees the same tasks because she might not do them correctly. Eva explains,

> I had to establish that I was credible, that I was competent, that I was reliable, and that I was knowledgeable. I often remember that even in this position, the provost asked me to do something, but he also asked the white male. I would discover we were working on the same thing. And, like, why are we working on the same thing? I'm capable of doing it. Why didn't you assign us openly if you wanted us to work together? So, you're working on it because I can't do it, just in case. Right? I mean, that was never said, but I have yet to come up with another reason why he's also working on what you gave me. Right? Or why do you need that person to verify? I would email an answer back to the faculty. And then they'd be like, what policy so and so says that, and I would have to say, I'm sorry, you're reading policy. 3.12. This pertains to policy 3.15, and I had to learn all that.

Eva worked hard to overcome these trying moments of mistrust and gain recognition for her proficiency on the job. She said,

> But when they figure out, which takes time, more than it should, you're a good person, okay. You know, okay, I don't have to check on you. You get to the better part once you get past all of that. But you must get past all of that crap.

Eva does not blame the government for her discrimination. She believes the government has instituted laws to ensure equal treatment for everyone regardless of race or gender. Instead, she blames rogue administrators in institutions who knowingly flaunt these rules and regulations for their selfish ends. Eva said, "I think the policies are in place for all things to be equitable and fair. I don't think this is a policy issue. I think it's just office norms."

Eva expressed some skepticism about her hiring, believing it might have been an uncanny effort to save the institution money by paying her less than they would a White person. She shared,

> So, little did I know that the salary change they offered me to stay in this position was 10s of thousands of dollars less than what they were budgeting for the dean position. So, I had the opportunity to make $50,000 or more dollars as a dean, and I didn't know that because I didn't know what the salary range was or what a dean position or my boss was like.

Eva could not refuse the job offer, although she was aware of the salary discrepancies because she was "the primary breadwinner for my family, as many African American executive females are." She has exhausted all possible channels to address this discrepancy, including HR and the ombudsman. One of my African American friends tried to cheer her by saying, "girl, you better be glad they offered you a counteroffer; they could have just turned you down in the dean search, and you would be stuck at your original salary." Thus, Eva settled for less pay after all else failed to make things fairer and more equitable. She was thankful that she got a raise. She could hide her incredible frustration and minimization, making far less than people with comparable workload responsibilities and inferior titles. I found that a white male in the college of education makes $1,000 more than she does as an Associate Vice President.

To overcome this deep sense of frustration, Eva uses self-therapy. She is using this position to prepare herself for better opportunities. She said, "I'm equipping myself so that I can take advantage of it elsewhere when the opportunity presents itself." It is important to note that Eva acknowledged that her White male counterparts might have higher salaries because of their negotiating skills. She reflected on her failure to bargain harder for better pay. She was afraid of a no to her counteroffer. She said,

> My inaction is that I wouldn't like the answer if I got it. And the possibility we can't afford that. I, maybe, I don't know. Either way, I decided not to negotiate for more, and some of my African American friends slash mentors, so you need to go back and deal more. I don't know; I'm not there yet.

Eva was also frustrated when other faculty members challenged her professional decisions. She recalled,

> I had a grade appeal where I had to tell the white male department chair that we would not accept or overturn the decision and that his faculty needed to go back and give the student another chance to do the work. It turned out that the professor allowed some students to get their work looked at before turning it in and only allowed other students to look at it after it got to him. So, some got the professor's review and then got to modify it. Some of the students didn't. So, we're like, you can't do that; both students get a chance with the professor to look at the work and modify it. It was a nonsensical argument. I just thought you needed to accept it. But here you are. You don't want to make the decision. I don't know to what extent my gender or race played into it, but they challenged me in the tone of email and questions, but we went back to the professor, and she said she couldn't let him. She did not say that in a meeting. It was just outrageous the number of challenges trying to defend their person over the decision, you know, over the committee, again of something obvious unfairness.
>
> I finally had to start by saying this is the decision of the grading committee. I mean, this is no Eva doing this to you. I am only representing their decision. I didn't even vote on the committee because the designee didn't. The chair regarded the work. And in those kinds of situations, you wonder if my boss had just said, deal shut up, and take it.

Eva believes that sometimes her White male counterparts knowingly sabotage her to look bad and damage her reputation. She captured this stressor in the following vignette:

> One of my white male counterparts would give different information, prolonging the process. Sometimes I didn't know whether he was intentional or careless, but he would give me the wrong information. Some may have been that he wanted to be viewed as all-knowing, and nobody could come close to that. The two males I worked with on that team have the same

name. And it was so bad or so, you know, problematic at times, that my husband would say, is that the good one or the bad one, let's say the name of Jim.

I said, no, honey, I'm talking about bad Jim. I'm not talking about good Jim. Because bad Jim would leave out details, give me incorrect details. And so, I'm relaying this information incorrectly. You know, I would say, Hey, what's this policy? Or what's this thing over here? He had much more knowledge than I did because he had been in the role longer to say, Oh, that's so and so. And then I would relate to the chair. Oh, that's so and so. And then later in the meeting, he said, well, that's not so and so. And I'll be sitting in the meeting, like, dude, you just told me two days ago. That happened, not once, not twice, but many times. And I wondered if it was a control thing. I later learned as I worked with him more and more that he would fire off the first thing that came to his mind sometimes. But I still think that explained only some of the incorrect or incomplete information he gave me. So, I started looking up stuff for myself, but that would take a long. Why couldn't I have somebody give me the full answer? You know, we're not competing against each other. We are the Academic Affairs leadership team. There's no reason for there to be competition between us.

Eva advises up-and-coming African American administrators to be more proactive and assertive when opportunities for professional growth come their way. She encourages them to show initiative when opportunities to be on a committee and a university-wide committee present themselves or an opportunity to go to a training that might involve work experiences with other divisional leaders like training that might involve Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, training that are opportunities that involve multiple colleges or multiple divisions that you want to take advantage of those. It's very important that you are known across the campus, that you are viewed positively, and that you are recognized as being a competent professional.

Eva emphasized knowing oneself - your weaknesses and strengths to move ahead in a

predominantly White institution. She said

> it's important to know your strengths and weaknesses and your personality preferences because you will be working with many people, and their personalities may not align with yours. Their weaknesses may not mesh well with yours. You need to navigate those relationships effectively to last in the leadership position.

Eva prides herself as a highly organized analyst who always looks for improvement opportunities. She said, "I feel comforted in knowing the schedule, the plan, and how to proceed. I like to analyze our processes, and process improvement is one of my strengths, and I've done a lot of that in this role." Eva knows how to work with disorganized leaders who muddle their way through processes without a vision or mission. The following vignette neatly captures how she assists these people.

> When working with them, I must help them do their job better so that the university can be better, and I know that's my strength. I bring it to the meeting, and I'm always mindful of that strength in a meeting. Management is as much about managing yourself as it is about managing others. And the truth is that you manage yourself differently to manage others effectively.

Eva is aware of work-life balance at her job to be successful. She relies on her husband to manage her home life and make difficult decisions. She said,

> Today my husband is taking our daughter to the volleyball games at five o'clock, and I have this farewell event for my former boss. So now I'm in a situation where I will attend this farewell event from my former boss? Or am I going to go to my daughter's last volleyball game as an eighth-grader? So, it's our final middle school game. I'm going to go to my daughter's middle school game. I must make these kinds of decisions.

Eva believes communication is critical for African American females seeking a senior-level

administrative position in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. Communication has not been difficult for her as she has had White people and a blended family. Her brother was married to an Italian woman. Her communication is direct, and she tells it like it is. Although she grew up in the south, she does not consider herself a Southern woman. Southern women tend to be passive and less aggressive, costing them good professional opportunities. However, she gave an example of a well-qualified AA administrator who was not passive at a job interview and lost an opportunity. She said,

> Her communication style was one that they didn't feel like they wanted to deal with. So, they did choose another African American because it is a DEI, you know, chief diversity officer position. But this is a very proper person in his language and dress, but he isn't aggressive; he's more reserved, so I think they felt like he was safer. I hate to say that you've got to wear the mask, you know, time, time magazine had an article about the mass that exact that high-level African American males and females must put on.

Eva complained that her institution does not consider the issue of diversity seriously. She doubts if the top administrators understand what diversity means to a campus that promotes diversity and equity inclusion. She thinks that lack of diversity knowledge is terrible when African American females are underrepresented in senior administrative roles in higher education, especially in academic affairs. Eva struggles with the bizarre situation whereby African American females graduate with college degrees at a very high rate yet remain underrepresented in leadership. Eva lamented that

> We have three African American women at the executive level on my campus—one in the computer area. HR will probably have one, then student affairs, and then me. And so, they're one of us. But are we a third of the leadership on this campus? We are not. So, on our campus, we are not equitably represented. We're not even the next level, middle management, equitably or underrepresented in middle management.

Eva attributes the underrepresentation of African American females in senior-level

administrative positions in higher education to low pay. She conceded that highly qualified African American highly female leaders have more options. However, she is tied to the same place because her mother-in-law lives with her, her sisters live nearby, and her husband is an only child. As a member of the AA extended family, she is responsible for their welfare and must be there for them. But she encourages others without family responsibilities to take their chances and look for better opportunities elsewhere.

Eva is painfully aware of the problem of microaggressions as a primary reason AA woman avoid senior-level leadership positions at higher education institutions. She claimed that the macro aggressions force 'people to leave before they get to the administrative level, or even when they're in the administrative level, affecting our underrepresentation representation." Eva believes that colleges need to develop inclusive, equitable environments through implicit bias training as part of their personal development.

Eva thinks that if colleges listened to students of color, there would be harmony across campuses. She said, "you need to listen to them. There should be regular methods of discussing how they are experiencing this campus. Their experiences are a good barometer of how the faculty and staff are experiencing many things."

Given the few female leaders in the academy, Eva believes that she represents African American women in senior leadership as competent and confident women. She said,

> I may be their only experience or their only significant experience with a woman of color who can do their job and is competent. So, I'm raising their understanding and appreciation of women of color. That goes a long way beyond that umbrella of raising their awareness and understanding.

Furthermore, Eva holds folks

> accountable, in a way, because when they are doing when they are aware of what is best

> practice, they can't get away with not honoring that when I'm in the room. You'll probably not have a dumb blonde joke when a blonde is in the room. Or you're f not going to talk about broads when females are in the room. When I'm there, it forces them to be more accountable to best practices related to others, you know, related to women and persons of color.

Annie Lee

Annie Lee and I met via Microsoft teams due to the current pandemic surrounding COVID-19 restrictions. She is a 48-year-old mother and the Interim Associate Provost of Academic Affairs at her university. She attained a college professorship at 27 and regarded herself as a high achiever. Annie Lee's life began in a small rural town in South Georgia, where she was born to a single parent who highly valued education. She reinforced the importance of education to her. Inspiration from her mother motivated her to work hard in school and excel in all areas of her education.

Annie Lee's mom played a major role in shaping her educational and professional trajectories in several ways. As a teacher, she encouraged Annie Lee to excel in math because she felt "like computers and math were exciting, and that's where the world was going." Annie's mom knew that STEM was beginning to be the talk, and she did not want Annie Lee "to fear math as a black woman because she did." So, she prepared Annie for a math career at an early age. She probably did not want Annie Lee to go through some of life's struggles that she had experienced as a single mom. Annie said her mother was "driven" and very "determined" to succeed in life because "being a teenage mom from a small town, her options did not look well." Annie Lee's mother overcame all odds of being a Black single mom in a rural southern town and became a teacher. Annie Lee said, "[she] made it a point to become a teacher to care for her daughter."

Annie Lee’s mother grew up in a traditional African American extended family with her mother and siblings, who were very close knitted and believed in staying together. The family was

very important in a small rural town in Georgia. They are somewhat content with working in the local factory and living basic lives. Contrary to this, Annie Lee's mother

> went against the family's expectations. … it would have been a lot easier if she had just worked in the town at a factory, but she wanted a degree to take care of her daughter, and she made that choice.

Annie Lee's mother's thirst for education and progress rubbed on her, making her an outstanding student through school and college. Some of her exceptional educational achievements include being a salutatorian of her high school graduating class and graduating summa cum laude with the highest honors. Following her mom's advice, Annie Lee studied math in college. She proudly proclaimed, "My area is math. I do the math. I excelled at math all during school." Furthering her academic achievements, Annie Lee won a full college Presidential scholarship to be a teacher. It is not surprising that Annie Lee's first job out of college was as a math teacher at the local high school in her hometown.

After teaching for a while, Annie Lee returned to school to get a Ph.D. in math education. However, she had much to learn as the first in her family to get a Ph.D. She captured her fears in the following anecdote:

> When you are a first-generation something, you don't have the support other people have. When I first got to [PWI], where she earned her Ph.D.], one of my white female colleagues said, " My mom has a Ph.D. The dissertation is five chapters, and you do this and this. I'm going to class, and I figured they would teach me that, but she had grown up with somebody who had a Ph.D. And she knew the whole dissertation thing and everything I didn't know yet. My mama was not first-generation, but I am as far as Ph.D. So, it was not a big deal to her (White female colleague), but it was a big deal to me.

Annie Lee beat the odds of being first and graduated with her PH.D. in math education and got

her next job as a math professor in the same department where she obtained her undergraduate degree in math. She excelled and won teaching awards, moved up the professional ranks, wrote a book with her mentor, and published research articles. Annie Lee started her family and moved back home to balance work and family life. Annie Lee was able to balance work and life with the support of her extended family in a small rural town in Georgia. The family helped with childcare, making it easy for her to focus on work without compromising their family. Annie Lee felt safer in her hometown than in any other place. She said, "So, I went back to my safe space because my professor was still there. My mentor was still there. Now we are colleagues."

Annie Lee admitted that she was not superhuman and that after having her baby, like most new mothers, she also "dealt with the postpartum depression." But this crisis did not hold her back from making progress. She passed "the Praxis leadership test to add leadership to [her] certificate… three years later [she] decided to go back to school … to try online learning because everything was moving online. Now [she is] considering another degree."

Annie Lee's college experience impacted her education and career goals. Annie Lee explained that the HBCU in Florida was her first choice. "I went against many people when I chose an HBCU. My teachers did not support that. They wanted me to attend College A and some of your predominantly white schools. And they told me that I was too smart to go to these different places and I needed to go to those places, but my family is very HBCU centered." At College B in Florida, Annie Lee's mentor was from her hometown, a math teacher. Annie Lee was assigned to her as a work-study leader. Annie Lee's mentor had given her the ins and outs of what she could do with a math degree and was just as passionate about math as Annie Lee was. Annie Lee almost left the institution because she did not fit in. Still, her mentor convinced her otherwise. Annie Lee said: "I threatened to leave once because I didn't feel like I fit in, but she told me… she told me well, you're going to be you wherever you go so, if you don't feel like you fit in here, you're probably not going to feel like you fit

in if you go somewhere else. Annie Lee is not a social butterfly. She has taken every psychology test in the world and has concluded that she is an introvert. However, she is "very determined, very focused," and "was going to do the top degree in whatever" she did. So, when she got the "top math ED degree," she knew she would be "a math professor at a university."

Although Annie Lee enjoyed many accomplishments throughout her personal and professional life, she admitted failures in other areas. For example, when she took math in college, she wanted to become a doctor but ended up in a college classroom. She said,

> when I came to the fact that I was not going to be a medical doctor, I say, Okay, what's the highest thing to be with a math degree? So, I did a Ph.D. in math. So now, what do you do with a Ph.D. in math? You work in higher ed. That is how I got into higher ed.

Besides her mother, Annie Lee also credits her achievements to her high school teacher and mentor. She said, "My mentor, who just passed recently, her family knew me because we were just that close. She was instrumental in, you know, just cultivating me as a mathematician and a math professor." The following anecdote captures their mentee-mentor relationship:

> We hung out together; we wrote books together, and she would tell me to get on this committee and do and apply for this kind of position. She has always been one of my references whenever I used it, and now I must change that.

Annie Lee's mentor expressed unburnished confidence in her in their final conversation:

> I was Dean of Education at the time, so we were going through accreditation, and I called her and told her. I got this accreditation going, and I was feeling bad about it. And I was like, I don't know how it will turn out. I wonder if I will end up on top or not on top. She said you'll be fine. So, she would say, you got that, and you're smart. You can do it. But that is what she did, and everything was great.

Annie Lee shared her experience being a minority in an institution dominated by African

American women. As a math professor, she was the only woman in the room. She said,

> I was the only African American female in the math department, pure math. So, conversations had to change when I walked into the room. So, I went from being one of many to the only African American female in the math department.

Annie Lee also shared her experience working with people from diverse nationalities common in the STEM area. She struggled with the idea of a non-African-American getting a promotion over her and considered it a problem. After counseling from a fellow African American female who told her this had nothing to do with race and gender. This decision was a bitter pill, but she could move on. Although diversity is not a significant issue at her institution, Annie Lee sees severe Black underrepresentation at other institutions and wants to see that change. She said, "We got to diversify the faculty or the teaching pipeline."

Annie Lee grapples with diversity issues about the intersectionality of race and gender at different levels. This problem worsened recently when her college merged with another, complicating her views on race and gender as the faculty became more diverse. She confronts conservatives who think along patriarchal lines delineating male and female roles. She said, "Well, we are newly merged. So, we have a more diverse faculty now. I think before the merger, it was more gender. We have a set body of traditionalists. They were quick to identify who was the woman or male." She is even more frustrated that this problem involves some conservative, traditional African American males. They constantly remind her of her gender and its limitations. As more people join her college, people no longer look at each other as professionals but as distinct racial groups. She lamented, "People count like we got this many White leaders. We got this many Black leaders. You know, people are counting things now and, I guess, to ensure fairness or equity. People are being very mindful of making sure we have, you know, both ways. We need a White face on this committee. We need a Black face on this committee. The transition has gone more to race since the merger than gender. And that's unusual at

HBCUs, but we're a non-traditional HBCU now that we have merged."

Despite the growing problems about race and equity, Annie Lee thinks of herself as an accomplished Black female leader. However, she is frustrated that this is not what others see first when they see her. They see a Black woman first before acknowledging her as a successful professional. She expressed frustration in the following anecdote:

> I am a Black woman when you see me. And then, if another person has an issue with that or has a problem or concern with that, that's what they will see first. They're not going to see the Ph.D. first. They're not going to see, oh, look how organized this is; look at her credentials. They're not going to see that. They're going to see the black female face first, and they have pause or concerns with that; no, I'm pushing against that.

Annie Lee tries to stay above the traditional patriarchal and racist naysayers who try to put her down by projecting her worth as a Black female leader. She firmly believes she is integral to the Department of Academic Affairs. She defiantly proclaimed:

> I have started solidifying some things and finding myself because the first month was like the design; you know, you got to figure out where you belong and what your responsibilities are, mainly because you're a part of a new team. I have been the leader of teams, either the department leader or the Dean leader. So, I can find my way. I've been given my assignments, and we have a weekly meeting, and if I have concerns, we will call, text, or whatever.

At her current institution, Annie Lee feels like she has the same advantages for career progression as her white counterparts. Annie Lee states: "You know, I do because, for some reason, the black female is winning right now on this campus. What is probably being discussed is that there are no other faces in leadership, and I have to say, you know, they probably feel like it's a no-deal because we're at an HBCU, and it's expected that senior leadership might look a

certain way. So, I think that I am at an advantage right now. I know that that can change. I think that the white colleagues may be feeling that way. Yeah, but I feel like I could progress here. This is an HBCU."

Annie Lee believes her organization holds African Americans to a higher standard than their peers because of race. She feels they need to work harder to be considered competent and worthy. Having your credentials in order will help African American women meet the job requirement criteria, but more is needed to make them fully qualified for the job. In addition to meeting basic qualifications, she also believes you need to demonstrate other scholarly attributes. She said,

> do your research … and presentations; you also need to ensure that you are engaged nationally, serving on different boards, going to conferences, networking, and meeting different people trying to get your name out there. Make sure you are actively teaching in your research. You must start solving problems. It does not have to be a bad problem, but if a unit or department needs something, you need to be on the solution side.

Annie Lee is constantly doing good work showing the institution that she is an essential part of the system. She is, however, aware that she needs to establish a professional network to succeed in making this case. She emphasized that "you need to build a set of support, a support group, and get a mentor in whatever position you want, some senior leaders, … for advice, [and] just need to talk about it."

In a different tone, Annie Lee blamed the victims (i.e., African American women) for their lack of progress in closing the gender gap in senior-level leadership jobs. She accused them of limiting themselves because of their race and gender. She argued that personal perception is the only barrier in her career as an African American senior-level administrator in Academic Affairs. She furthered: "Not even my personal, but people's perception. It was brought to me that somebody is a

Black female and leader on this campus. But it is not a barrier to doing the job. It is more of the other's perception of who should be in that position".

Annie Lee credits her passion for her curriculum and new program processes for success. She believes that she was hired purely on merit and deserves her job. She said, "I'm credentialed to do the job. So, I overcome that; mind thinking is about doing the job. And that is with any other barriers or anything." Her bottom line is that prospective African American females need to "know people, learn to work with people, and meet them where they are. She is working with someone she is not accustomed to working with and trying to meet them where they are. She said,

> I found myself working with a lot of white males, and I didn't have that experience. I am learning to connect with people and work with a more diverse group by talking, meeting, and being as professional and good at my job as possible.

Above all, Annie Lee surrounds herself with people she can trust. She said,

> You don't know whom to trust or if you can trust; you need to know if people truly have your best interest at heart or what people have been trying to do behind your back. That could be anywhere, but if I'm the only person of color in the room, I will feel like that's happening.

Annie Lee is very proud of what she has achieved in her career. One of the things that she is most proud of is helping her school get a perfect accreditation score. She states: "We just went through accreditation, and we got a perfect accreditation. There are no areas of concern under my leadership, and I have a great team that supports it. We went down as having a perfect accreditation review, and I am very proud of that. In the state of Georgia, your teacher-ed programs are evaluated or ranked. And this is public knowledge on the PSE website. When I started, we were at a two, which was acceptable. The target is three, so I got us the three right at the end, and I was very happy about that."

Annie Lee finds comfort and connection working in an institution dominated by African American female leaders. Leadership at the institution where Annie Lee work is "very lady heavy." "The president is an African American female, and you have six Vice Presidents, three of which are African American Females, two Black males, and one White male. Then you got three deans; two black ladies and a white lady. It would be about 60% Black females. Appreciating the institutional female dominance, she said, "Why would an African American Lady want to work where she's the only one?"

Annie Lee understands that not all women enjoy her comfort level as an African American female leader. She knows of some institutions that don't value African American women. She claims these institutions hire a Black female to meet the diversity quota. The following vignette shows what Annie Lee shares about how some institutions think of these token hires:

> They handle all the black stuff … [they] are not going to move over here to Academic Affairs, where we are dealing with SACS and where you are dealing with programs and what can be taught and overseeing faculty and all those important things so forth.

Annie Lee was emphatic that she was not a token hire. She had several other jobs offers but chose the HBCU out of familiarity. She felt safer at a place she knew and associated with instead of plunging into unknown territory. She captured her fear of new spaces in the following anecdote:

> Well, one thing you know, you never know what the future is, and I made a choice when I went to College B. College C had offered me a position to stay, and you know, they never want to hire your own, you know, usually, you get your Ph.D. there, and you got to go on. But for whatever reason, [PWI] offered me a position to stay. I chose [HBCU] because of familiarity and had my mentor lady down there.

As the Interim Associate Provost, Annie Lee assists the provost in the Academic Affairs office for the entire university. Her responsibilities include overseeing accreditations, coordinating academic

operations, oversight of the student success programs, curriculum, and new programs, coordinating tenure and promotions and academic or annual faculty and staff reviews, academic policies, grade changes, and approvals, overseeing the Aspiring Leadership Academy, faculty senate committees, search committees. According to Annie Lee, they have many responsibilities, but no "man is an island," and she is "on a team with the provost and those of the area that fall under us."

Annie Lee is a seasoned administrator, having risen through the ranks of professor, Associate Dean of Business Education, and Professional Studies. However, as the interim associate provost, she has confidently assumed most of the Academic Affairs department. She hopes to become the substantive provost soon as this temporary status bothers. She admitted, "When it's called Interim, that bothers me. But I understand why, like for this one." She likes that the institution considered stepping into the provost position after the original provost resigned.

Annie Lee proudly sold herself as the best senior administrator in Academic Affairs. She attributes her success to her outstanding organizational skills and attention to detail. She captured this sentiment in the following anecdote:

> I'm an order kind of person. I spend all day drawing up organizational charts. I never share them with anybody because it is just me, but I must organize and know where things are. And what we have now is that I made a folder that faculty have access to, and I put everything for tenure promotion in this folder. I put everything for everything I'm responsible for in this folder. I do this for two reasons. I'm interim and may not be here next month and transparency. I am trying not to hide anything.

Annie Lee finds herself in a profession where most people are older and more experienced. Annie Lee's more senior colleagues sometimes bully her for her more contemporary ideas. She understands older people like stability and prefers the status core. She takes this negative aspect of her youth within her stride. She said,

> "I'm relatively young for this level. I don't think I am the youngest, per se. Professors and staff will come bullying, but not in that way, using their age. It is not physical bullying or anything, but just talking about, clicking, and making people not like you because you sometimes must make an unfavorable decision. It comes with the job.

Annie Lee has learned how to navigate the politics of her institution to survive. She feels like one with a split personality. Depending on the situation, she can be friendly, knowing that the friendship can turn sour if there is a complaint against her. She does not take these friendships for granted, as she may need to take harsh corrective measures if parents or students complain about them. She said, "that role change is a challenge for me. Because you can be my best friend, but if you get too many complaints from parents and students about you, I got to do something." Situations like this force her to swing to be more aggressive. She struggled to balance being nice and friendly versus being stern and directive.

Annie Lee thinks that her impeccable work ethic has earned the respect of some white colleagues. The following anecdote captured this thinking:

> I just saw a lady, and we went over my folder system. And she was like, this is awesome. This is great. My work speaks for me. I don't feel it at this moment. Still, if they do, they cover it up well enough.

Annie Lee enjoys great relationships with her department head and other support staff. She knows the value of collaboration in accomplishing institutional goals. She said

> the entire Office of Academic Affairs is led by or provost, and that's a Black female. I'm the Interim Vice Provost; I'm a Black female. We have two administrative assistants who are black females; then we have a white female receptionist. So, it's all ladies, and I feel comfortable. My direct supervisor, the provost, she's provided me with everything I need to do the position. I have her support; we cover one another.

Annie Lee is disturbed when people rank Black females last for being undesirable leaders. She believes this perception of female leaders may contribute to the continued underrepresentation of African American female leaders. She does not understand this perception when African American female leaders are known for caring and nurturing. She lamented,

> Maybe no one wants to hire us because they don't want to work for us. And why are we at the bottom of the list? I just told you that we were motherly. Why would you want to work with that? Are we just getting the short end of the stick? We must make sure that we are aware of our perceptions. I worry about us being prejudged.

Although Annie Lee receives support from her department, she would like institutional leaders to match the effort to help her grow professionally. She clarified that institutions should step up

> professional learning and professional development to better prepare African American females for senior leadership in academic affairs. Southeastern colleges and universities in the US used to have a version of it but for new deans and chairs like me. They will have those workshops for everybody. And so, of course, you want to give people professional preparation.

Annie Lee believes that investing in the professional growth of an African American female administrator in Academic Affairs adds value to the academy. She thinks they can bring value, so you know their experiences or background. But if you are in the minority, their values would remain a mystery to the greater population.

Overall, Annie Lee feels accomplished after going through the professional ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, full professor, program coordinator, department chair, dean, and now Interim Vice Provost. She is proud to have shattered the proverbial glass ceiling in her career.

Dorothy

I met Dorothy virtually due to the current pandemic surrounding COVID-19 restrictions.

Dorothy is a 54-year-old wife, mother, and Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs at her university. Dorothy grew up in Chicago but attended college in Virginia, receiving all three of her degrees and her first tenure track position. Going to college was not always on the radar when Dorothy graduated. It was when she started working and living in the real world that having a college degree would work to her advantage. Although working in Higher Education was not her first career choice, in college, Dorothy crossed paths with influential people and mentors who helped her develop into the professional she is today.

Dorothy's parents grew up during the Jim Crow era when State and Federal laws denied African Americans the right to hold jobs, get an education, or other opportunities. She captured her parents' lives during this period of racial segregation in the following vignette:

> They grew up getting on the front of the bus, putting their money and getting back down and walking around to the back of the bus to get on. They went to segregated schools. They drank from colored water fountains.

Despite racial segregation, Dorothy's parents overcame all obstacles and realized the American dream. This resolve and determination rubbed on their daughter. Dorothy dubbed herself as growing up "a strong-willed kind of kid." Dorothy survived her parents' divorce. From age 15, she learned to move between her parents before graduating high school. She soon realized she needed a college degree to find a good job. She thus enrolled at a large urban institution in Virginia. She, however, dropped out of college because of problems at home with her mother. She said,

> I didn't want to live with my mother anymore. I wanted to move out because I thought I was grown. So, I dropped out of school, got a job at an insurance company, and then moved out. And then, I realized once in the real world of work that I was brighter than the people supervising me, but they had college degrees. And so, I went back to school, graduated, and was married by then. We went on to have a family, and I decided I

wanted to return. I went back to school while I was pregnant with my second child. I got a Master's degree and then worked for the police department.

Dorothy received her first degree in Mass communications because she wanted a job in advertising. She failed to get her dream job in Mass Communication and decided to go back and get a Master's degree in Criminal Justice and work in law enforcement as a crime analyst. She said,

> I had always been interested in criminal justice and wondered whether I would attend law school. Instead, I got a master's degree and got my first job after graduating from the police department.

Dorothy worked at the police department until she returned to school to get a Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration. While in the doctoral program, she taught a class that changed her career trajectory toward higher education administration. Upon graduation, she immediately got her first tenure track position at College D for about two and a half years. From there, she moved to a College E, an HBCU. She went through the traditional faculty ranks, received tenure, and got into administration. She started her administration career as a junior administrator before moving to the provost's office as the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Dorothy credited many people for helping her make it to the top echelons of her career. While in college, the Assistant Director of Admissions gave her the first significant push when he helped her navigate the admission process as a first-generation student. She recalled

> I went to see him. I explained my situation to him, and he knew what paperwork needed to be filled out and what needed to happen. I had my mother's taxes, whom I was going to be living with at the time, no longer with my father, and he made sure I got to college.

Next was a Professor, who offered her an independent study course after failing to get the final course she required to graduate. With a smile, she said,

> I had no idea what the independent study was. I mean, I'd made it through all those college years, and I just took the classes they told me to take. He told me about this research project that he wanted me to do. To collect this data for him. And so, part of it was to do this advertising project, which was well within the realm of the class. And so, he was instrumental in my graduating because I had no idea. I thought I just had to wait for that class to come back.

Dorothy struck an unusual friendship with one of her White female professors. The White female professor grew close to Dorothy after Dorothy told her how students characterized her. The two formed a bond that helped Dorothy advance in her studies. She captured their relationship in the following anecdote:

> I told her my concern was that there were so few women in the department and how people characterized her. Well, I guess she took pity on me. She was happy that I shared that with her. And she told me… I'll never forget these words. She said, if you just do what I tell you to do and read everything I tell you to read, you will be fine. I got an A in the class. By the time I got to my thesis, she had become my chair for my thesis, and I worked for her in the future. She's the person who then was my dissertation chair and the one that I talked to about being in Higher Ed.

A dean at College E and her current Provost made a lasting impression on Dorothy. She said: "I've been fortunate that I've had people invested in me and my success and wanted me to do well. I always had a great Provost who protected me and saw value in me." Dorothy appreciated her department chair convincing her to join him at College E. More importantly, she credited him for helping and guiding her through her career.

Dorothy did not allow gender discrimination to hinder her career advancement. She confronted the male chauvinists head-on. The following vignette captures her determination to fight any form of

gender suppression:

> "Some men I worked with told me that I was too ambitious. And I realized later I knew that it wasn't me, but it took me a minute to realize what it was. And what it was is that they weren't ambitious enough."

As Dorothy became more mature and wiser, she recognized some White and Black people who posed threats to her well-being and took measures to protect herself. She resented animosity from fellow women and Black people in general. She lamented:

> I certainly support black people. And so, it was hurtful when I was at a historically black institution and left College D a PWI thinking it would be different. And then that's when you realize all people have their stuff. And so, I just got the stuff from my people … that was shocking. I learned that it had nothing to do with race or gender. It just had to do with people hurting so much that they chose to hurt others.

Race and gender slowed down Dorothy's career advancement. She thinks she would have been a Provost if she had been male. She complained about the microaggressions she deals with daily as a woman. She said,

> I have had to deal with the issue of she's a bitch; she's nasty, you know, all those things. I don't get to say things my male colleagues might say. But over time, you get to hone your message and who you are and figure out how to do things.

Despite the racist experiences, Dorothy stayed true to her virtues of being Black and female. Dorothy felt the burden of representing all Black students while working at a College C. Every black student wanted to take her class as they regarded her as their role model. After that experience, she eventually took a job working at a HBCU. Working with predominantly Black and Brown students eased the burden of racism except when she attended events like the convocation, where the president was a Black male. She credited the HBCU for allowing her to become Vice Provost for Academic and

Faculty Affairs.

Dorothy used her power and authority to increase faculty diversity by 26% at College F a PWI. She said,

> I hired their first diversity person, and she right now is still there. I'm not sure if they changed her title to Chief Academic Officer, but she sits in the president's cabinet, and I was responsible for making that happen. I didn't need to do targeted hiring because black people know how to apply for jobs, and they know how to show up and give great interviews. And suppose you take all the other barriers out of the way.

Dorothy was instrumental in erasing racist legacies and enhancing diversity at College F. She removed racist symbols to create a culturally sensitive learning environment. For example, she advocated changing one building's name from Woodrow Wilson Hall to the Great Hall.

As the Associate Vice Provost at a College G, Dorothy supports faculty members through their life cycle and recruit's faculty from the HR and faculty development offices. Her office also oversees the policies and procedures at the university level that impact the faculty member, even from the grievance policy to promotion and tenure and the faculty handbook.

Dorothy admitted that her chance to advance to the vice provost job came when her department chair agreed that he would retire. She shared:

> He came to me and said he thought I would make a great department chair, but I was not tenured yet. And I knew I was going up a year early. He said that he would work one more year until I was tenured, and he did. At our institution, the department recommendation came from the faculty. And so, there was a vote. It was contentious because some people were concerned about how the current chair had run the department. How we use technology today differs greatly from how we used it then. And so, the expectation is that students could come by your office during office hours

to see you.

Dorothy enjoys the freedom to do her job as she sees fit. She bragged:

> I set the agenda if what I've decided to do helps the vision of the Provost and the President. I love my Provost because she is indeed a person who believes that if I've hired someone whom I believe is qualified, I let them do their job. So, he does not micromanage me in any way. She comes to me for advice and counsel. Just like I go to her for advice and counsel. It's nice to have someone who values your opinion and the things you oversee.

Dorothy is a problem solver willing to go against the grain for the institution's good. College F has strict travel reimbursement for candidates traveling for interviews. In this process, the person pays for the travel expenses and gets reimbursed after the trip. Dorothy realized that this rigid payment system was too rigid and could prevent good candidates from applying for jobs. She captured this challenge in the following vignette:

> We did much hiring because we did some program development. We paid for people to come for the interview. However, you had to pay upfront. And we had a gentleman in the pool from one Caribbean Island. He couldn't afford the plane ticket, hotel, or food, turning in all receipts and getting his money back. And so, the person who was the Associate or Assistant Provost for budget came to me and said, well, he won't be able to be in the pool. And I said, well, I'm sure we can do something. No, it is not because we don't do that. And we did that, blah, blah, blah. I say okay. So, I walked down the hall to this other woman who oversees the processing of this paperwork to ask her to cut him a check when he arrived. She wasn't happy because people like to do what they've always done. I had already gone to her Vice President and convinced him to go with the idea. This guy was our best hire and is still with the faculty.

Dorothy believes her institution is not progressive and still stuck in the 1920s. She said:

> When you look at the curriculum, you are not teaching anything black even though we have a different Africana Studies area. Because everybody doesn't necessarily take something in Africana Studies, but it's a core for general education, people will take something for history. What does this say about Black and Brown people regarding the history of this country in the history department? Our curriculum looks like it was when we were students. Well, that doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Our classrooms look like those from 1920. The desks are still in a row, there's still a spot at the front of the class where the teacher stands, and there's still some writing instrument behind them. So, please stop trying to act like we've done innovative things in communicating with students when we bring them into space because we haven't. So, I think that that will be the downfall of higher ed.

Dorothy believes Black males are less affected by racism than Black women. She said,

> I probably would have been a Provost if I were a Black man. I think, quite frankly, while the race is always out there, Black men get touted out, and I have a black son. But providing equity and inclusion in our societies can't just be about Black men, especially if it's going to be at the expense of a black woman. I honestly believe I would have been further along in my career if I were a man.

Dorothy is resilient and does not allow racism and genderism to slow her down. She said:

> You simply keep moving forward to get someone to hear where you're coming from and value and see you. I'll put my name on the line to help move you forward. And I think sometimes, we not only know what we want and the opportunity we need, but we get stuck on who ought to give it to us. You got to let that part go.

Dorothy celebrates big and small wins as she struggles to change her organizational culture.

She shared:

> The dismissiveness is when you say something in a meeting, and nobody says anything. And then one of your male colleagues, White or otherwise, says exactly what you said. And they go, yeah, it's a good idea. It is a good idea because he just heard it come out of my mouth. And so, I think that thing that wasn't paying attention to what you said happens very often. Over the years, I've been fortunate to have people I've worked for who set the tone for the expectation. So, I recently had a conversation with a Dean and the Provost, and we were in the room and had to share some unpleasant things from the dean's college regarding his leadership. It was a conversation that should have been about this is what we are hearing. You must have people who support you in that.

Dorothy does feel respected by her white peers; however, "there's always some rogue person who has some issues, some issues of their own with you. Dorothy's Provost is a white female who feels like she has the support she needs from her to be successful. Per Dorothy, "she had been tremendous in her advice in how, you know, whenever you to a new place. It's the unwritten stuff, you know, those cultural things you're trying to tease out. She's been very good at helping me to just do those, especially during a pandemic. I worked for the institution almost a year before seeing students in mass. So, I feel highly supported, and she's been able to help me through that. Had it not been for the pandemic, I wonder if that would have been different.

Dorothy now feels like she has the same advantages for career progression as her white colleagues. Dorothy explains, "I think there's a certain sort of point that you hit where people start to see, first of all, you have a litany of things that you've done. It still feels like that. You must do twice as long and twice as hard to succeed. And so, I come now at this point with sort of a track record. And I come with a litany of people who have supported me and speak well of what I've done. Throughout

that process, there have been, and again, I think, not that gender plays a bigger role. Still, I think what I've seen happen with my white female colleagues is that their processes mimic mine in many ways in higher ed, where my male colleagues, Black or White, have jumped over. And so, I still think that while race plays a role, I again see that my male colleagues are often provided an advantage that my female colleagues have not been."

Dorothy believes expectations are higher for African American females seeking a senior-level administrative position. She urged African American women seeking professional development to demonstrate superior readiness to take on senior leadership jobs. She also encouraged women to find their voices and actively seek leadership roles. She offered African American women the following advice:

> people assume that you're happy doing whatever you're doing. They think you are content where you are. So, you must be vocal that you're interested in doing something new and different, even if you don't know what that next thing is. But you must make sure that you've done the work to prepare yourself and to be able to say, you know, that you've participated in certain programs and taken advantage of opportunities to do your professional development. It's never too late to continue to figure out what is next. And not only next for you, but what's next in your field, what's happening in higher ed that we need to be doing and thinking about differently. So, prepare, and make sure you communicate with people about what you'd be willing to do next.

Dorothy avoids institutional politics and is suspicious of people's intentions. She is very cautious of people until she knows what motivates them to do the things they do. She explained: There's politics in colleges and universities. It might not come from where you think it will come from. It might not come from someone who looks like you; it might not come from someone who has the same gender as you because you think that person sees you.

It might come from somebody in a different political party two generations from you. That is so different from what you are; you must be open to that happening. And you have not to let the politics of the day get in the way of your actual development because that's all it is, is the politics of the day will change all over again. And so, you can get caught up in it, and you won't have a seat at the table. And ultimately, that's what you want, a seat at the table.

Dorothy believes gender roles prevent women from fairly competing with men for senior leadership jobs. She said:

> Women still carry the larger burden of caregiving, whether that's for other family members or one's children. And so, when COVID hit, it impacted female faculty much differently than it did some male faculty. And again, that's not to say that it did not impact male faculty, but there was a difference in the impact we saw across the board.

In addition to gender role constraints, women also need terminal degrees to stand a better chance of professional advancement. She said this is a challenge because one must have a Ph.D. in most areas to teach a class and be a full faculty member. Women without terminal degrees get inferior non-tenure-track roles. The irony is that most of the faculty are women, who get paid a premium salary, even though it is generally a clinical faculty member's role rather than a tenured role.

Dorothy believes the most significant constraint on women's advancement is the lack of preparation for leadership roles. She lamented, "I don't believe anybody's going to prepare us or prepare for us."

Dorothy believes that female African American administrators in academic affairs add value to the academy simply by their lived experiences. She argued, " we bring a different lens than others who might be at those decision points." She did not want to characterize women as nurturers because of the negative gender stereotype associated with that notion. She said,

> I don't necessarily go for the characterization that women are nurturers. And some

> women aren't nurturers. They aren't good nurturers at all. And so, don't assume that you need a nurturer, so let's get us a woman because that's simply a stereotype. While there is some truth to it, and like most stereotypes, you could end up with a woman who doesn't bring that to the table. Again, the most helpful thing would be if we get the same shot that everybody else gets without dealing with the stereotypes in any stigmas that might exist. A fair shot would be nice.

Dorothy believes that higher education policymakers never intended for African Americans to participate. She said

> Higher education is not a new industry. It's an old industry that relegated people of color who were regarded as new immigrants to the country. They created it for English-speaking people and not for people who spoke English as a second language and gays and lesbians. Higher education was for the most privileged, who were, by and large, white men of status.

She concluded that creating equal spaces for African American women in higher education is akin to

> Turning a horse and buggy into a car. Are we at the point where it's time to figure out the next best move for higher education? The hard part: you must be prepared to dismantle them and create the ones that serve. That scares everybody because it sounds like people who have power now won't have it. That's going to be the problem.

Lucy

Lucy and I met via Microsoft teams due to the current pandemic surrounding COVID-19 restrictions. Lucy is a 43-year-old African American female mother, Associate Dean for Faculty Development in Academic Affairs, and wife. As a first-generation student, Lucy represents progress for a family. She was not terrified about the pitfalls that may otherwise deter most people who decide

not to go to college because they don't think they can afford it. Lucy defied all odds and aspired for the highest degree on the land – a Ph.D. She always knew that she wanted to attend college but was unsure what she wanted to be.

Lucy was a good student throughout their secondary and post-secondary education. She said, "You know, I enjoyed school; I was good at that." She was a perfect student in school. After graduating high school, Lucy attended College H an HBCU on an academic scholarship. She started as a "pre-med chemistry major." Still, after participating in various service learning projects and getting involved with the community by tutoring and mentoring students, she quickly changed her major to elementary education. She reflected on her education endeavors: "I think my passion and gift are working with kids."

After graduating with her undergraduate degree, she started teaching third grade at an elementary school in Atlanta, GA. Lucy stated: "While teaching third grade, I met several students identified as having disabilities and could not understand." Lucy was troubled by the poor services her school provided to kids with disabilities. She resolved to go back to school to learn more about special needs children so she could make a difference in their lives. Thus, Lucy returned to school to get a Master's in Behavior Learning Disabilities. Lucy credited her decision to go for her master's in Behavioral Learning Disabilities degree to one of her professors turned mentor, who encouraged her to follow her dreams despite the financial challenges she faced as a first-generation student. She shared her fears:

> I do not know anything about a Master's. I am a first-gen college student and college completer. So, I thought I had done it, getting an undergraduate degree, but he said that you got to a Master's. I didn't know how to pay for that. And he said, it doesn't matter, get a loan, find a grant. He said, but you must get a Master's. It took a couple of years to sort it out and connect the dots.

Lucy's education journey did not stop there. As she went through her master's program, she flirted about getting a doctoral degree. Lucy's professors and mentors recognized her academic potential and pushed her to consider a terminal degree. She captured her response to her professor's advice in the following vignette:

While I was in my master's, one of my professors asked me if I had considered getting a doctorate, which I had never, ever, ever, ever considered because, you know, I thought I was doing it by finishing, you know, an undergraduate degree. And she was like, well, you have much potential, you know, you ask great questions, you're thinking, you know, you're a good practitioner, you should consider getting a Ph.D. And I said okay, sure. You know, she said that we might have some funding opportunities available. You know, if that happens, I'll reach out to you.

Lucy soon received a full fellowship for her doctoral degree, as luck would have it. However, the college fellowship required her to commit to teaching in Higher Education for two years for every year of funding. So, she willingly committed to eight years of service in higher education even though her heart was still very much in the classroom in a p12 space. Upon her degree completion, she started pursuing faculty positions and soon landed a faculty position at College I, a PWI, where she served for three years. Lucy missed teaching as her new job focused primarily on research. Lucy captured her professional experiences at this job in the following anecdote:

> I received grant funding and excellence as a new teacher of the year for being an outstanding junior faculty member. You know, I did everything you're supposed to do, you publish, and you do service and things like that. But I didn't get a lot of chances to teach, which was my passion. My heart desired to teach. And so, while there, I got a few teaching opportunities because research was her primary role. Even when I picked up extra teaching, it interfered with my ability to do my research because it's just time, you know, there's only so much time in a day.

However, soon an opportunity presented itself at another institution for Lucy to lead a portion of a teacher quality partnership grant and support Special Education teachers. Lucy shared her joy at this opportunity:

> It did not have a real research requirement to it. It was very much teaching and mentoring and coaching, which is what I love doing. And so that opportunity, combined with some family commitment, made me decide to take that position.

Lucy believed this new position was a "better fit and a better use of [her] time and a better tradeoff for [her] energy." After being in this position for three years, Lucy became the Program Director for the Special Education Unit. She was the director of this program for five years before her promotion to the Associate Professor position. She said, "I had a desire to take another step. I have a mentor, the associate dean at the time in our college, who retired. And about a year or so, she announced her retirement, she retired, and then the position became available, and the dean asked me if I wanted to apply."

Lucy's educational experiences at the College H influenced her profoundly. The university provided a stable and nurturing environment for first-generation college students. As a student of color, she felt more at home and performed better in school, where she felt supported and safe. The student environment fit was essential for her success. With the boost from the HBCU, she assumed her most preferred teaching job at an elementary school in metro Atlanta. She loved schools and was an avid reader. Lucy recalls:

> I love school, have always loved school, and have always loved to read. My family has nurtured me to be a reader and curious. I loved working with students and children.

The HBCU experience, in conjunction with good mentors, was instrumental in her career choices, making her the professional she is today. Lucy became more conscious of her Black identity. She neatly captured how she morphed into a proud Black female scholar in the following vignette:

College H changed my life. It was probably one of the best decisions I've ever made to attend an HBCU. It changed my life in a lot of ways. I had always gone to school in predominantly white areas and experienced a lot of exclusion and racism in ways that I didn't detect. It wasn't always explicit or overt. It was often very implicit, very subtle, but very damaging because I think I always grew up questioning the validity of what I brought to the table. You know, and it was because of a lot of instances because I was a Black girl in a place where, you know, it was curious to see like, oh, you're in this class, oh, you're in this, you're in this program, you're in the experience, oh, how did that happen? You know, so I was… It planted a seed that made me question my ability as do I, am I capable? Am I competent? or am I smart or here because they needed a person of color? When I got to College H and saw all these beautiful people who looked like me, had the same experiences, or had different experiences, it was great because I felt like I belonged. And I had never really felt this way before. And sometimes, I felt like I did not belong because I was kind of weird in my way, but there was a space for me. It wasn't like a manufacturing space. It was true belonging. And it was a celebration of the fact that we were amazing, you know, it wasn't an accident, it was like you are, and this is…. Let's nurture that. So, I felt that nurturing at College H. It had on me that there was an expectation to succeed and make a difference. The other thing I got from College H was that there was an expectation there that people wanted to make a difference in my life, and they wanted me to go and make a difference in someone else's life.

When reflecting on her career, Lucy appreciated the benefits she got from the counsel of many important informal and formal mentors who have provided meaningful insights that have helped her look at opportunities and obstacles from a different perspective. These mentors can have a powerful impact on her professional's career, providing feedback and guidance that complements what she receives from her supervisors and other colleagues. Lucy captured the mentor-mentee relationships

she values so deeply in the following vignette:

> One person was my mentor at College H, who encouraged me to go on; he stayed in touch with me during my work in Higher Education. So, he just continued to, you know, ask me, like, once I got into this career, you know, how is your publication going? Are you on track with your research, you know, things? So, he gave me that kind of coaching. Another person was the person who told me about the doc program and the potential funding and later reached out to me when they got the funding. She left my doc program about two years into my programming and went to College J, a PWI. And so, when there was a position at College J about the time I was applying, she encouraged me to apply. And she served as a mentor for me when I came to College J. She supported my thinking through my research, publication, and a gentle reminder to publish. She would say: What do you do with your dissertation? Have you broken it down? Have you reformatted it? You know, have you sent it out? You know, those kinds of things. In my early teaching career, a woman who was a teacher next door to me was a 20-year veteran when I started teaching. Still, she was new to the school, so we intersected because we were in new teacher activities together. Even though she was not a new teacher, she was new to the school. She was generous with her resources. She was generous with her ideas. She knew what I didn't know, so she could help me anticipate things and be proactive so that, as a new teacher, I just wouldn't have had the skills or experience.

Mentors helped Lucy find her calling as an educator, making a difference in people's lives. She was instrumental in shaping children's lives as a teacher and a human giving her best to the students. She said, "I appreciate that because I don't know I would have gotten that kind of whole-person mentoring anywhere else." She credited her former dean for encouraging her and opening valuable professional opportunities.

Although Lucy has successfully navigated her way to the top of the academic profession, she

is still painfully aware of the challenges of being in academia while Black and female. Lucy lamented feeling isolated and lonely in a field dominated by White folks – a phenomenon often referred to as the "Black Tax." She repeatedly questioned her legitimacy at the job and constantly pushed herself hard to prove her worth. She said,

> As an African American woman, especially once I got into higher education, the absence of other African American people was very pronounced. It was not unusual for me to be the only Black woman in the room or the only black person in the room. Being the only one made her a little self-conscious. I felt like I had to conform in many ways. I felt like I had to oversell almost over myself for people to take me seriously, which felt strange. Still, it took me back to, as I mentioned early, in my younger years, when I was always questioning, like should I be here? Am I here on my merit? Or am I here because someone needed me to be here? I found myself subconsciously having those same conversations with myself again. When I was in certain spaces, I looked around.
>
> Do they need me? Do they need a brown person to be a part of this committee? So, that was a thing that I often grappled with. And then grappled with being vocal about certain things, especially regarding issues around students of color or issues around diversity and equity. By speaking up about some of those things, I realized that I became the equity inclusion person, right, always like, let's defer to Lucy, let's see what Lucy thinks about this. Which felt silly; because I'm the black person in the room doesn't mean I'm the go-to person on equity. So, I found myself between wanting to be an advocate and being sure that I didn't present myself as an expert or even be perceived or utilized in that way. So, as an African American woman in my field, that's just something I pay attention to.

I further the notion of a Black tax explain Lucy's psychological weight or stressor she experienced from consciously or unconsciously thinking about how her White colleagues perceive the

social construct of Blackness. Her Blackness in her university is often portrayed through a deficit lens and is associated with racial stereotypes. This phenomenon aligns with how African-Americans experience racism in America. Lucy's professional experiences reflect racial discrimination and other racial microaggressions. She explained:

> At my first job at College I, a PWI, I grappled with how I showed up, like how I presented myself. I grappled with that for a long time. I would blow out my hair or wear it straight. I would do certain things to have a more traditional kind of appearance. And one time, I was at work, and I had my hair curly or something natural, and one of my co-workers came to my office and asked me if she could touch my hair. She was like, oh, your hair, like you always have it so different. I was like, no, you can't touch my hair. Then people would exchange stories about, like, their experiences with family members or things like that. And they would be exchanging stories that have racist or racial undertones. And it wasn't until they looked at me that they remembered a black person in the room, and they would catch themselves and try to change course or soften what they were going to say. So that was awkward. But it also made me wonder why I didn't speak up in times when I did speak up, whether it was because it was offensive to me or because I was advocating on someone else's behalf. I don't know. Strange occurrences happen when you are the minority in the room. I feel like I'm in a different place with a feeling of responsibility about that now than in my early career. I felt like I had to keep peace and keep people's goodwill towards me because I knew I would go up for a promotion and tenure, and I knew opinions would matter. I found myself in this dance of playing the academic game and the social game not to be too disruptive. But to also not shrink in the, you know, into the background, that was something that I've grappled with. I continue to grapple with a bit but a little less because I feel more comfortable in my role and my ability.

For Lucy, coping with discrimination created the burden of an "emotional tax" in the

workplace. Being treated differently from peers due to race/ethnicity or gender triggers adverse effects of isolation and makes it difficult to thrive at work. She sometimes felt that her colleagues welcomed her perspectives. Lucy believes race and gender have impacted her career experiences in higher education. She thinks that it has affected her experience in good and bad ways. She complained,

> I feel like I've been at tables, and I've been in rooms because I'm a black woman. And there aren't a lot of black people in my space and probably a lot of higher ed spaces in education, special education, specifically, some of our organizations, there aren't a lot of black people, many people of color, so they have this desire to have representation, which they should. Because I tend to be outspoken, a go-getter, people say we want to have somebody, we want to bring in somebody for a leadership opportunity; in the back of their mind, they want to say it, but they want it to be a woman, a person of color, so they'll ask me to do it. Sometimes I am invited because of my qualifications and because I am a person of color. In some ways, people might have had one set of intentions to engage with me, but because my credentials, experience, and skills speak for themselves, it doesn't take long for that to be a non-factor.

Lucy appeared to rebut herself at times, saying that she did not experience professional barriers because of her race. She said:

> Being a woman is less than a barrier. For me, then, it is being a black person. In my university, the percentage of women and men in our college is equal. When you look at the numbers, you know, demographics. The percentage of African Americans to white is represented like in this country, but when you start looking at the ranks. Hence, assistant professors, there are a lot of black people and associates. It gets smaller, full. It's almost non-existent. So, when you start to critique why those things occur, I find myself being back in the space of being the black representative when I am, and this system needs to be addressed. I'm not saying that because I am the Black person in the room. I'm saying that because the data points indicate that the

system needs to be addressed. I find myself being the Black person in the room who also knows that data and the research, so I can wear every hat in every conversation.

Lucy is proud of her professional accomplishments so far despite the racial problems. Lucy states,

> I am proudest of the number of teachers I've contributed to the field. I've worked on several grants. When I came into my position initially, it was to support a grant, but eventually, I became the grant director. So, I have moved through the leadership ranks in the grant experience. But I feel proud of the number of people I've been able to help meet their dream of being a teacher. I can say, and I know they will say, that I was a person who contributed to their development and their identity as a teacher. And that means a lot because I came to higher ed. I left teaching because I felt my impact would not be as great in the classroom as if I were working with teachers. My impact would be exponential. So, I feel like, in a way, I've helped shape the class, the classrooms for children of over 150 teachers, and that feels special. And I am thankful that I've had the opportunity.

Lucy realizes she is one of the few Black women who have made it to the top of her career. She expressed humility and gratitude for the unique experiences that prepared her to succeed in her job.

> Everybody does not get the opportunity to be a full-time doctoral student or student and get all the opportunities she has afforded. "I feel blessed and thankful that I was able to be included in a lot of the things that I participated in because it gave me a skill set that I had the benefit that I use today. So, I think preparation is the key. And whether you start in your undergraduate experience or your graduate school experience, having strong preparation and strong opportunities are essential in having a long-term career. "I feel very blessed. This opportunity was something that I felt was intended for me. I believe that God has a plan for my life, and

things work out for good. I think my process was somewhat unique compared to the other colleges in our university but not unique to our college. The Associate Dean notified the dean that she was going to retire. I assume he asked her to, you know, give him some ideas about who might be a good candidate for the role, and she probably gave him names, and he decided whom he wanted to interview. I was one of the people on the shortlist of people he spoke with. So, we talked about my ambitions, my goals, and my skills he knew because I have been at the university and in the college, I worked closely with the dean's office through some funded projects that I've had. So, he knows what my skill set is. And so that was my hiring process. So, he selected me, and he announced my position."

Lucy's current position is Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Equity. Her responsibilities include supporting all faculty in their teaching, supporting them in professional learning opportunities necessary to improve education, mentoring, facilitating mentoring opportunities for all faculty in the college, and serving as the liaison to mentoring efforts that occur university wide. She also supports all part-time instructors and leads their professional community. She is responsible for all of the college's equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives and is the point person for the ED partnerships, whether national or international. Lucy assists faculty members when they're writing or doing any research activities. Lastly, she is a liaison for the staff council and several other college-level committees. Before becoming the Associate Dean, Lucy was the director of the Special Ed Program in the Department of Learning Sciences. That responsibility involved coordinating the programs in the unit, such as the doctoral, master's, and undergraduate programs. She was responsible for managing their day-to-day operations.

Lucy feels that she does play an integral part in her department, and she can express her concerns freely up to a certain point. She explains, "Yes, I play a very integral part. I didn't realize how influential this position is. So, I must be mindful of that when I'm communicating with my

colleagues and, you know, the people that I work with. But I feel free to express my concerns and make recommendations. I must be careful about what I say and how to be thoughtful about what I say. And so that's been a vital lesson. I learned it quickly. And I've also had to learn how to maneuver and navigate the politics that happens in higher ed, and how to do that publicly and do it, you know, in front of people and behind closed doors."

As a senior-level administrator in academic affairs, Lucy mentors junior employees and helps shape her institution's mission and vision. She said:

> One of my roles is mentoring. We have several initiatives that I've rolled out starting this fall. Going through this process and explaining my vision to the faculty, I was a little nervous about it because this has been attempted before, and it wasn't successful. I was worried because many of the same faculty who were there when it rolled out the first time are still there now. So, I thought to myself, why would this be any different? But, what I found was, you know, I use a process of consensus-building and faculty input to help inform and confirm the program's vision. I feel like I was clear about setting intentions. I made it a point to reach out to lots of faculty who either, you know, who represented a variety of positions. I talked to full professors. I spoke to new professors. I spoke to people of color, non-tenure-track teachers, tenured tracked, everybody, and chairs. And my goal in doing so was to ensure that everybody's voice was represented in this process. And, when I went to share this work at a faculty meeting at the end of the year, to share my heart about my intention to be supportive, to create a network of support that everyone could be a part of, that everyone can access, the feedback I got was positive. So, that was affirming because what my work is doing is filling a gap that exists and helping people see. I feel like this work fills a void and helps provide resources to people who have felt unseen and supported.
>
> When faced with bias and discrimination, Lucy has found survival strategies. These include

alternating between self-expression, appearance, and behavior in the workplace to downplay racial differences and connect with colleagues. This suppression of one's racial identity has come at the cost of her authenticity and, thus, decreasing her sense of belonging in her work environment. Lucy believes that race and gender impact her relationship with faculty and staff. However, race is more than gender for her. She explains,

> I am at College J in the college of ed. Our gender composition is even amongst faculty and staff. I feel like gender plays less of a role for me because I don't feel like I have fewer opportunities than my colleagues do as a woman. I think race plays more of a part because when you dive into the numbers when you start looking at the number of people who are in a higher rank among faculty or who have a longer tenure as a staff member, the group of people get less, gets wider, let's just say wider. So, I think that my race plays a role in that because, you know, my interest aligns with who I am as an individual.
>
> You know, they allow my identity. So, those interests don't necessarily appeal to everyone and aren't considered rigorous by everyone. And in the system, where you are required, where you rely on your faculty to give credence to your work, you are at their mercy in many ways, and you have to do extra work to make it clear why your contribution to the field to the profession is meaningful. Faculty members who don't share my identity and don't understand my work's intention might not see it as rigorous or impactful. So, as a black woman, who prioritizes the issue of black and brown students and understands the disproportionate impact that some of our policies and practices have on them, you know, the research that I do might not look like the research that other people do. And therefore, it might not experience some of the same setbacks. But the reality of the situation is that's not my work. And I wouldn't take on work that seems more mainstream just to hedge my bet in terms of being able to advance.

However, Lucy does feel her presence is "intimidating to people" because she "speaks her

mind" and she is "kind and compassionate" when she does. Lucy explains, "Some people don't appreciate being challenged by a person of color, especially if they feel like they've arrived and are a name in the field. They feel like their voice should be the loudest in the room. And so that can be intimidating, and it can create tension."

Lucy believes that she has a good relationship with staff overall as far as staff goes. She captured this sentiment in the following vignette:

> I have always been an advocate, and I don't see the staff differently or treat them any differently than faculty. You should treat everybody with respect; treat people how you want to be treated. My grandmother used to manage a Marriott, and I used to, when I was a teenager, I used to clean rooms in the summer to make money. So, I understand what it is like to do work that other people don't want to do. I know what it is like to do the work that people look at as lesser than, and I understand that the people who work are valuable. So, I feel like I go into every space to appreciate what everyone brings, whether you are the person answering the phone or taking out the trash. I'm not good at finding the trash bags, emptying my trash, and lining my trash bin. People see that and my deeds, and they know that I'm not just talking about that. I live that way, and I mean that. And I think that provides me with a lot of credibility among the people they offer. As a result, people appreciate that and respect me because I respect them.

At times Lucy seemed to minimize other problems and highlighted the issue of isolation and being the only Black person in her ranks. She said:

> People are surprised when they realize why I'm there. I don't look like my counterparts, the other Associate Deans. Recently there was an award ceremony at the university for people who had achieved some milestone, and I was recently promoted. So, I'm at the table with the other Associate Deans because they seated me. And the people said, you know, they were

going through different promotions, and I stood up when they promoted to associate. And they looked at me like, you know, oh, well, congratulations, and then they started asking me a barrage of questions. Well, when did you go up? And you went up. You have a small child. Now you're in this position like they're trying to figure out the timeline. And in my mind, I'm like, well, other people are at other tables like ours. You are not asking them questions. People are often curious about me, like, how did you get here? But I don't see that as a barrier, per se. If anything, now that I'm an administrator, I've been told that faculty don't always like administrators are for faculty. They feel like they're in opposition to them. Sometimes I don't even disclose that I'm an administrator in some of the affinity groups I'm a part of. I start with my identity as a faculty member because I'm still a faculty member. And at the end of the day, if this position went away, or if I was no longer in this role, I would go back to being a faculty member. So, I feel like I must meet people as a faculty member and as a colleague because if I don't, it shifts the perspective. I think this might seem superficial, but we're doing a lot of equity work at our university. I don't feel like it's intended to be systematic. I guess it feels like sort of checking a box. And since I am the person tasked with equity in my college, I think the line one barrier I have is trying to have meaningful conversations and do significant things. And sort of distance myself from things that look surface. So, that's tricky. But I think that's part of navigating a system."

To overcome the barriers of being the only person of color in the room and people's curiosity about her, Lucy stopped feeling like she had to prove herself. "I'm here. So, you don't need to know. I don't need to pull out my CV and show you my publication record or grant record or anything like that." However, if the conversations happen, she is not afraid to talk about it. Still, she does not feel it is necessary to go into every situation proving that she belongs or that she owes anyone any explanation of how she got here. According to Lucy, "I wouldn't be here unless I was supposed to be."

Lucy turns the burden of being a black female in senior leadership into an opportunity to help black and brown people attain their master's degrees and fulfill their dreams. She also finds joy when people reach out to her and commend her for her breaking the glass ceiling. She said:

> I don't think I realized how impactful that was. And I don't think I realized how many people were paying attention to that. And that might sound naïve to say, but we had a staff member recently who announced she was leaving. And I just wrote her back, and I was like, oh, well, you know, I wish you the best. She wrote me back, and she thanked me for that. And she said, I appreciate you, and it encouraged me to see a black woman in that position. She calls another experience as a guest lecturer in zoom class. Lucy explains, "I was a guest lecturer, and my son, who is five, came downstairs where I was doing my talk. And you know, he stood beside me and, you know, he wanted a snack, and I like, okay, buddy gives me a few minutes mommy's working, but I promise I'm going to help you in a minute. And then I just went back to talking, and a black woman sent me a private message. Thank you for being a role model for loving your black son, including him, and not shooing him away. And I just like that never occurred to me that someone would see that. So those kinds of things have been powerful. I am thankful that I've had those experiences; those are some of the best experiences."

On the other hand, Lucy's most challenging experience as an African American female senior-level administrator in Academic Affairs has been "learning politics and how to navigate the bureaucracy." Lucy explains,

> As a black woman, that is a challenge because I feel like I've been socialized to kind of go with the flow, not necessarily pushed back, you know, if it looks like the decision has been made, not to challenge the decision but figure out how to make it work. Where I see my colleagues, you know, they get some information they don't like, they're just like no, we're not doing that. They don't have a problem challenging the status quo or saying, we're not going to

do that. And, and for me, in my experience, as a black woman, I've never, I don't feel like I was ever permitted just to say no, we're not doing that. So, overcoming my, I was socialized to interact with people and learn how to navigate the politics of things. Because there is a system, you must be savvy in that system. I have a very supportive dean, but he's very old school about many things. I've had to teach him and learn how to work with him, but sometimes around him. And sometimes, it seems like he needs to hear some things I've said to him from other people who happen not to be black women for him to consider taking it up. Some of the same things I've spoken directly to him or in a meeting don't always land. But when other people say it, he's like, oh, well, maybe we should consider, and I'm thinking, well, oh, that's just what I said. But what's also had to learn is that it's not necessarily about who gets the work done, as long as it gets done. Like I can't be a person taking credit for everything because sometimes I'm not going to her the credit, and that's okay."

Lucy has made a conscious decision not to let racism worry her. She chooses to focus on the respect she gets from her peers instead of the naysayers. However, she still sees through some disingenuous peers who pretend to respect her while doing the opposite. Lucy had addressed those circumstances privately. Even after all is said and done, Lucy still supports them when they are recognized or awarded for things they have achieved. Per Lucy, "I don't always feel like people respect me. Some people see me as a token, but I don't let that bother me because I know I'm not. And I am comfortable with my accomplishments, and I'm comfortable in my position. So, that's their issue, not my issue."

Lucy has improvised a strategy to overcome racist and bureaucratic leaders. She excuses her boss's racist tendencies as something he can't help because of his advanced age. She said:

He is very old school. He is committed to the hierarchy of higher education. He doesn't always think outside the box about how various people contribute to the college's mission. So, I feel

supported until I start pushing on some of those hierarchy structures. Then I must ally with other people who have his ear to work together to work around some of those issues.

Lucy also struggles with institutional racism. She does not feel like she has the same advantages for career progression as her white counterparts. She lamented:

> I feel like I have had excellent progression, but I didn't have the system's edge. I had the advantage of being savvy just because I feel very blessed. But I don't feel like the system is set up to give a person like me advantages. In my college, excuse me, in my university, there only have been a promotion schedule for non-tenure-track faculty for about seven years. So, until that point, non-tenure-track faculty matriculated through the tenure-track promotion process; they had to meet the same standards, even though they didn't get the same raise and didn't get the same job security. Once the clinical or non-tenure track promotion process was established, the structure was set up such that there was a mechanism, but nobody could help you through it. You were left to your own devices to determine how to succeed in that structure. Once you advance through the structure, you're at a disadvantage with your pay increase, and that's a decision that our dean makes and that's another example of how he is committed to hierarchy. He doesn't believe that a tenure-track promotion and promotion for a non-tenure-track person warrant the same merit. But that puts me at a disadvantage from a financial perspective, long-term retirement, compound interest, etc. I think that's unfortunate, and I believe it is inconsistent. I think you must learn to figure out how to navigate the system and after I've don't it and done it successfully, I've turned around and taught other people how to do it. I've used those strategies in the mentoring structures that I've created college-wide. Once I learned the way to win in the system, I used that as the basis for this program that every person now has access to. I feel like it's my responsibility to pay it forward and to share that information with others so that they can have the opportunity to be successful, even when their chair says, I

don't know how that process works which is a shame. Survival strategy is another thing that I learned is that sometimes you must be quiet. That skill in a professional environment is beneficial because it allows you to gather information you might not otherwise have access to. It will enable you to learn how to understand the way people think and how they operate to use that to your advantage. Once you get to the table, whether you bring your chair or somebody invites you, sit there and stay. I know that before COVID, I would show up to meetings. I would get there early and talk with the people there. I will stay after for the post-meeting debriefs that people will have so I can hear the meeting, the meeting information, and the other information because it's all related. Sometimes you get the best information at the end when the meeting is over. I have learned that over my life, and I've used those skills in this environment, which have greatly benefited me."

Lucy tries to focus on her passion for helping others and finding her survival balance. She focuses on her professional goals and lets the rest go by. She said,

I think you must plan as if this isn't your final position and create opportunities for yourself to get the skills you need to move to the next level. Focus on what you're there to do, but also, in the back of your mind, decide if this is your forever job or if it is temporary. Do make yourself indispensable in doing your forever job. If you inspire to do something different or move to a different or higher role, learn what that looks like. Think about what you want to do right now that would be akin to those duties. And if you don't do anything, what can you do? What can you volunteer? What can you do to team up with someone else to get that skillset?" She also stresses finding a mentor. You need somebody who can help you understand the day-to-day because, again, you can look at the role of paper to what people's duties are, but what does that feel like? How do you balance that with your family, with your obligations? With your personal goals? So, having somebody willing to share that information with you, who's willing

to help you think about forwarding planning, and who you can confide in, because sometimes you don't know what you don't know, and you need somebody who you can trust that you can bounce ideas off and to help you brainstorm. So, finding a mentor who might not be one person, you might have multiple mentors but finding somebody who can help you.

Lucy uses feedback from colleagues to improve herself. She said

If you have a responsibility that requires you to conduct professional learning for the people who work for you, or the people who report to you, then part of your being successful would be to ask them did you get what you need. Did I offer the information so that you can understand it, or was that useful? So, if you want to grow, you must be vulnerable, ask for feedback, and be willing to take it. Because one, that's how you grow, but two, when you get into an interview, and people always ask the question, what is your weakness, what is something you must work on, you have a source of information that you can lean on. So, seek feedback for the quality or the value of what you do, and then use it.

Lucy believes that institutions do not take diversity seriously. While she applauds the diversity tenets of equity, inclusion, and justice, she believes her institution does not have enough willpower and commitment to make it a reality. Institutions conflate diversity with patriarchy. She complained that some male leaders often bring patriarchal attitudes from home to work. Thus, patriarchal hierarchy intersects with diversity efforts. And it's hard to dismantle one part of the hierarchy without dismantling the other. So, they struggle to separate the two.

Lucy also acknowledges that the work of diversity is a marathon, not a sprint. She said, Sometimes you must start with the low-hanging fruit. So, I think we are dealing with low-hanging fruit. And I think that allows you to develop momentum, and it allows you to develop credibility and develop buy-in. But I think sometimes we stay at that place too long, and we don't keep pushing to the next thing that needs transformation and that needs change. So, I hope our university goes beyond the

low-hanging fruit and gets more toward transformational work. And I think we're working to that end. But I think it's going to be a process, and it's going to be slow."

Lucy blames the underrepresentation of African American women in senior administrative roles in higher education patriarchy and the institution's high structural organization. She said

> I think part of the reason is back to the hierarchy. So, in many places, to be promoted to a senior-level position, you must have tenure, be a tenured faculty member, or be promoted. When you look back on the demographics, I could speak to my college, for example, when you look at entry-level faculty roles and assistant professors who are either clinical or tenure track. Diversity is abundant in that level of faculty. But once you look at the next rank, associate, it gets less diverse, and when you look at full, it is much less diverse. So, in many leadership positions, you must be at an advanced level even to be eligible to be a leader considered, you know, identified as a leader, and hired in a leadership position. And when you look at their research on the experiences of black people, especially black women in the academy, and their promotion rates, they are much lower, dismally so, than males and their white counterparts. Once you cross that hurdle, you have the sort of out gamesmanship and the issue of being considered qualified in that position and having, quote-unquote, the opportunities to develop those leadership skills. We have leadership, executive leadership programs for women, and things like that, focusing on a specific person. So, if you don't have you're not in that role at the time, they won't even allow you to participate. I think that's unfortunate because what it does is it really … It devalues your potential. I might not be in that role now, but I might be in that role. So, what's the harm in participating in this program even if I'm not able to take on a leadership role immediately. I would have at least had the exposure and the skills to think about how to position myself for that down the road. I think they decide to try and select people who might be in a more immediate position to be able to accelerate or

advance. But I think they do that at the harm of excluding people who maybe aren't yet, but it could be if they could refine their skills and think ahead. Those are some reasons we see an underrepresentation in senior-level positions.

As Robert Frost said in his famous poem, "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep." Lucy knows all institution's stakeholders must work hard to include more female African Americans in senior leadership in the academy. She challenges institutional leaders to use the traditional or old school for "lack of a more professional terms measures to identify leaders." She believes as leaders "promote the status quo when we use standards that haven't evolved. I would say to challenge ourselves and think about what leadership means and the mission, mission, and vision of our organization and units. And to identify people who have a record of work that aligns with the mission and the vision and who also can be inclusive. Because our world tends to be very exclusive, like being the only youngest, the person who got tenured the fastest, those metrics are usually widely and highly regarded. But you might have someone who didn't tenure the fastest but has excellent relationships with people in the community or across campus, and those skills are valuable. So, to reconsider perhaps the skills we privilege and the traits we privilege, and not to say, throw the baby out with the bathwater, but to include other things, besides our standards, what we view as the characteristics of someone successful."

Lucy also believes that institutional leaders can better provide mentoring programs to prepare African American women for senior-level administration positions. Lucy explains,

> I think mentoring is important. I know that every university doesn't have systemic mentoring programs. So, emphasizing and putting resources into mentoring. I think valuing mentorship and demonstrating that value by counting it, compensating people for it, and acknowledging it beyond saying, oh, thank you for your additional service. Make it a part of how people are evaluated, recognized, and given merit. So, I think they can do a better job of preparing

African American women by providing them with opportunities for mentorship with giving them the opportunities to be protected. I hear this term used all the time in higher ed like we got to protect new faculty and protect them. Well, protect everybody. And make sure everybody had an opportunity to get unique experiences and be a part of a team. Those are the things that institutional leaders can do to prepare people. That's doesn't mean you have to go through your list of employees or your list of faculty and pick every black person and say, now your part of this thing, but create spaces where people feel welcomed, where people have the opportunity to participate because many times people don't have the opportunity. So, when we create entry points for people, we can prepare all people to be leaders, specifically people of color and Black women, because typically, we are not welcomed in those spaces.

Lucy believes female African American senior-level administrators add value to the academy through their "diverse thinking." Per Lucy, "it is helpful to have visual diversity, but you also need diversity in voice. So, sometimes we do a good job of ensuring there are brown people in the room and we're at the table, but are those people given the opportunity to influence decision-making? And when we have people who have diverse experiences at the table, you allow space to consider a way of life that isn't consistent necessarily with your way of life. So, having leaders at the table who are black women adds value because they bring a different perspective on experiences that are becoming more status quo and more so the norm. I think black women because traditionally we've, we hold so many spaces, we hold so many roles, we understand, and we are willing to acknowledge work-life balance conversation. We might prioritize our pursuit of advancement differently and be able to speak to why others might wish to do the same. And by doing so, we normalize a way of life that is more normal than others, like chasing the golden ring perspective that people have. It's not unusual to balance caring for your children and caring for older adults. And many times, the role of African American women requires you to wear those hats. And that's not unusual for us. And it's probably not unusual

for a lot of people. Be we talk about it. We normalize it. We make it exposed. We make it explicit. So, having women of color at the table adds richness to the conversation, adds representation, and allows decision-making to happen that more likely to represent the masses and not an elite small percent of people."

Lucy believes that African American women in senior-level administration positions in higher education voices will shed more light on their underrepresentation. She is happy to be one of those voices that creates awareness of the issues facing African American women who struggle to break the glass ceiling in higher education institutions.

Chapter V

Themes

This study examined professional experiences and strategies used by African American senior administrators in southeastern colleges and universities in the US to advance in their careers. Four main themes emerged from the stories of four African American women with a cumulative 20 years in senior administration positions. The four themes are 1) advisors and mentors, 2) increasing visibility in the work place, 3) Black Tax, and 4) beating the odds. Although I treat these analytical themes as analytical isolates, the same phenomena may reflect more than one of the above themes simultaneously. For example, Black Tax is conceptually distinct from beating the odds. However, in the analysis, the themes are fluid, and the boundaries between them are permeable.

The women's stories in this study illuminate the influence of race and gender and the underrepresentation of African American women's participation in senior leadership positions. The influence of race and gender on women's disproportionate representation in the workforce calls for increased awareness of women's issues that potentially negatively impact the country's economic, social, and political well-being. This chapter provides a detailed description of each theme with supporting literature and participant voices.

Table 3

Examples of Initial Codes Used and the Themes Noted

	Theme: Advisors and Mentors
IF	Immediate Family – the participants immediate family members influence their life, education, and career decision
ME	Mentors – the participants had mentors to help them navigate post-secondary education systems and influence their career trajectory
PF	Professors – the participants understand the importance of forming a relationship with professors
TE	Teachers – the participants teacher validated their ability to be successful
PR	Principal– the participant describes that her principal was like a father figure
GP	Groups – participant knows the importance of being around like-minded people
	Theme: Creating Visibility in the Workplace
BFF	Black Female Face – the participant describes what they see first when she enters into a space
AIE	Address it Early– the participant knows the importance of tackling problems no one wanted to deal with
DI	Dismissiveness – the participant describes not being heard in a meeting
VI	Visible-participants understood that their presence and contributions within their institutions are known and even highlighted when they are visible
	Theme: Black Tax
ES	Emotional Stress – the participant describes the devastation of having her achievement diminished
FS	Financial Stress – the participant shares the loss in salary due to merit
WH	Work Harder – the participants knew that they had to work twice as hard to be successful
OBR	Only Black Representative – the participants felt the pressure of being the only Black person or female in the room
NBM	Not Being a Male – the participants felt if they were a male that they would be further in their career
	Theme: Beating the Odds
GTKP	Get to Know People – the participants know that it is very important to network with people
NS	Navigate System- participants know that in order to be successful you have to know how to play the game
OTH	Open to Help – Dorothy
SS	Solution side – the participant knows the importance of being on the solution side of the problem
WP	Well Prepared – the participants know that it is very important to have qualifications

	and educational order
MYV	Make Yourself Vulnerable -the participant understands to communicate to people want you want

---

After coding the transcripts, I noticed that repetitive codes emerged and grouped them thematically. I confirmed themes by noting relevant participant quotes. As I began to compare the notes for each code, the themes emerged. I extracted four significant themes from the research data. All participants rose through the ranks or broke the glass ceiling to earn the positions in senior-level administration in the area of academic affairs by listening to advisors and mentors, increasing their visibility in the workplace, surviving the Black tax, and beating the odds with resilience and grace. Table 4 includes these four major themes and a supporting quote from each participant.

Table 4

Themes with Supporting Commentary

Theme	Participant	Supporting Commentary
Advisors and Mentors	Dorothy	The first person and he doesn't even know this. I've never ever seen this person again. He was the Assistant Director of Admissions at College D. I grew up in Chicago, and they wanted to charge me out of state tuition. This is 1985. So, there is no googling anything there, you just had to stand in the line and hope somebody took pity on you to answer your question, and then pray that they gave you the right answer. I went to see him. I explained to him my situation and he knew what paperwork needed to be filled out and what needed to happen.
	Eva	If anything, it said that we could survive in a community where we're the minority. And so, I learned that I could stay in a majority-minority community, and I had already been doing that. Again, I never had a less-than attitude, and I still don't. I can say that it affirmed it. I could say it was fun. I felt like I

belong. I was of that black group that could, and we did.

	Annie Lee	I threatened to leave once because I didn't feel like I fit in, but she told me… she told me, you're going to be you wherever you go so, if you don't feel like you fit in here, you're probably not going to fit in if you go somewhere else.
	Lucy	One of my professors and later mentor, he told me, you have to get a master's degree. I said, well, I do not know anything about a Master's. I am a first gen college student, college completer.
Increasing Visibility in the Workplace	Dorothy	Dismissiveness is when you say something in a meeting, and nobody says anything, and then one of your male colleagues, white or otherwise, say what you said… and they go, yeah, it's a good idea. It's a good idea because he just heard it come of my mouth. Not paying attention to what I said is one of the things that happens often. But over the years, I've been fortunate to have worked for people that made sure that they set the tone for the expectation.
	Eva	I really feel like I was the Golden Child… I once wrote an article about it. There's a lot about that in the literature. In minority-majority cultures, the will bequeath a certain minority to get all the benefits and all the, look what we are doing for the Golden Child. That proves to us that we are not racist. We're not biased. We're fair. Look what we did for Eva. We're an equitable environment. We gave Eva this job. You see what I mean. So, I became the one to be the storyline to counter that they are a biased or that they are in an environment that's not equitable.

	Annie Lee	I'm black when they see me. And then, if another person has issue with that, that's what they are going to see first. They're not going to see the PhD, first. They're not going to see that she did great with the curriculum and programs, first. They're not going to see, oh, look how organized this is; look at her credentials. They're not going to see that. They're going to see the black female face first, and they have a pause or concern with that now I'm pushing against that.
	Lucy	I feel like I've been at tables and I've been in rooms because I 'm a black woman. And there aren't a lot of black people in my space and probably a lot of higher ed spaces in education, special education, specifically, some of our organizations, there aren't a lot of black people, a lot of people of color, so they have this desire to have representation, which they should
Black Tax	Dorothy	When I started teaching at College E, it took one semester. I taught there before graduating, so students began to know me. But once I was full-time, it took only one semester before I had just about every black student in my class. They were fighting to get into my class because you can go through all four years and not have a black professor. And so, they wanted to see themselves reflected in them.
	Eva	I told you about the experience of merit pay. And here I am, winning something that one out of 50,000 people don't win, yet I am rated as exceeding. So, I am still wounded over that a little bit. Well, because it affected my pay from that point forward. I'm like I could lose out $200,000 over the rest of my career because I did not get that merit pay. $200,000 pays my kid's college tuition. So, that will always be a big deal to me.

	Annie Lee	It's ironic, when I was trying to decide on a dissertation topic myself, my, my, what my dissertation chair, she told me, and this is probably terrible, but because I wanted to do black females in math ed, that was what I wanted to do. And in essence, you know, how did I become successful? So, I wanted to do that. So, her advice to me at Auburn was to keep it academic. She told me to keep it academic and do that kind of stuff when you have made your name for yourself, later. So, I'd say okay, well I got to get through and you got to sign off on some stuff so, we're going to keep it academic.
	Lucy	It was its not unusual even now for me to be the only black woman in the room or the only black person in the room. And it made me early on... It made me a little self-conscious, to be honest. I felt like I had to conform in a lot of ways.
Beating the Odds	Dorothy	You keep trying to get someone to hear where you are coming from and to value and see you. I let go of whom that person ought to be. I let go of the fact that other black people would recognize it and let go of the fact that it might be other women. I let whoever is willing to come into this space and say, I see you, and I see what you're doing, and I'm willing to put my name on the line to help you move forward.
	Eva	So, to the best of your ability, and get a body of knowledge and volume, understanding about leadership and get a deeper understanding about you. Like, for example, I know that I'm a person who is a planner, and a scheduler. And I feel comforted in knowing the schedule, and knowing the plan and knowing how we're going to proceed.

Annie Lee	You need to get to know people. You must learn how to work with people and be more social, you know, you must find common ground with people. I working with someone I'm not usually accustomed to working with, you know, I have to start to meet them where they are, like now, I find myself working with a lot of white males.
Lucy	You have to be very, very savvy, and you have to can't be afraid to be savvy. And you know, another thing I learned is that sometimes you have to be quiet. That skill in a professional environment is very helpful, because it allows you to gather information that you might not otherwise have access to and it allows you to learn how to understand the way people think and the way they operate.

Theme 1: Advisors and Mentors (It Takes a Village)

In this theme, I distinguish between two forms of guidance that underpin the roles of advisors and mentors. These distinctions helped me clarify what participants needed in their leadership trajectories. I construed mentors as individuals who fulfilled specific roles in participants' lives, and advisors fulfilled their socially circumscribed roles.

First, mentorship occurred organically in this research, without force. I found that many of the mentors in this study often mentored their protegees by accident. It was not their responsibility to mentor. Instead, in most cases, the mentees sought mentorship and appropriated it. It is important to note that mentors were probably the most encompassing of the two categories and the most amorphous. As I will demonstrate in this theme, these people sometimes serve as role models for women in more than one domain. I can speculate that these mentors may be living admirable lives or have gone through trials and tribulations they will have to go through. I categorize life into several categories: career, contribution, relationships, intellectual, and spiritual wellness. It was ultimately up

to each participant to decide which issues to discuss with the various mentors. The women sought mentors who appeared to have succeeded in their careers and contribution and sought to learn from them.

As a first-generation graduate, Lucy credits her early educational success to her professor and mentor, who helped her navigate college. She said:

> While at College H, one of my professors and mentor told me I must get a master's degree. I said, well, I do not know anything about a Master's. I am a first-gen college student and college completer. So, I thought I had done it, you know, getting an undergraduate degree, he said, so you got to get a Master's. I didn't know how to pay for that. And he said, it doesn't matter, get a loan, find a grant. He said, but you must get a Master's. It took a couple of years for me to sort it out, you know, connect the dots.

Lucy's mentors opened her eyes to educational possibilities she had never imagined. She shared:

> While I was in my master's, one of my professors asked me if I had considered getting a doctorate, which I had never, ever considered because, you know, I thought I was doing it by finishing, you know, an undergraduate degree. And she was like, well. You have much potential and ask great questions; you're thinking, you know, you're a good practitioner, and you should consider getting a Ph.D. And I said okay, sure. She said that we might have some funding opportunities available. You know, if that happens, I'll reach out to you. And I said okay, then a year later, I heard from her, and she said that we have grant funding here. I will be a full fellowship. You'd be a full-time doctoral student. Would you be interested in applying? So, I applied and was selected to be a part of this cohort, putting me in the space of being a doctoral student."

Lucy sought people who encouraged her the most in her career by encouraging her to pursue a terminal degree. Thus, after attaining her PH.D. and securing a college professor job, she sought a mentor who guided her through tenure and promotion requirements. This mentor continually nudged her about her progress with publications by asking, "How is your publication going? Are you on track with your research, you know, those kinds of things?" Although Lucy felt comfortable at an HBCU institution, another mentor alerted her to new horizons within the PWI institutions. This proposition made sense, considering that PWIs continually seek to diversify their colleges with Black female scholars. Thus, with some persuasion, Lucy applied for a position at College J and got it. She said

> She supported me in thinking through my research and publication, a gentle reminder to publish. What do you do with your dissertation? Have you broken it down? Have you reformatted it? You know, have you sent it out? You know, those kinds of things. In my early teaching career, a woman who was a teacher next door to me was a 20-year veteran when I started teaching. She was new to the school, so we intersected because we were in new teacher activities together; even though she was not a new teacher, she was new to the school. She was generous with her resources. She was generous with her ideas. She knew what I didn't know, so she could help me anticipate things and be proactive so that I wouldn't have the skills or experience as a new teacher. She emphasized my role in the children's lives as a teacher and a human and that I needed to be my best self to give my best to the students. I appreciate that because I don't know if I would have gotten that whole-person mentoring.

Eva got her first educational boost from a third-grade white male teacher who made her student of the month six of the eight months they were in school. She said, "I filled my whole bedroom with the student of the month certificates. So, there you figure, I've had affirmation from other races about my capability."

One of Eva's mentors, a school principal, turned a negative trait into something good. She captured the mentoring incident in the following vignette:

> He felt I would not be content not sharing my opinions and whatnot. He helped me grow as a woman. We would spend hours just talking about all kinds of things, what she was doing in my life, and why she was doing that. He told me I was sabotaging my relationships, which made me look at where it came from and how that fit with my life with my parents and their relationship. He was right. He told me once that you never make good decisions, and I didn't believe that." He was the person that challenged her on many of my ideas about her reality. He was the dad I didn't have because my dad died when I was nine. So, he helped me self-actualize. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been as successful as an employee, a colleague, or a leader.

As a college student, Dorothy relied on the Assistant Director of Admissions at College D to help her navigate the issues of getting into college. Next was the male professor, who pulled her from a desperate situation and gave her an independent study to complete her coursework.

Dorothy fondly remembers a White female professor, a faculty member who took pity on her and helped her get an "A" in the class. She eventually chaired her doctoral dissertation chair and talked her into pursuing a career in Higher Education.

Dorothy also mentions a Dean when she went to work at College E and her current Provost. Per Dorothy, "I've been fortunate that I've had people who invested in me and my success and wanted me to do well.

Lastly, Dorothy recalled a department chair when she worked at College E for significantly impacting her career trajectory. The following vignette neatly captures the mentor-mentee relationship the two shared:

> He was an older white guy who had worked at College E, an HBCU, his entire life. We

> knew each other through our criminal justice work. He convinced me to come to College E, guided me, and cared about my career. I stay in touch with him to this day. When I look back, I know that, one, I stayed in touch with people; two, I told people exactly what I needed and when I didn't know how to articulate that, I made myself vulnerable enough for people to tell me, no, and they never did. Whenever I thought I wanted to learn and do something differently, I was honest, and someone always remembered it.

Annie Lee almost left college because she felt she did not fit in until a mentor convinced her otherwise. Annie Lee said: "I threatened to leave once because I didn't feel like I fit in, but she told me… she told me well, you're going to be you wherever you go so, if you don't feel like you fit in here, you're probably not going to feel like you fit in if you go somewhere else."

Annie Lee expanded her mentor-mentee relationships to encompass their families as well. She shared:

> My mentor, who had just passed recently, and her family knew me because we were close. She was instrumental in, you know, just cultivating me as a mathematician and a math professor. I had her at College A for ten years. Four years, when I was an undergrad, and then six when I was a professor. We hung out together. We wrote books together. She would tell me to get on this committee and do and apply for this kind of position. She has always been one of my references whenever I applied for work, and now I must change that. I was the Dean of Education going through accreditation when I had the last conversation with her on the phone. I got this accreditation going, and I was feeling bad about it. And I was like, I don't know how it will turn out. I don't know if I am going to end up on top or not on top. She said you'll be fine. So, she would say, oh, you got that, and you're smart; you can do it. But that is what she did, and everything was great.

On the other hand, advisors offered participants advice on specific feedback about specific questions. Most notably, they advised participants on navigating race and racism as Black women in America. They based theirs on their lived experiences of being Black. This theme will describe and analyze these engagements as the women set on their leadership trajectories. Advisors knew more about surviving while being Black, an area the women were trying to learn more about. Lucy's grandmother used to manage a Marriott and taught her to clean rooms in the summer to make pocket money. She helped Lucy understand what it is like to do work other people don't want to do. Lucy said:

> I know what it is like to do the work that people see as lesser than others, and I understand that those who do it are valuable. So, I feel like I go into every space with an appreciation for what everyone brings, whether you are the person who is answering the phone or whether you take out the trash. I'm not too good at finding trash bags, emptying my trash, and lining my trash bin. People see my deeds and know I'm not just talking about that. I live that way, and I mean that. And I think that gives me much credibility among people, and they offer, you know. As a result, people appreciate that and respect me because I respect them.

Lucy's grandmother built a Black woman's career using skills like those Lucy required to develop her leadership career. Lucy's grandmother used her expertise to help Lucy avoid common pitfalls and get around problems she had encountered in her experience navigating race and racism.

Dorothy's mother taught her basic daily skills like tying her shoelaces to make them. She captured one of these interactions in the following vignette:

> One of the things that are so interesting, so my mother is 20 years older than I am, so she's 74. My father is 79. And so clearly, they grew up in Virginia. They grew up getting on the front of the bus, putting money on getting back down, and walking

around to the back of the bus to get on. They went to segregated schools. They drank from colored water fountains. But something about those two people never said I couldn't do whatever I wanted. And I was always kind of a strong-willed kind of kid. My mother said that the first time I talked back to her, she said I was about two and a half. And I had been watching her tie my shoes, and one day, I told her, like, I do it; I told her, I do it, I do it myself, not let her tie my shoe. And I tied it poorly, but I would never allow her to tie my shoe again. And you know, she could have tapped my hand and say, girl, let me tie so the shoe can stay on. She just let me keep trying it.

Dorothy's family advising team did not serve her well regarding traversing college. Her parents had succeeded in beating segregation and just making it through the racist world they lived in. Dorothy decided to go rogue and find her way through life. She said,

I decided in high school that I wasn't going to college. So, after I graduated and it was like, what are you going to do? I was bright but had no real experience with anything, but I could talk through an interview. So, I knew I could get a job. And so, when I did and was working, I returned to school. I talked myself… I talked my way into college and was not having a great experience. It was a large urban institution, and I was fortunate because I had gone to one of the best high schools in Chicago, so I had a good foundation. I ended up dropping out. But much like many college students, it wasn't just about college, but all the other stuff at home. I didn't want to live with my mother anymore. I wanted to move out because I thought I was grown. So, I dropped out of school, got a job at an insurance company, and then moved out. And then, I realized once in the real world of work that I was brighter than the people supervising me, but they had college degrees. And so, I went back to school, graduated, and got married by then. We went on to have a family, and I decided I wanted to return. I went

back to school while I was pregnant with my second child. I get a Master's degree and then work for the police department."

Similarly, Annie Lee found her advisor in her mother, a history teacher in the 70s, but ironically, she did not like math. Annie Lee's mother understood that gender disparity in Sciences and technology skewed against Black females more than other subgroups in America. She thus advised her daughter to like math because she felt "like computers and math was exciting, and that's where the world was going." STEM was beginning to be the talk, and she did not want Annie Lee "to fear math as a black woman because she did." So, she introduced Annie Lee to it at an early age. Ultimately Annie Lee's relied on an advisory team that included many positive relatives and people who were all professional teachers. Teaching was the family business, so she didn't have a choice.

It was interesting to note that participants played fewer formal roles with advisors than with mentors. Participants used high-value advisors like grandparents with skin in the game, like microaggressions in their work and social lives. For example, Eva would visit her grandfather to get some words of wisdom. He wanted to know how Eva was faring with her life in general. She captured these fascinating conversations with her grandfather in the following anecdote: said:

> What are you going to do with your life? He wanted me to be a business owner like him. He was old school, so he did not see me as an engineer, a college professional, or anything like that. He wanted me to open a boutique and own a boutique. I was like, Granddaddy, I do not want to do that. I want to be a teacher. He did not want me to be a teacher, even though my grandmother, his wife, was a teacher. Being a teacher or nurse was for ladies of certain status. Then their husbands were so and so on the local chamber of commerce. My grandfather was in the chamber of commerce in Fort Lauderdale for African American businesses. So anyway, I had a family example of success. I never thought I could not be successful. You know, I always felt quite

capable of succeeding educationally, and I never struggled academically."

Eva also benefitted from talented and super intelligent African Americans who had mastered the art of success in America being Black. She said,

> If anything, it said that we could survive in a community where we're the minority. And so, I learned that I could stay in a majority-minority community, and I had already been doing that. So many other black people had it going on. Again, I just never had a less-than attitude, and I still don't. I can say that it affirmed it. I could say that it was fun. I felt like I belong. I was of that black group that could, and we did.

Although most of the women in this study had mentors of some kind, they were deeply attuned to their communities and had a great sense of loyalty to their relatives and friends. This commitment significantly impacted how they felt about their careers, their ability to achieve their goals, and how they saw their futures. The most significant personal insights came from their interactions with their families.

This finding is consistent with Jordan-Zachery's (2004) notion that race, gender, and sometimes socio-economic circumstances influence Black women's career experiences. Consequently, the mentoring process for Black women, as is the case of other underrepresented groups, requires "different levels of mentoring." These different levels involve formal and informal mentoring and should address concerns about the personal and professional lives of the protégé.

However, while mentors helped motivate participants and their ultimate goals, sponsors enabled them to attain them (Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey,1995). This research demonstrated that minority leaders, like everyone in charge- need help, and lots of it. In the words of Abrams (2018, p. 82), they need guidance, redirection, a sounding board, and correction. But they also must learn to excavate their experiences to find the right people to help them. First, they understood their needs, such as a counselor or gatekeeper sneaking us inside or a phone-a-friend who knows the right

answers. Eventually, they will need all of the above. The trick is knowing what they need and making the right asks.

Many of the women's success hinged on their abilities to commit the time and attention they sought in finding a mentor. They spent some time getting to know their supervisors and coworkers so that they could be someone people want to see successful. Abrams (2018) contends that protegees wish to see the greatest version of themselves. This contemplation can be terrifying. However, they can't fully understand how to ask for help or use potential resources if they don't know themselves. Participants demonstrated self-knowledge to receive support and comprehend how to process advice and change. Abrams (2019) four types of mentors: situational mentor, sponsor, advisor, and peer mentor, supports the results of this research. Participants drew from situational mentors they connected with through college and the profession. Their close community contacts provided cordial relationships. Their mothers, grandparents, and other family members encouraged them to open doors. As advisors, these people had more complex relationships. They offered advice and engaged in their long-term plans.

Situational mentors (Abrams, 2018, p.88) provided specific types of advice rather than career-wide support. They knew more than they did about a particular subject or had key insights into specific issues. They provide advice, serve as a sounding board, or help with a limited set of circumstances. For example, the Admissions Director was the first person who helped Dorothy navigate college. Dorothy explains, “The first person, and he doesn’t even know this. I’ve never seen this person again. He was the Assistant Director of Admissions at College D. I grew up in Chicago, and they wanted to charge me out-of-state tuition. This is 1985. So, there is no googling anything there; you just had to stand in line and hope somebody took pity on you to answer your question and then pray that they gave you the right answer. I went to see him. I explained my situation to him, and he knew what paperwork needed to be filled out and what needed to happen. I had my mother’s taxes,

whom I was going to be living with at the time, no longer with my father, and he made sure I got into college."

On the other hand, family influenced where Annie Lee went to college. Annie Lee's college experience impacted her education and career goals. Annie Lee explained that College A was her first choice. "I went against many people when I chose an HBCU. My teachers did not support that. They wanted me to attend College B and some of your predominantly white schools. And they told me that I was too smart to go to these different places and I needed to go to those places, but my family is very HBCU centered." Like Dorothy and Annie Lee, Lucy, who was a first generational college student, also had situational mentors that played a role in her furthering her education to get a master's degree and Ph.D. which was something that she had never thought about because she was excited with just getting her Bachelors.

Eva's experiences as an African American woman navigating the college experience were very much different. She recalled that in her senior year at College K, a PWI, she had a teaching internship where she was coupled with a mean supervisor. She lamented, "she would be correcting me in front of the class over something that did not impact the lesson." Eva vowed not to allow her to undermine her confidence as a beginning teacher. Eva felt a tinge of racism in her supervisor's disrespectful demeanor toward her. She said: "This was extremely upsetting to be in the face of racism like that."

Professional mentors help start careers, breaking barriers often guarded by those who only allow those they know inside (Abrams, 2018). In this research context, advisors held the proverbial key for the African American female leaders with no historical claim entry into the White dominated leadership space. Lucy and Dorothy both received opportunities that may have escaped them if it was not for mentors. Lucy explains, "I was hitting the ceiling regarding being promoted and climbing the ladder. The Associate Dean notified the Dean that she was going to retire. I assume he asked her to, you know, give him some ideas about who might be a good candidate for the role, and she'd probably

give him names, and he decided whom he wanted to interview. I was one of the people on the short list of people he spoke with. So, he selected me, and he announced my position." Dorothy had a similar experience to Lucy when she decided she wanted to be in administration after her department chair agreed that he would retire. Per Dorothy, "He came to me and said he thought I would make a great department chair. And I knew I was going up a year early. He said that he would work one more year until I was tenured, and he did.

I can cautiously speculate that since these were the few women of color in a space not many have traversed, it probably was not very easy for people to rally to be their mentors. It is plausible that finding mentors was not very easy. Abrams (2018) said that building a mentorship network can be a solid alternative and a way to have the array of supporters you'll need: the sponsor, the situational mentor, and everything in between.

According to Abrams (2018), improving Black women's capacity requires cultivating relationships, alliances, and friendships as tools for effective leadership. Though the challenge of finding a proper mentor, in any form, can overwhelm even the most confident minority in industries where there are fewer women, fewer people of color, and fewer "others" of any kind. As per extensive research, mentors provide proteges with two types of support that can benefit advancement: career support and psychosocial support. Try both the traditional and the unexpected to find a mentor who can help you on your path. The most popular venues are networking events or mixers. They provide enclosed spaces in which you can connect and begin to develop your advisory board.

Theme 2: Increasing visibility in the workplace

This theme focuses on participants' reasons for becoming more visible and their efforts to align with their values as they navigate the leadership terrain. All participants raised the issue of visibility in the workplace. I construe visibility in this research as the women's efforts to be seen, gain recognition and acknowledgment, and acceptance by coworkers and peers. Annie Lee attributed her struggle to be

visible to race and racism. She believed that her Blackness may have prevented some of her colleagues from seeing her accomplishments as they focused on her race and other racial prejudices. She said:

> I'm a black woman when you see me. And then, if another person has issues with that or has a problem or concern with that, that's going to be what they're going to see first. They're not going to see the Ph.D. first. They're not going to see that she did great with the curriculum and programs first. They're not going to see, oh, look how organized this is; look at her credentials. They're not going to see that. They're going to see the black female face first, and they have a pause or concern with that now I'm pushing against that. And so, you know, not my resume first or whatever, but first physical impression would be a barrier."

Participants understood that their presence and contributions within their institutions are known or even highlighted when they are visible. They realized that when people know who they are and what they can do, they're more likely to be considered for promotions or exciting assignments. Thus, in this theme, I chronicle participants' strategies to increase their visibility at work in the most professional way possible.

The following section discusses women's strategies to gain visibility in their workplaces.

Participants perceived speaking up at meetings futile because most of their colleagues and peers did not listen to them. They believed that people tend to listen to White people, better still, men before a woman. The female leaders reported that when they are talking, men will talk over them as though they are invisible. Their male peers often steamrolled them, and gender stereotypes made them invisible. All participants were frustrated by not being heard, and their inability to make colleagues listen to them affected their confidence in their communication abilities.

Eva was not an introvert but had to learn to increase her visibility at work to make her voice

heard in meetings. The following vignette shows how Eva found her voice in a meeting and challenged her colleagues.

> I had a grade appeal where I had to tell the department chair, a white male, that we were not going to accept, that we were overturning the decision and that his faculty needed to go back and give the student another chance to do the work. It turned out that the professor allowed some students to get their work looked at before turning it in and didn't allow other students to look at it before it got to him. So, some got the professor's review and then got to modify it. Some of the students didn't. So, we're like, you can't do that. Both students get a chance with the professor to look at the work and modify it. It was a nonsensical argument. I just thought you needed to accept it. But here you are. You don't want to accept the decision. I don't know to what extent my gender or race played into it, but it was conveyed in challenging tones via email and verbally; we went back to the professor, and she said she couldn't let him. She did not say that in the meeting. It was just outrageous the number of challenges trying to defend their person over the decision, you know, over the committee, again of something apparent unfairness.
>
> I finally had to start by saying this is the decision of the grading committee. I mean, this is no Eva doing this to you. I am only representing their decision. I didn't even vote on the committee because the designee didn't. The chair regarded the work. And in those kinds of situations, you never, you always wonder if my boss had just said the deal, shut up, and take it. I think it would have stopped if I had been some other person. Maybe they would not have felt so comfortable, you know, being so argumentative and even belligerent about a decision again for what was unfair treatment.
>
> In this situation, Eva had taken the time to investigate this grade issue and was well-prepared

to speak confidently and confidently at the meeting. She made a point to be one of the first two people to say something. She observed those who spoke up first and noted what they said and how they said it before she spoke her truth.

Dorothy complained about dismissive colleagues who did not value her contributions at meetings. The following vignette captured one of these dismissive events and her retaliation:

> Dismissiveness is when you say something in a meeting, and nobody says anything. And then one of your male colleagues, white or otherwise, says what you said. And they go, yeah, it's a good idea. It is a good idea because he just heard it come out of my mouth. Not paying attention to what I said is one of the things that happens very often. But over the years, I've been fortunate to have people I've worked for that made sure that they set the tone for the expectation.

Dorothy chose confrontation to address the issue of invisibility with her superiors in hopes of reasserting her presence at meetings. She said:

> I recently had a conversation with a Dean and the Provost, and we were in the room and had to share some unpleasant things from the dean's college regarding his leadership. It was a conversation that should have been about this is what we are hearing. We believe in you, and we want to support you. What can we do to help you? He went slap the hell off, and the provost knew enough to say, she said; I thought to myself, should I say… should I meet him afterward? No, I need to do it right in front of her because I need to let him know it was inappropriate how he spoke to her. And I want him to know it so much that I will say it in front of her. Those are leadership moments that people need to understand.

Her actions set the tone for how she expected him to behave professionally in general and regarding me. Dorothy, thus successfully reasserted herself at meetings using a very aggressive

strategy. She also was proud to have fought this man's bad behavior on behalf of her subordinates, who had also endured similar humiliation at different venues.

Dorothy raised her leadership profile by tackling problems others were reluctant to deal with, directly confronting the accused, and stopping the bad behavior affecting many other coworkers. In so doing, Dorothy raised her visibility and changed how institutional leaders saw her. Now they know she is a problem solver, a go-getter [who can take] initiative and think creatively.
Dorothy's ability to confront a bully made her a hero, and she got credit for solving a human relations problem.

Some women attributed their invisibility to tokenism. I construe tokenism as when institutions employ women to cover up their unwillingness to acknowledge, address, and find solutions to fix the racial imbalance. When this happens, all other professional activities are merely cosmetic and appear as a token gesture. Lucy neatly captured this idea of tokenism in the following vignette:

> I feel like I've been at tables and rooms because I'm a black woman. There aren't many black people, so they desire to have representation. They want to have somebody for a leadership opportunity. In the back of their mind, they want to say it, but they want it to be a woman, a person of color, so they'll ask me to do it. So, sometimes I am invited because of my qualifications and because I am a person of color. In some ways, people might have had one set of intentions for engaging with me, but because my credentials, experience, and skills speak for themselves, it doesn't take long to be a non-factor.

Lucy does feel her presence is "intimidating to people" because she "speaks her mind," and she is "kind and compassionate" when she does. She thinks, "Some people don't appreciate being challenged by a person of color, especially if they feel like they've arrived and are a name in the field. They feel like their voice should be the loudest in the room. And so that can be intimidating, and it can create tension." So, they behave like she is not in the room to avoid the challenges she poses for

them.

To make herself tall and visible, Lucy stopped feeling like she had to prove herself. She said, "I'm here. So, you don't need to know. I don't need to pull out my CV and show you my publication record or grant record or anything like that." However, if the conversations happen, she is not afraid to talk about it. Still, she does not feel it is necessary to go into every situation proving that she belongs or that she owes anyone any explanation of how she got here. She believes that destiny has her in this leadership role. She said, "I wouldn't be here unless I were supposed to be."

In her bid to make herself visible and recognized in her leadership role at her institution, Lucy has learned how to navigate the bureaucracy." Lucy explains,

> As a black woman, that is a challenge because I feel like I've been socialized to go with the flow, not necessarily pushed back, you know. I challenge the decision but figure out how to make it work. Where I see my colleagues, you know, they get some information they don't like, they're like, no, we're not doing that. They don't have a problem challenging the status quo or saying, we're not going to do that. And, and for me, in my experience, as a black woman, I've never, I don't feel like I was ever permitted to say no, we're not doing that. I am overcoming my socialization to interact with people and learn how to navigate the politics of things. Because there is a system, and you must be savvy in that system.

Lucy has leaned on her for support and stature in her college. She has studied and learned how to work with and sometimes around him. And sometimes, to be heard, she tells him what he needs to hear through other colleagues. She said, "I've told him things through other people who happen not to be Black women for him to consider taking it up." She has also learned that "it's not necessarily about who gets the work done, as long as it gets done. Like I can't be a person taking credit for everything because sometimes I'm not going to give her credit, and that's okay."

Once she figured out how to be visible and navigate the system, Lucy now teaches other people how to do it. The following vignettes illustrate how she improved here in the institution:

> I've used those strategies in the mentoring structures I've created that are now college-wide. When I learned how to win the system through mentoring others, I used that as the basis for every person to access the program. I feel like it's my responsibility to pay it forward and to share that information with others so that they can have the opportunity to be successful, even when their chair says, I don't know how that process works which is a shame.

Lucy learned to be quiet and sometimes to be visible. This strategy allowed her to gather information she might not otherwise have found. She explained:

> It allows you to learn how to understand how people think and operate to use that to your advantage. Once you get to the table, whether you bring your chair or somebody invites you, sit there and stay. I know that now before COVID, I would show up to meetings. I would get there early and talk with the people there. I will stay after for the post-meeting debriefs that people will have so I can hear the meeting, the meeting information, and the other information because it's all related. Sometimes you get the best information at the end when the meeting is over. This skill has benefited me very much.

All the women in this research have seniority and authority but not necessarily the accompanying recognition and visibility. They have been passed over for promotions by candidates they perceive as less technically competent. In retrospect, they acknowledge that they are less competent in self-promotion, networking, and visibility than their savvier male counterparts – all proven to be essential strategies for career advancement.

However, I found that in some cases, participants didn't want to be visible or even opted for

strategies of invisibility at work. For example, Lucy had to keep peace with a low profile and keep people's goodwill towards me because she knew she would go up for a promotion and tenure. She understood that other people's opinions of her would influence whether she got the promotion. She intentionally chose to be invisible so as not to muddy the waters and risk losing the support of her colleagues. She said,

> I found myself in this dance of playing academic and social games not to be too disruptive. But not shrink into the background. That was something that I grappled with. I continue to grapple with a bit but a little less because I feel more comfortable in my role and ability.

Growing up, Lucy chose to be invisible because she was afraid of violating gender and racial norms as if Black women should be modest. She tended to shy away from visibility and avoid the spotlight because she is a Black girl in a White men's domain. She questioned her legitimacy and ability to do the job in these circumstances. She wrestled with her thoughts: "Am I competent? Or Am I brilliant, or am I here because they needed a person of color?" She eventually drew confidence from peers who seemed to be thriving in this environment when she attended an HBCU for college. She said,

> I saw all these beautiful people who looked like me, had the same experiences, or had different experiences. It was great because I felt like I belonged. And I had never really felt this way before. And sometimes, I felt like I did not belong because I was kind of weird in my way, but there was a space for me. It was true belonging. And it was a celebration of the fact that we were amazing, you know, it wasn't an accident, it was like you are, and this is…. Let's nurture that.

Lucy overcame these foreboding anxieties and made herself visible by overselling herself to a point where it felt strange. She found myself subconsciously having those same self-doubts again. She

realized that speaking up about issues of equity and inclusion made her an expert on the subject, garnering respect and visibility among her peers.

In her early career, Lucy sometimes struggled with low self-esteem and self-identity. She shared her self-image struggle in the following vignette:

> I would blow out my hair or wear it straight. I would do certain things to sort of have a more traditional kind of appearance. And one time, I was at work, and I had my hair curly or something natural, and one of my coworkers came to my office and asked me if she could touch my hair. She was like, oh, you always have it so different. I was like, no, you can't feel my hair. Then people would exchange stories about their experiences with family members or things like that. And they would be exchanging stories that have racist or racial undertones. And it wasn't until they looked at me that they remembered a black person in the room, and they would catch themselves and try to change course or soften what they were going to say. So that was awkward. But it also made me wonder like why didn't I speak up.

With experience and maturity, Lucy has learned to overcome her insecurities and become more visible. She explains, "I feel like I'm in a different place with a feeling of responsibility about that now than I was in my early career." Over time, she practiced being visible for it to become natural. Lucy tended to be introverted because of the racial norms that rendered her submissive to White peers. Some did not enjoy the spotlight and learned to avoid it. She regretted missing out on opportunities to build relationships and advance her causes and career.

All participants realize it is time to shake off that invisibility cloak and assert their earned authority and power as senior leaders. Some were uncomfortable, but the more they did it, the easier it felt and the more effective they became. Dorothy reported feeling awkward at first but admitted that the new habits of visibility gave them a new world of opportunity.

Becoming visible helped Dorothy navigate a PWI more confidently and show up meaningfully. Colleagues had warned her of the problem of not being seen in an environment dominated by White people. When she arrived at this institution, people assumed that because she was Black, she was most likely to be a faculty member or a diverse person rather than a senior administrator. She did not take the time to correct this racist perception. She knew how to rise above the fray and assert her authority as provost, not faculty. She captured this effort in the following vignette:

> I said, no, I'm not. I am your Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs. When she picked her tongue back off the floor, I was like, okay, so this is where I am, right? And that was tough, but by then, I'd got much thicker skin, and I was not coming in as a faculty member. I'm not coming as your colleague. I'm coming in as someone who has power and authority. And so, I owned the power and authority and used that to make them understand that some things they were saying and doing were horrendous.

Participants complained that the struggle to stay visible could be exhausting and sometimes resorted to staying in their lanes to avoid overstepping their roles and getting in other people's way. But that did not force them to give up the fight to remain visible and relevant. They resorted to thinking through their complete list of past accomplishments and talents and looking for ways to apply them to their current work roles.

Although Dorothy knew the impediments that were in the way, because of her gender and race, she acted like they didn't exist. And not the way where she thought it was going to be all good, but in the way, most people in America go about their lives every day. She said:

> If you spend much time in a space, you won't be able to get up and go to work. You won't be able to come home and take care of your kids. You won't be able to have a whole life. I think in a very long tradition of African Americans in this country is that

> despite all those obstacles, you find a way to move forward. Even enslaved people sang songs about picking cotton. And so, you find joy where you find it, And So, I've had people say all sorts of things to me. I was telling another group of women that we do some leadership programming in my office, that some men I worked with told me that I was too ambitious. And I realized later I knew that it wasn't me, but it took me a minute to realize what it was. And what it was is that they weren't ambitious enough. And so, as you move through, you know, the aging process, you learn a little bit quicker each time what's about you and what's about other people and try to go over or get past those obstacles.

Women in this research believed they needed higher qualifications to gain visibility and relevance in their institutions. They dealt with misogyny to stay in their jobs. Dorothy lamented:

> I have had to deal with the issue of she's a bitch, nasty, you know, all those things. I don't get to say something that my male colleagues might say. But over time, you get to hone your message and who you are and figure out a way to be able to do things.

Theme 3: Black Tax (No Rest for the Weary)

Scholars can adopt several orientations to frame their understanding of the "Black tax" phenomenon. Mangoma and Wilson-Prangley (2019) refer to the Black tax as the emotional tax because of its impact on Black people. Jackson and Jones (2020) define Black tax as the psychological weight or stressor that Black people experience from consciously or unconsciously thinking about how White Americans perceive the social construct of Blackness. They contend that Blackness in America is often portrayed through a deficit lens and is associated with racial stereotypes. The cognizance of the definition of Blackness by the dominant culture, coupled with the unjust treatment Black people have endured due to racism, results in a psychological burden known as the Black Tax. This research revealed participants'

behavioral responses to this tax. In the following section, I focus on the participant's need to protect themselves from unfair treatment and negative attention in their institutions. I analyze the time and energy they devote consciously preparing to face each day, which they know comes with the potential for large and small acts of bias, discrimination, and microaggressions. Dealing with these issues requires participants to be constantly vigilant to protect against what others might say or do. Thus, the theme examines the Emotional Tax levied on the female African American senior-level administrators in southeastern colleges and universities in the US as they carry out their professional daily roles and responsibilities. I focus on their state of being and conscious preparation to deal with potential microaggressions and discrimination.

In support of my research findings, Mangoma and Wilson-Prangley (2019) indicated that, while most Black people face discrimination, those with college or higher education experience were more likely to be affected. Success for the women in this research came with a cost. All the participants experienced "emotional tax," a psychological burden resulting from feeling different from their colleagues because of either race or gender. First, I focus on participants' coping skills with discrimination and the responsibility of an "emotional tax" in the workplace. I construe this emotional tax as 'the heightened experience of being treated differently from peers due to race/ethnicity or gender, triggering adverse effects on feelings of isolation and making it difficult to thrive at work. All participants of this research experienced this burden and dealt with different forms of discrimination, creating the burden of an "emotional tax" in the workplace. Jackson and Jones (2020) define this emotional tax as 'the heightened experience of being treated differently from peers due to race/ethnicity or gender, triggering adverse effects on health and feelings of isolation and making it difficult to thrive at work. I construe Emotional tax as the participant's perception of the impact of racial discrimination, bias, and microaggressions on their daily professional environment and well-

being. However, to contextualize how the Black tax has affected the participants' lives in this study, I use their personal stories in the following vignettes.

All participants in this research felt the weight of emotional tax differently. For example, Eva was frustrated that she must work harder and pay more to receive the same credit as her white peers. The following vignette captures Eva's experience with racial discrimination after a junior White woman received the same recognition for doing less:

> I will tell you in this position, the year our department won the award, that fall I came here, and you know, we get annual reviews based on merit. And so, when my merit came out, the provost who gave me this job, who believes I can do it, gave me the same merit as everyone else who just showed up and did their job. And I'm like, my program won a big program award. He dropped some project on me that I nailed in record time. I had three big wins that year, and he gave me the same merit as the white lady sitting up front, answering the phone. I was so mad. So anyway, I went to HR about it. I talked to my mentor about it. I went to HR because I said there was no way that I did not exceed expectations, but you want the white ladies up front to feel valued and everybody to feel the same, but minimizing my career achievements that year was devastating. I think if I were not who I am, if I would have been a male because I feel like there's much male favoritism around here, or if I had been a white female, I probably would have gotten at least a little more merit than people who are just answering the phone and typing out memos. Not that that work isn't valued, but my work was exceptional that year.

When faced with bias and discrimination, Lucy felt obligated to code-switch, a method of alternating between self-expression, appearance, and behavior in the workplace, to downplay racial differences and connect with colleagues. Her racial identity suppressed her

authenticity and self-confidence, decreasing her sense of belonging in the work environment. She said:

I've had some strange experiences that I know are because I'm a black woman, like the first job I had when I was at College I. So, I grappled with how I showed up, like, how do I present myself? So, I would blow out my hair or wear it straight. I would do certain things to have a more traditional kind of appearance. So after about, you know, six months or so, she would comment on my hair and how it was always so different.

Eva's efforts to stay vigilant against bias and prejudice are taking an enormous toll on her self-confidence and career prospects as she strives to maintain and hold on to her senior academic position. The constant attention can become a job within a job or, at the very least, an energy-draining distraction. She captured the emotional toll this effort takes on Black women in the following vignette:

> When you're living in a world that's not your own, you need much help. And some African American females that have come here and left here required a quick study, and it just couldn't be a quick study. Right? Unfortunately, they were more expressive than needed, or people would say they were pulling out the race card even when they weren't. You must know how to communicate so that you don't give the impression that you're trying to make the conversation around race or diversity; there's a skill in that. Again, you must be bilingual if you don't learn to learn the language fast enough. Very talented African American females have been non-renewed and asked to leave. I had one sister from the Caribbean who involuntarily left in the middle of the semester. I was so angry because she was no worse than the white male teacher we'd kept for around 20 years. But anyway, I don't know… Navigating a world you're not used to is a big deal, and you need help or you better figure out how to be bilingual and

bicultural very fast because they don't give you many opportunities to mess up. That's one thing about us. We don't get many options and mess up. Being established, I still feel like If I had a mess up comparable to some other people's around here, they would find a way to get me back to faculty regardless of all I've done. So, we are more expendable. Unless you're their token, I don't mean it in that little way. You can't be an incompetent token. You must be a competent, capable token. I guess we are not as equitable as we think we are or not as diverse as we think. So, sometimes I recognize that I have a seat at some of these tables because it's not a good look for me not to have a seat at the table. I also know I'm doing my job very well. But I also know I must do my job well because I'm expendable, right? And they'll find another face to make them feel good about how the room looks.

Eva also pays Black tax through loss of merit pay, adding to the emotional toll she endures for being Black and female. She lamented:

I told you about the experience of merit pay. And here I am, winning something that one out of 50,000 people don't win, yet I was not rated as exceeding. So, I'm still wounded over that a little bit. Well, because it affected my pay from that point forward. I'm like, I could lose out $200,000 over the rest of my career because I didn't get that merit pay. $200,000 pays my kids' college tuition. So, that will always be a big deal to me.

Dorothy believes that working harder is a necessary price to be successful. She said:

To be successful, you must do twice as much, for twice as long, and twice as hard. And so, I come now at this point with sort of a track record. Throughout that process, there have been, and again, I think, not that gender plays a more

> significant role. Still, I believe that what I've seen happen with my white female colleagues is that their processes mimic mine in many ways in higher ed, where my male colleagues, black or white, have jumped over.

Black women are not a monolith, yet they have the emotional tax of nurturing all Black students in their organizations because of their race. Dorothy overstretched herself to enable every Black student in her college. She captured the emotional toll she deals with being Black at a PWI in the following vignette:

> When I started teaching at College D, it took only one semester because I taught there before graduating, so students began to know me. But once I was on full-time, it only took one semester before I had just about every black student in my class. They were fighting to get into my class because you could go through all four years and not have a black professor. And so, they wanted to see themselves reflected in them.

Similarly, Lucy found working with white people draining because of feelings of extreme isolation. She often realized that there was no one there I could go to. She was alone in a space where she acted as the Black representative. She said:

> I have found myself back in the space of being the black representative when I am, and this system needs to be addressed. Right. And I'm not just saying that because I'm the black person in the room. I'm saying that because the data point indicates that the system needs to be addressed, I find myself being the black person in the room who also knows the data and the research. So that I can wear every single hat in every conversation. I have to say my position because I'm black, and the data shows this, and the research backs this up. Um, I don't think everybody has to have that level of preparedness when they enter the room for their voice to hold weight, but I do, and that's fine. I think it's crummy that that's the case.

In the absence of other African American people, Lucy felt even more emotionally taxed with undue self-awareness forcing her to watch everything she did at work. She found herself in an untenable situation where everyone regarded her as the expert on issues of equity and diversity. This situation made her feel like an imposter pretending to be who she wasn't. She inadvertently became an expert on a strange subject. Doing her job often felt like she was walking on eggshells. She said:

> It was not unusual even now for me to be the only black woman in the room or the only black person. It made me a little self-conscious, to be honest. I felt like I had to conform in many ways. I thought I had to over-oversell myself for people to take me seriously. I grappled with being vocal about certain things, especially regarding issues around students of color or diversity or equity. I didn't… I realized that speaking up about some of those things made me the equity inclusion person, right, always like, let's defer to Lucy, let's see what Lucy thinks about this. Which felt silly because just because I'm the black person in the room doesn't mean I'm the person who needs to be the go-to on equity. I study equity, and I consider equity issues in my scholarship, but it's not something I'm an expert in.
>
> I was between wanting to be an advocate and being sure I didn't present myself as an expert or even perceived or utilized in that way. I don't think I was savvy about that in the beginning. I eventually realized this is how my voice is used or leveraged. I had to be very careful about how I spoke about certain things and managed people's expectations about the officialness, lack of a better word, of what I was offering, you know.

Lucy paid her tax through the extra work to clarify why her contribution to the field and the profession is meaningful. She said, "Because on its face, faculty who don't share my

identity, who don't understand the intention of my work, might not see it as rigorous or as impactful."

As if this tax was not enough, Lucy felt emotionally drained by this intimidating situation. She said:

> So, I think my presence is intimidating to people. I think the fact that I do speak my mind and that I'm, I feel like I'm kind and compassionate when I do. But some people don't appreciate being challenged by a person of color, especially if they think they have arrived and are a name in the field. And they feel their voice should be the loudest in the room. And so that can be intimidating, and it can create tension.

In addition to her job description, Lucy must learn to navigate her institution's politics and bureaucracy. To do that, she relies on how she was socialized to survive working and living in White people's spaces. She explained:

> I was socialized to go with the flow, not necessarily push back, not to challenge the decision but figure out how to make it work. Where I see my colleagues, you know, think is some information they don't like, they're like no, we're not doing that. They don't have a problem challenging the status quo or saying, we're not going to do that. As a black woman, I don't feel like I was ever permitted to say. But I don't feel like the university system is set up to give a person like me advantages.

Dorothy paid a heavy emotional tax to occupy a predominantly White space. She performs before an extant racial divide, judgmental, and unsympathetic audience of gatekeepers whose minds are typically already made up about the Black person's "place" and the threat they believe she poses to the white space (Burrows, 2016). However, Dorothy seems to perform the pass inspection effectively. It is important to note that, at times, some audience members weaponize their prejudices to put her in her “place." The following anecdote shows

how others in the white space may require additional proof on demand.

> Although I knew the impediments in the way because of my gender and race, I just acted like they didn't exist. And not in that way where I thought it would all be good, but in the way that I think most black people in America go about their lives every day. If you spend much time in that space, you won't be able to get up and go to work. You won't be able to come home and take care of your kids. You won't be able to have a full life. In a long tradition of African Americans in this country, you find a way to move forward despite all those obstacles. Even enslaved people sang songs about picking cotton. And so, you find joy where you can find it. And so, I've had people say all sorts of things to me. I was telling another group of women, we do some leadership programming in my office, that some men I worked with told me that I was too ambitious. And what I realized later I knew that that wasn't me, but it took me a minute to understand what it was. And what it was is that they weren't ambitious enough. And so, as you move through, you know, the aging process, you learn a little bit quicker each time what's about you and what's about other people and try to go over or get past those obstacles. I am sure that there are white people and women and men and some black people who tried to stop me in whatever ascension I was going toward.

Eva struggles with trust issues after her White colleagues blindsided her and showed no regard for her life outside the institution. This incident took a big hit on her emotional well-being. She captured this phenomenon in the following vignette:

> Two white females, and granted one of the husbands of the VP, the VP over assessment, a VP of assessment is my colleague, but he's been here longer, so he had seniority. And they say, Eva, you'll write all the responses to these program assessments for the year, and then maybe they're 20. And I'm like, it's due like June

> something. I had my vacation planned around that time. Why didn't you tell me that in September when we were going over revising the plan? And even the provost hadn't told me I was his designee to write responses to this. It takes several weeks, you've got to read, you know, hundreds of pages when you put it all together, and you need to write an analysis, and it needs to be perfect because you're representing to the provost. So, they blindsided me.

This situation derailed Eva's plans as she had no option but to do the work. No one stepped up to help her as she tried to make sense of this situation. She later found that the white female would get her husband or the provost to ask her to do stuff that her direct report would ask her about, creating an environment of mistrust. She pondered over this issue:

> Why are you asking me about stuff? She's your direct supervisor. Shouldn't you be going to your direct supervisor? And to me, we call that the black tax, you know, she's going to play the black tax. And, to this day, it still doesn't make sense."

Eva worked harder and paid more to receive less money and opportunities than her White peers.

Theme 4: Beating the Odds

In this theme, I focus on the attempts by African American female senior administrators to think strategically about how to build access to networks with others. Management of those dynamics caused tremendous burdens as they simultaneously tried to cope with structural and systemic racism. The theme is thus about Black women's persistence to make changes and shifts where necessary. The data provides evidence of their efforts to lead with multiple challenges and find creative ways to get the work done with great sacrifice.

I highlight Black women's expertise in making connections, which are critical to running their organizational departments and building meaningful rapport with the university community. This

research chronicles their efforts to leverage, develop and create deep relationships in and outside their institutions. Hence, my focus is on participants' formal and informal networks. In general, networks connect people and provide access to information and support. A woman's work-related informal network can be a group of acquaintances, colleagues, family, friends, and other contacts she has personally developed over time and to whom she may turn for assistance with various issues related to the job. Informal networks exist for everyone, of course, but there is a greater chance of success for those with easy access to influential colleagues.

Alternatively, formal networks are company-sponsored groups with pre-defined memberships that corporations institute in response to the needs of traditionally marginalized employee groups. Formal networks create opportunities for members to build relationships and assist with professional development. As such, they can expand the informal networks of traditionally marginalized groups.

Networking strategies:

"Blending In" Strategy (Catalyst, 2006)

Women in this research sought networks that reflect those in power's characteristics. In most cases, they networked with White male colleagues. The participants have shown the benefits of forming relationships with influential others. Eva admitted, "when you're living in a world that's not your own, you need much help." Eva captured how she networked with those in power to enhance her position and survive as an African American female leader in a sea of whiteness dominated by men. She said:

> Show initiative to be on a committee and a university-wide committee or go to a training that might involve work experiences with other divisional leaders like training that might include Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, training that are opportunities that involve multiple colleges or multiple divisions that you want to take

advantage of those. It's essential that you are known across the campus, that you are viewed positively, and that you are recognized as a competent professional. And you won't get that opportunity if you only do stuff in your college. Take advantage of any opportunity, even a search committee or planning an event on campus. Seek out those opportunities that will help you get to know the other leaders on campus and help you develop an understanding outside of that little pocket you're in. So, that would be one of my first because with me, being an academic chair, the university had a chair level group, you know, chairs group, we met regularly, we talked about issues regularly. They must see me as someone who can be fair, strategically minded, and not biased towards your college. If they thought that I was only going to be about my college and only serving my college, then that would have lessened my likelihood of being the selected individual. So that's one piece of advice I would give you.

Although Eva works hard to keep up the connections with her White male counterparts, she falls short as she tries to balance work and home responsibilities outside work hours. She said:

I must weigh that my maintaining a good status at my job is important for everything. So, you must know and recognize that in making this decision, the woman who's not the primary breadwinner or whose husband also makes much money might be able to make choices you're not making. The White male might be going to play basketball at 3:30 pm on Thursdays with the other white males on campus, and you can't do that. You can't go to the gym and play basketball for two hours until people return to their job… I suppose you could do it, but you better be prepared for the assumption that you're not doing your job, the belief that you need more work, if you got time to get away for a couple of hours, you know. And so not only do you need to be very sober about the demands this position will have on you, you need to recognize that you might

not be able to modify those time demands as other people can. And why? Because you don't control the world. Right?

Annie Lee reiterated the importance of blending in with well-established White colleagues to gain more stature as a Black female leader. She said:

> You need to get to know people. You must learn how to work with people and be more social, you know, you must find your common ground with people. And So, if you know, I'm working with someone I'm not usually accustomed to working with, you know, I have to start trying to meet them where they are, like, now, I find myself working with a lot of white males.

Like Eva, Annie Lee also uses the blending strategy to build professional networks. She said:

> I'm all about a hands-on mentor, or if you are so wonderful and you know you're going to be a president, and you are shadowing early, or you shadow vice presidents early if you have time, you know, that's always a good thing to do hands-on experience with that. And just, and sometimes this again, just talking. You learn things by just talking, but you need a safe environment or space to do that kind of discussion or have that kind of discussion.

Lucy uses networks to "share information with others so that they can have the opportunity to be successful, even when their chair says, I don't know how that process works, which is a shame." In other cases, women networked with colleagues from the same company rather than with people from outside the organization. I can speculate that these women may be motivated to turn to their colleagues for job advice because those who know the organization will likely provide better advice than those from outside (such as friends from the neighborhood or family members).

Lucy takes the notion of 'blending' further by teaming with people with skills she wants to emulate. She incorporates these people into her network as mentors to help her balance the daily roles

and responsibilities of her job, family, and other social obligations. She understands that she will learn little by limiting her networks to people in her circles only and that she needs to brainstorm ideas with people who don't necessarily agree with her. She said: "So, a mentor might not be one person. You might have multiple mentors, somebody who can help you. Just who can co-labor with you in thinking ahead and figuring out where you want your career to take you."

"Sticking Together" Strategy (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001)

Annie Lee builds networks composed mainly of members of her race/ethnicity and gender whom she trusts. She thus utilizes the 'sticking together' strategy believing that the greater the similarity between informal network members and a woman, the better the advice and support these people will give. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook's (2001) research has shown that similarity breeds connections of every type, including marriage, friendship, and work advice. Annie Lee neatly captured this view in the following vignette:

> Get a mentor in whatever position you want; if you want to be a college president, you know, find a good one. If you're going to stick with African American female lady President, and, you know, reach out and people, ironically, very helpful about that kind of stuff. You see, I look up to you. I want to be a president one day like you are, you know, let's talk, you know, I won't take up all your time, but let's talk, can we meet? You back home, we were traveling, and not so much now. But now you can do it virtually, and it keeps people from traveling. Get as good a support staff as a mentor, get some senior leaders, you know, they don't have to be necessary over you but get a peer. Now, I got a tight bunch of chairs, you know, we mesh well; we would meet and vent once a month and all of that. So, you know, you're talking with like-minded people who understand what you're going through. Sometimes you're looking for advice, but you need to talk about it. And, of course, get trustworthy people who do not

repeat everything you say. But you know, when whatever counselor you talk to, you share your pain. So, yeah, I would say get your group of friends, your mentor, get your colleagues because sometimes, you know, the family may not want to hear about it, and that's okay; oh, you need to talk with somebody who knows NCAPE and SACSCOC. You see, you must speak about that kind of stuff. And of course, you know, do good work, stay organized and set goals for yourself, and make sure you have some successes and document that."

The data shows that Annie Lee thinks that minority professionals with significant same-race/ethnicity relationships may be more effective at maintaining a sense of self. Receiving affirmation and emotional support from a same-race/ethnicity support system buffers her from the stress at the workplace and positively affects her success.

Like Annie Lee, Lucy is not afraid to stand out and stand up for people who look like her. She said:

"There aren't many black people, many people of color, so they have this desire to have representation, which they should. And because I tend to be outspoken, and I tend to be a go-getter, people say, Oh, we want to have somebody, we want to bring somebody in for this leadership opportunity; in the back of their mind, they won't say it, but they want to, they want it to be a woman, a person of color, so they'll ask me to do it. So, sometimes I am invited because of my qualifications and because I'm a person of color. But I think when I, you know, in having the opportunity to, you know, span those boundaries, then it's like, okay, well, you might have had a plan for why you brought me here, but now that I'm here, I'm here. And let's talk about it. And let's, you know, so I feel like, in some ways, people might have had one set of intentions for in engaging with me, but because my, my credentials, and my experience and my skills speak for themselves, it doesn't take long for that to be a non-factor. And, you know, it ends up

serving me.

Dorothy blends the "Blending In" and "Sticking Together" strategies to survive as an African American leader in a white male-dominated environment. She shared:

> You keep trying to get someone to hear where you're coming from and to value and see you. And, I let go of whom that person ought to be. I let go of the fact that other black people would recognize it and let go of the fact that it might be other women. I let whoever is willing to come into the space and say, I see you, and I see what you're doing, and I'm willing to put my name on the line to help move you forward. And sometimes, we not only know what we want and the opportunity we need, but then we get stuck on who ought to give it to us. You got to let that part go."

I analyze the nature of their strategies to initiate a changing culture.

Lucy admitted that she would not have succeeded in her efforts to become a senior administrator without the benefits of networking. However, she does specify whom she leaned on the most for her success. The following anecdote illustrates Lucy's sentiments about the value of others in her trajectory to senior leadership. She said:

> You know, once you get to the table, whether you bring your chair or somebody invites you. Sit there and stay. Before COVID, I would show up at meetings. I would get there early and talk with the people who were there. I would remain after for the post-meeting debriefs. I would listen to the meeting and other information because it's all related. Sometimes you get the best information at the end when the meeting is over. So, I have learned and used those skills in this environment to my benefit.

In the above anecdote, Lucy does not have to go far to find people to expand her professional networks. Meanwhile, Lucy uses networks to reach immediate goals such as gaining tenure. So, she targets those people she knows will influence her promotion to get them on her side. As a minority,

she realizes the power of politics to move forward. She said:

> Because I'm black, I know how people interact and think about my role in educating people or advocating for others. I had to keep peace and people's goodwill towards me because I knew I would go up for a promotion and tenure, and I knew their opinions would matter. And so, I found myself in this dance of playing academic and social games not to be too disruptive. But to also not shrink into the background.

Not only does Lucy network with people when necessary, but she also leans into related electronic media to find strategies to help her move ahead professionally. She said: "I spend time looking at the Chronicle or looking at ads to see what types of expected responsibilities people in those other positions have. And think about what I do right now would be akin to those duties."

This study revealed how Black women used networks and relationships as they transitioned into an inflection point in their careers that challenged them to rethink their roles. In the process, they found that networking—creating a fabric of personal contacts who will provide support, feedback, insight, resources, and information—is simultaneously one of the most self-evident developmental challenges they must address.

As the women rose through the ranks, they gained a strong command of the technical elements of their jobs and focused on accomplishing their departments' objectives. However, they inevitably encountered challenges in moving beyond their functional specialties and addressing the institution's strategic issues. They soon realized they would not immediately grasp everything and that this would involve relational —tasks. They understood that exchanges and interactions with a diverse array of current and potential stakeholders are not distractions from their "real work" but are at the heart of their new leadership roles.

This research aligns with Jones, Dovidio, and Vietze (2013) notion of women's two distinct but interdependent networking strategies: blending and sticking together. These two strategies played

a vital role in their transitions. The first helped them manage current internal responsibilities, the second boosted their personal development, and opened their eyes to new business directions and the stakeholders they would need to enlist. While the women differed in how well they pursued operational and personal networking, I found that almost all of them underutilized strategic networking.

Chapter VI

Discussions and Conclusions

Since the adoption of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African American women have been significantly underrepresented in Senior-Level Administration (SLA) positions in U.S. postsecondary education institutions. This statute barred gender and race discrimination in hiring, promotions, and dismissal (American Council on Education [ACE], 2017; West, 2017b). Women of all races, particularly African American women, continue to be substantially underrepresented in SLA posts (ACE, 2017; West, 2017b). Women presidents headed just 8% of U.S. doctorate-granting institutions and 30% of U.S. post-secondary schools in 2017, the most recent year for which statistics are available (ACE, 2017).

In this study, I explored female African Americans' lives and professional experiences in senior-level academic administration roles in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. My goal was to understand better the barriers, institutional rules, and practices that were beneficial and bad for the participants as they followed their professional paths. I highlighted the experiences of female African American senior administrators working in southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are African American females' life and career experiences who have attained Senior-Level Administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

RQ2: What do female African American senior-level administrators at a public four-year state university believe are strategies for attaining leadership positions in Academic services at public institutions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

Using a video conferencing application, I utilized Seidman's (2013) three-series interview technique to collect stories from participants. The first interview focused on the administrator's life

history, including their background, education, and relevant experiences leading up to their current administrative role. The second interview focused on the administrators' work experiences and interactions with faculty and staff. The third interview provided an opportunity for the administrators to reflect on their experiences to determine significance and clarify meaning to offer advice to other female African American women seeking administrative roles and recommendations to an institution's senior leadership looking to diversify their leadership team. Administrators verified transcripts to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of this research. The inductive nature of this study called for a qualitative research technique. I attempted to derive meaning from the experiences and views of participants on their paths to senior leadership. I utilized a basic interpretative design to explore how individuals interpret and assign meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2002). I addressed the study's trustworthiness by gathering enough data to offer detailed, thick descriptions, using several data sources to help triangulation, and doing member checks to uncover personal biases and correct data misconceptions.

The data analysis process began with a systematic search and arrangement of transcripts, followed by coding transcripts and observation notes, allowing for open coding that prioritized participants' voices (Saldana, 2016). Following that, further substantive categories evolved based on the words of participants connected to their conceptions and views (Maxwell, 2013). These categories aided in developing initial codes utilizing two-letter abbreviations based on four of the study's core themes. The second coding cycle focused on values, which is helpful for research on intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences (Saldana, 2016). The codes were then refined and organized into groups based on attitudes and values (Saldana, 2016). Finally, consistent principles were linked together based on their category linkages, and pattern analysis of principles allowed for the construction of themes (Patton, 2015). Four significant themes emerged from the data: advisors and mentors, creating visibility in the workplace, black tax, and beating the odds. The following includes a discussion of the

two research questions guiding this research, emergent themes, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Research Questions: Summary Discussion

This section connects the research questions to the study's findings through the four primary themes and the conceptual framework.

RQ1: What are African American females' life and career experiences who have attained Senior-Level Administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

Participants revealed similarities and differences in their paths to becoming senior-level administrators and their progression into their professional careers. All participants grew up in the eastern region of the United States. Regarding their education, Annie Lee and Lucy attended an HBCU (Historically Black College and University) in Florida for their undergraduate degree. Eva and Dorothy obtained their undergraduate degrees at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution) in Florida and Virginia, respectively. Annie Lee's family was HBCU-centered, so an HBCU for post-secondary education was almost mandatory for Annie Lee, even though her teachers in high school suggested that she attend other schools believed to be more aligned with her high school academic achievements.

On the other hand, Lucy thought attending an HBCU was the best decision she had ever made. It changed her life because during her primary, middle, and high school years, she had always attended predominantly White schools and experienced “exclusion and racism,” even in some salient ways. This experience caused her to doubt her sense of legitimacy and belonging. She thus “always kind of grew up questioning the validity of what I brought to the table.” The “exclusion and racism” during her secondary education relate to CRT.

Lucy’s HBCU experience motivated her “to succeed and to make a difference.” She benefited from sharing similar experiences with people like her and enjoyed a new profound sense of belonging.

Although Eva did not attend an HBCU, she appreciated how HBCUs taught African American Students "how to embrace and love [ourselves] and [our] community," - which did not happen at her PWI institution, which was located very close to an HBCU. However, her PWI experience taught her how to survive as a minority student throughout her secondary and post-secondary education settings. Even though Lucy and Eva attended different college settings, they found ways to push through and beat the odds.

Lucy utilized the "sticking together strategy" to find a sense of belonging. On the other hand, Eva utilized the "blending in strategy" to survive as a minority student attending a PWI. Although their experiences were different, they both utilized these strategies to thrive.

Family structure was different for all the participants. Lucy grew up in a two-parent household in Georgia and was the oldest of three siblings. Dorothy and Eva started with both parents in the home until unforeseen circumstances changed the household outcome. Dorothy's parents separated/divorced when she was around 15, and her mother and younger brother moved to Virginia to care for her elderly father. Dorothy decided to stay with her father in Chicago until she graduated high school. Eva's father passed away from alcohol addiction when she was nine leaving her mother to raise three children independently. Eva's mother dropped out of college to keep the family going and later remarried. However, all participants reported that their immediate and extended families played a vital role in their lives growing up.

Conversely, Annie Lee grew up in a single-parent household in a small rural town in Georgia until her mother got married when she was about eight years old. Although her mother was a single parent in Annie Lee's early years, her mother's close knit-family participated in essential family celebrations, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthdays. Similarly, Annie Lee's close-knitted family helped her when she became pregnant and had her daughter. She decided to leave her previous institution and work at her current institution to be closer to her family. She sacrificed professional

gains to be closer to her supportive family and had to work her way back up through the ranks at the new place.

All participants brought educational and work experiences before becoming senior-level administrators. They credited strong female and male influences who guided them and made them feel capable of doing anything they wanted to do in life. These strong females and male influencers directly relate to theme one, advisors and mentors, where mentors who fulfilled specific roles in participants' lives and advisors fulfilled their socially circumscribed roles. For example, Annie Lee drew most of her motivation from her mother – an educator– who instilled in her the importance of education, especially math. Her mother wanted her to embrace it since STEM was the world's direction. In retrospect, Annie Lee knew that she would inevitably join the teaching family trade. She excelled in high school, earning a full 4-year presidential scholarship to attend college. In college, Annie Lee's mentor and math teacher helped her realize the merits of having a math degree. After attaining her undergraduate degree, she got her master's and taught math at a local high school in her hometown for a few years before achieving a Ph.D. in math education. Eventually, she became a math professor at the same University where she completed her undergraduate studies.

On the other hand, Eva got her inspiration from her grandfather, who owned a funeral home business. Although he wanted her to be a business owner like him instead of a teacher, Eva chose to pursue a career in education. Like Annie Lee, Eva also excelled in high school, earning an academic scholarship to attend college. Although she did not credit her success to a specific mentor-mentee relationship in college, she received advice that resonated with her and helped her achieve her career goals. After graduating college, Eva taught math for a few years at an alternative school before changing her career to become a school counselor. This eventually led to her work in higher education.

Lucy, a first-generation college completer, defaulted into education and participated in various

service-learning projects, working with the community and tutoring and mentoring students. Like Eva and Annie Lee, Lucy also received an academic scholarship to attend college and taught in a secondary education setting after graduating. She taught third grade in metro Atlanta before changing to a career in special education. Like Annie Lee, Lucy had mentor-mentee relationships that propelled her to obtain a doctoral degree in education. However, Lucy's choice to pursue higher education fulfilled an obligation to fulfill a service-learning requirement for her doctoral degree program.

On the other hand, Dorothy pursued a non-traditional path to her current leadership job. She joined the workforce immediately after graduating from high school before going to college. She started with marriage before college graduation. Unlike Annie Lee, Eva, and Lucy, Dorothy pursued an undergraduate degree in communications because she wanted a career in advertising. After failing to progress in advertising, she obtained a master's degree in criminal justice and a Ph.D. degree in Public Policy and Administration because she wanted to become a researcher at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

After teaching a first-year transition class in her doctoral program, Dorothy later pursued teaching. This teaching experience propelled her to her first tenured track position. Dorothy found success in her new career from the help she received from mentors and advisors. Like the other three participants, she went through the traditional faculty ranks, received tenure, and later got into administration.

Though the participants are settled in their administrative careers in academic affairs, their career experiences have not been accessible. They still wrestle with isolation, unfair treatment, and disrespect from their senior colleagues, faculty, and peers while working in a position of authority. I connect the participants' experiences with unequal treatment and disrespect to critical race theory tenet number one. This tenet states that race and racism are essential, domestic, permanent, and fundamental to understanding society's functions. It implies that racism is common and that people

would do this to women and not think it is out of the ordinary for them. Dorothy's parents grew up in Virginia during the Jim Crow era when Black people rode the back of the bus, attended segregated schools, and drank from colored water fountains. However, Dorothy believed she had overcome the racial injustices endured by her parents as she has always been a "strong-willed" person. She, however, was cognizant of the persistent gender and racial inequities constraining Black people in America – but is determined not to let this stop her from achieving her professional goals. She proclaimed, "If you spend much time in that space, you will not be able to get up and go to work … Thus, you find joy in where you can find it."

Eva, like Dorothy, is determined not to let racial and gender discrimination get in her professional journey. In school, she overcame condescending White teachers and broke the proverbial glass ceilings to find success in education leadership. She coined herself the "Golden Child" and became the storyline to counter that they are biased or that they are in an environment that's not equitable." She excelled in all her educational and professional endeavors to qualify for a seat at the leadership table.

All participants successfully created personal comfort zones in their jobs despite the pervasive structural discrimination in their workplaces. All women found ways to remain authentic while accepting the mainstream White organizational norms and values. Creating personal comfort zones can be connected to theme two, increasing visibility in the workplace, where the women made efforts to gain recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance.

All participants seemed to know the rules to survival in these White spaces. For example, Lucy knew to walk the fine line between keeping the peace with the powers that held the keys to her promotion and tenure without shrinking into invisibility. The data indicates these women found race as the most formidable barrier to their advancement than their gender. Knowing the norms of survival is linked to CRT and BFT because these women have normalized racist acts so much that they have

discovered ways to adapt to them daily to advance in their careers. Essentially, these ladies were aware that they were being discriminated against, but they refused to let that stop them. Furthermore, the rules of survival are strongly related to theme 4, beating the odds, because the women in the study discovered methods to continue despite the obstacles placed in their path.

RQ2: What do female African American senior-level Administrators at a public four-year state University believe are strategies for attaining leadership positions in Academic services at public institutions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?

Women in this research employed varied strategies as they navigated the educational leadership terrain. The women used nine strategies to help them navigate this White male-dominated space. The nine strategies reflect CRT and BFT, connecting the themes. First, they all strategically formed and maintained relationships, including building coalitions. This finding is consistent with West's (2017b) notion of professional mentoring. West contends that emotional support and career guidance are among the most pertinent factors for promoting African American women's advancement to leadership positions in post-secondary education. Women in this research understood the value of people who supported and championed them and built on those relationships. All women reported having a variety of mentors and advisors and not focusing exclusively on other Black women or more senior colleagues. They built fundamental relationships with people at higher levels than themselves, their peers, and other community members. Others used professional networks or social media to find someone in that role both within and perhaps outside their university.

Secondly, all participants realized the importance of gaining additional education and professional development to facilitate their professional growth. Lucy used her tuition benefits to obtain different degrees at the university. She said, “Strong and quality opportunities are essential in having a long-term career thus effective and fruitful.” Lucy was happy that she had the type of preparation behind her and underneath her to serve as a foundation for her catapult. She feels her early

career experiences were productive because she was well prepared.

Dorothy stayed in touch with people whom she candidly requested what she needed, even when she did not quite know how to articulate it. She said,

> I made myself vulnerable enough for people to tell me no, and they never did. Whenever I thought I wanted to learn and do something differently, I was honest, and someone always remembered it. And when an opportunity became available, they'd say, didn't Dorothy tell me she wanted to do such and such? And they'd call me and say, okay.

Annie Lee acquired degrees from different institutions and disciplines to improve educationally and professionally. She said,

> I'm always trying to do better … I got my leadership degree somewhere in there, and I went, I got my health degree somewhere in there, and I got my Lean Six Sigma degree somewhere in there. But I've been moving up, not because that was my goal. You notice that sometimes leaders strive for leadership, and then sometimes, leadership is just thrust upon you. I feel like it was the next thing I heard somebody say. I was doing my job, and it happened. So, I moved up, and people always asked me, do you aspire to be Provost or President? Not really. But if it happens, I didn't wake up and say; I want to be a college president.

Eva takes advantage of opportunities to sit on department and university-wide committees to stay abreast with the new professional trends. She said:

> It's essential that you are known across the campus, that you are viewed positively, and that you are recognized as being a competent professional. So, it's essential that you take care of yourself and take advantage of any opportunity that will help you get to know the other leaders on campus and get the help you need to develop an

understanding outside of that little pocket you're in.

Third, all participants turned to outside-of-work passions. Their work was one of many aspects of their lives that was meaningful. Lucy leaned on religious affiliations and believed God had a plan for her life, and everything worked out for good. Consistent with her Christian faith, she became a role model nurturing her Black son and treating him like he belonged.

Annie Lee mentioned motherhood's role and self-care as a significant diversion from her job's stress. Being around family keeps her grounded. She even moved and worked her way back up to a leadership position to be close to family after she had her baby. She drew social support from her mother and her mother's siblings. She found family events such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday parties rejuvenating. Most importantly, she believes that her daughter is excelling and doing well because of family support.

Annie Lee indulges in self-care to find meaning outside her job. She said: "I just lost like 35 pounds. By myself, without buying all that expensive equipment." She also turned her sights to healthcare and earned an online health degree to stay abreast with her overall health.

Eva and Annie Lee said outside work and hobbies to avoid burnout and work-related fatigue. For example, the two women enjoy attending their children's volleyball games and maintain tight relationships with their college sorority sisters. Eva believes one should:

> Be very honest about work-life balance. You must know well what will be asked of you and what time it will take. Because if you're not honest with yourself about that, you will be miserable. You won't be succeeding at home, and you won't be advancing to your best ability at work.

Thus, all participants valued other interests outside of work and mostly perceived their roles as just a job, but this did not mean they did not care about students or their work but did not define them. These passions helped them deal with and contextualize their experiences.

Fourth, all participants took necessary risks and advocated for themselves. This finding echoes Barnes's (2017) contention that African American women are creative leaders and natural risk-takers who engage in boundary-spanning behavior and divergent thinking. Based on the data from this research, I can speculate that the women's brevity in confronting systemic racism and discrimination is rooted in the cultural pressures that helped them hone their unique determination as they searched for their comfort zones in their organizations. However, participants had to deal with the dominant organizational style present in many higher education institutions. Simien (2004) BFT also supports women's abilities to advocate for themselves. He employs the theory to defend the character of Black women against racist and stereotypical accusations for political purposes. My participants rejected any attempts to question their authority and other unfavorable stereotypes about their intelligence and abilities. From daily interactions with colleagues, the participants acknowledged disadvantages and discrimination because of their "dual identity" and "group consciousness." BFT beautifully captures the women's desire to take risks and advocate for themselves.

Barnes's (2017) research helped me understand how the participants felt more comfortable challenging authority as they created their comfort zones. Once they mastered how to navigate their workplaces best, they got the courage to speak up when they were being taken advantage of or if they witnessed unfair behavior in the workplace. They champion themselves and know their worth. They carefully used their knowledge of office politics to navigate the delicate balance, judiciously challenged norms, and advocated for the opportunities they wanted. For example, Dorothy admired a very confident Black female president who expressed her feelings, thoughts, and opinions using solid words and thought and believed she could also be like her. She said: "spending each day being the best version of yourself is much easier than trying to be anything else."

Lucy feels emboldened to take risks and advocate for herself because she plays an integral part in her department. She said:

> I feel free to express my concerns or make recommendations. I've also had to learn how to maneuver and navigate the politics that happens in higher ed, how to do that publicly, and how to do it, you know, in front of people and behind closed doors.
>
> Eva advocated for more pay when offered low income for a higher position. She said:
>
> You know, if you're going to keep me in this role, I'm not going to be the dean, then I want to make the comparable pay. I'm an AVP; I should be making equal pay anyway. So anyway, is that a barrier? I don't know what to call that. But, you know, how dare you.

With that, she boldly took her case to the ombudsman and eventually got a raise. My data also indicated the women's s hesitance to push boundaries "because they are not there yet."

The women's tendency to advocate for themselves aligns with Simien's (2004) BFT. Simien uses this theory to defend the character of Black women from racist, misogynistic attacks and stereotypes for political ends. The data illustrates how participants rejected any efforts to challenge their authority and other negative stereotypes about intelligence and innate ability. Participants recognized disadvantage and discrimination due to their "dual identity" and "politicized group consciousness" stemming from normalized racist day-to-day encounters with colleagues. I believe that BFT neatly captures the women's determination to take the necessary risks and advocate for themselves.

Fifth, all female leaders in this research demonstrate high levels of resilience. I found that setbacks motivated them more, and they handled adversity with maturity and grace. For example, Dorothy is not deterred when "people say all sorts of things to me." Some men have said that she is too ambitious. She does let this negativity slow her down. She, however, admitted that it hurt most when the negativity comes from fellow Black men and women.

Eva did not let the disappointment of being passed over for a promotion beat her. She has been slighted many times unabashed. She said: "I have never had a less-than attitude, and I still don't.

Lucy has prevailed over a system that does not favor her. She said: “I don't feel like the university system is set up to give a person like me advantages.” She navigated the system on her own to succeed. Similarly, Dorothy has been subjected to bruising racism, sexism, and macroaggressions. She constantly reminds people that she is Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs and demands respect. She shared her remarkable resilience in the following anecdote:

> I’d got much thicker skin and was not coming in as a faculty member. I am not coming in as your colleague. I’m coming as someone who has power and authority. I owned the power and authority and used it to make them understand that some things they were saying and doing were horrendous.

Eva withstood having her work undervalued and losing huge potential earnings over her career. She focused on her job when she received unfair job evaluations. She remained undaunted when her pleas for help fell on deaf ears. Annie Lee might not have graduated from college if she had listened to her disparaging chair's discouraging comments. She followed her gut instincts rather than dwelled on the chair’s negativity as she pursued her dissertation challenge. Likewise, Lucy survived the burden of representing all Black people at meetings. Dorothy ignores all the noise and “keeps on moving forward” against all odds. She said:

> I let go of the fact that other black people would recognize it and let go of the fact that it might be other women. Sometimes, we not only know what we want and the opportunity we need, but then we get stuck on who ought to give it to us; you got to let that part go.”

I found that these women are guided by their belief system, grounded in their faith or passion for their organization’s mission and vision, to persevere and continue looking and moving forward. They all focused on what they could control rather than exterior barriers that threatened to hold them back.

Sixth, all participants, as members of the underrepresented group, felt pressure to outperform their White peers, which is a form of Black Tax. The women are dealing with the psychological weight or stressor of working harder than their White counterparts to succeed. They complained that many social circles believe Black female leaders are promoted because of their race, not their qualifications and capabilities. All participants in this study reported working twice as hard and needing to accomplish twice as much as their peers to be viewed as on the same level. And even when they succeed, they must surpass expectations before they're permitted to climb the professional ladder, unlike their white co-workers. They suggested that their White counterparts are given opportunities based on their perceived potential. Dorothy lamented: "Women believe that we need to be more qualified than the qualifications dictate to achieve, but that is often because of impediments put in their way. I have had to deal with the issue of she's a bitch; she's nasty, you know, all those things."

Similarly, Eva was frustrated that she was noted as a diversity hire rather than her qualifications. She lamented: "some of them looked at my hire and my being the successful candidate, partly because I fit the diversity bill they needed." Despite being the strongest candidate. Dorothy reiterated a similar frustration:

> It still feels like that; to be successful, you must do twice as much, twice as long, and twice as hard. I still think that while race plays a role, I certainly again see that my male colleagues are often provided an advantage that my female colleagues have not been.

Seventh, the women in this research found the courage to take on complex challenges and make progress. They found no easy path to the top. They were prepared to take on challenging and complex assignments that allowed them to test their capabilities and get higher visibility in their institutions. Eva captured how she overcame a tough challenge in the following vignette:

> I got much attention on campus for writing my proposal; it was killing me. I was like, this will be my death because of nobody else... I don't even know if my faculty in the department believed we could win.

This victory catapulted her to be Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Similarly, Anne Lee pulled off a perfect accreditation. She shared: “No AFIs and no areas of concern under my leadership. I was very proud of that. When I started, we were at a two; I got us to the three.” Lucy overcame her fear of failing something that others before her had failed. She said, “I was nervous about going through this process and explaining my vision to the faculty because this was attempted before and wasn't successful. Many of the same faculty who were there when it was rolled out the first time are still there. But I was very clear about setting my intentions. I successfully reached out to many faculty who represented various positions and created a network of support that everyone could be a part of.”

In a similar research, Webster (2019) also found that African American women must work twice as hard to be considered equivalent to white coworkers. Like the current research, this finding is one of the dominant results of the compounding prejudices inherent in intersectionality. Participants complained that they had to work twice as hard to be thought half as good as males. The double standard of making these women work more than their White counterparts to earn respect and recognition nurtured resentment and exhaustion. My research also confirmed many other studies (Logan & Dudley, 2019; McChesney, 2018; Hollis, 2018). Regardless of their qualifications or achievements, African American women always needed to prove themselves.

Eighth, as these women broke through the glass ceiling, they often faced challenging projects that no one else wanted to handle to prove their worth. This notion is consistent with the phenomenon of the concrete ceiling, also known as the "black ceiling" (Glass and Cook, 2019). Women in the current research struggled to break through the glass ceiling of senior management more than Caucasian women. Glass and Cook (2019) coined this struggle as the term "glass cliff" to represent

the tendency to appoint women and African American women to leadership positions and expect them to sink or swim in a space they are not familiar with.

While experiences like these can build skills and credibility, participants found themselves in this situation more often than their white peers. Eva was blindsided in writing a problematic program report within a short period. This responsibility upended a planned vacation as she confronted the so-called "beast." She lamented:

> None of it made sense. To this day, it still doesn't make sense. And so, this is that idea that we can get the black lady to do that. I don't think they would have asked a white male to do something that wasn't in his job description.

Ninth, participants empowered others to bring their best selves to work because they recognized that they needed to inspire everyone to give their all. They helped cultivate the next generation of leaders in their institutions as coaches to others, offering stretch assignments designed to help their proteges reach their career goals. Lucy has created mentoring structures to develop and empower her subordinates professionally. She shared: I feel like it's my responsibility to pay it forward and to share that information with others so that they can have the opportunity to be successful."

Limitations and Delimitations

Identifying a study's limitations increases the credibility and trustworthiness of its findings (Patton, 2015). I chose a small sample size to allow in-depth and focused analysis. As a result, my results cannot be generalized to a larger population due to the narrow representation. I restricted my investigation to the state of Georgia. I specifically recruited participants from southeastern colleges and universities in the US to understand better the lives and professional experiences of female African Americans in senior-level academic administration roles in academic affairs. Comparing similar dynamics with multiple southeastern states' university and college systems would be

interesting.

Only Black female senior administrators in academic affairs from southeastern colleges and universities in the US were included in this study's sample. Since my research sample did not include other stakeholders, such as White female senior-level administrators, Black and White male administrators in 8 private colleges and universities, or technical and junior colleges in the region, I cannot triangulate what the participants said about themselves with what other stakeholders say about leadership. Future leadership studies must examine the perspectives of leadership by other individuals. Future studies will need multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon. Such studies may add more knowledge to the subject by selecting African American senior leaders from the exact location with comparable experiences. The study's transferability to other institutions in Georgia is thus limited due to its narrow scope. These constraints may limit the ability to generalize the findings beyond the case, setting, or group to other people, places, and times (Maxwell, 2013).

Following the identification of research locations, only four potential participants agreed to participate in the study in the fall of 2021. Over four months, I collected data. Participants chose video conferencing software to conduct interviews due to the convenience or personal comfortability of having just recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. While not as desirable as in-person interviews, video conferencing allowed me to observe participants' facial expressions and the work environment. On the other hand, the lack of face-to-face interactions limited my ability to immerse myself in the research environment.

As with most qualitative research, most of the data for this study was self-reported. I cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data as people tend to exaggerate or forget events. Participants could also have told me what they thought I wanted to hear. I assure the reader that I exercised the highest efforts to uphold strict validity measures to minimize the effects of bias and reflexivity.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research emerged while analyzing the data and developing themes. Leadership is complex and fraught with challenges, and leaders are bound to meet with resistance from their subordinates. However, African American female leaders tend to experience race and gender challenges. Black women are by no means a monolith. Yet, as a group, they deeply understand the relational nature of equality because they exposed racial and sexist targeted oppression. Thus, for Black women, leadership must discuss unconscious bias, being a wife, mother, and daughter, implicit dehumanization, and invisibility. This research demonstrated that Black women's leadership isn't just about their strength and perseverance. It's about how they consistently fight to be recognized as worthy of their jobs and often must accept an inferior social status regardless of their professional qualifications as leaders. I found that Black women are claiming their space in a crowded field of senior leadership, fighting to be treated as equals as they assume highly coveted highest offices in higher education administration.

One suggestion is to broaden the scope of this study by including many female voices from other southern states such as Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Louisiana, and South Carolina. Including more representatives may create a sense of urgency that allows all stakeholders to level the playing field for optimum organizational efficiency. These women remain optimistic that this fight will make a more just leadership terrain for those following in their footsteps. Another suggestion is that Future leadership studies must examine the perspectives of leadership by other individuals to get multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon. Such as other females who are comparable since this study only focused on African American females in Academic Affairs. Because the women in this study did not work in isolation and worked alongside male leaders, it would be a good idea to get the male perspective of these leaders. It would be good to see what males think is happening in this phenomenon.

Final Conclusions

The results of this study indicate the need for institutions to evaluate their culture, structure, processes, and talent practices to understand the challenges facing Black female talent. I found many biases, microaggressions, and outright discrimination against Black female leaders. Based on this finding, unconscious bias training is essential. Still, it's just the beginning as the institutions strive to build more inclusive cultures, starting at the top and holding your leaders accountable for ensuring that high performers aren't held back from moving through the leadership pipeline by inequities or biases.

Participants of this research refused to be held back by microaggressions and biases and tried not to take others' actions personally. They relied on their resilience and focused on their development. All women took the steps necessary to achieve their goals and did not wait for others to help them. They built relationships with their colleagues, who advocated and helped them climb the ladder.

Participants benefitted from formal, documented, objective, detailed, and transparent promotion practices and processes. These promotion procedures would help the women more if institutions approached succession planning with a diversity lens and looked for any biases or other unfair challenges that may hinder the progress of Black female talent. The data suggested that some people appeared to require more "evidence" of success from Black female leaders for promotions and other opportunities than their White peers.

The Black female leaders partly succeeded because they never gave up and forged ahead. Institutions may need to expand their brands and contribution to the organization to serve these women better. The data shows how the women closely tracked their roles, responsibilities, and accomplishments to show evidence of their outcomes and readiness for promotion.

The data revealed the women's struggles to stay visible and essential. Organizations should

encourage Black female leaders to take on visual, critical, and complex assignments with leadership responsibilities. Furthermore, they must offer these complex projects early in the women's careers to see them as growth opportunities, not additional hurdles. Institutions must also provide differentiated and tailored professional development training to meet Black women's unique individual needs.

Aspiring Black female leaders (BFL) must seek challenging assignments to broaden their skills and perspectives. This study's results indicate that BFL must continually ask for feedback from their colleagues to improve. Furthermore, they should ask current leaders about what they need to do to be considered for promotion and go after those opportunities with zest.

The data suggests that institutions risk losing talented Black leaders if they do not minimize unnecessary and unfair burdens revealed by these participants. It is, therefore, prudent for institutions to refrain from asking their BFL to prove themselves more extensively than their peers. Furthermore, they should ensure that high-performing BFLs receive the support they need, including sponsors and advocates, to help them remove barriers to progress.

This study suggests that BFL should use professional setbacks or failures as an opportunity for learning and growth. They are well advised to ask for advice and insights from colleagues who have handled similar assignments to assist them in assessing the project's opportunities and risks. The women in this research have excelled through their confidence and ability to perform at a high level.

As shown in this research and other studies (Ashley, 2019; Clarke, 2019; Francis, 2021), BFL stalls in functional roles in middle management due to oppressive institutional racism and other forms of gender discrimination. Based on this study, institutions may alleviate this by diversifying their leadership pipeline and their understanding of the barriers that may prevent BFLs from advancing further in their organization, especially in the roles critical for senior leadership positions. I suggest that institutions train senior executive sponsors to appreciate the benefits of inclusive leadership and how they can eliminate challenges to BFL's leaders' journey into senior leadership jobs.

The BFLs in this study have shown strategies to engage and inspire everyone in their workforce. They recognized the knowledge, insights, and perspectives that everyone in their institutions has to offer. Institutions may thus use this study to highlight and celebrate the leadership and contributions of BFLs to help everyone realize their hidden abilities to lead others.

The BFLs in this study extended their professional roles to find opportunities to empower others so they could focus on the more strategic and visible assignments that would attract the attention of senior leaders within their institutions. They could position others for professional growth through learning opportunities and challenging projects. They elevated the next generation into a new cadre of leaders through openness, transparency, empathy, and motivation.

My big takeaway is that society must listen to and protect Black women. African American leaders have demonstrated resilience against all odds and are still standing to tell their stories of survival. The country would be better if America listened to African American female leaders. Fellow researchers must amplify African American female voices that are typically not heard until the leadership space is equitable. African American female leaders have courageously fought to extend the scope of justice and civil rights for everyone.

REFERENCES

Abrams, S. (2018). *Lead from the outside: How to build your future and make real change*. Henry Holt and Company.

Agosto, V., & Karanxha, Z. (2012). Resistance meets spirituality in academia: "I prayed on it!". N*egro Educational Review, 62/63*(1-4), 41-46. https://scholarcommons.usf.edu

Akkaya, B. (2020). Opinions of Educational Administrators on Glass Ceiling Syndrome Preventing Women from Becoming Senior Managers. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *8*(3), 76-89.

Allen, T. G. (2018). *Ascending to leadership positions in higher education: Pearls of wisdom from successful African American women.* Rowan and Littlefield Press.

Allen, T. G., & Flood, C. T. (2018). The experiences of women in higher education: Who knew there wasn't a sisterhood. *Leadership and Research in Education*, *4*, 10-27. https://icpel.org

Allen, K., Jacobson, S., & Lomotey, K. (1995). African American women in educational administration: The importance of mentors and sponsors. *Journal of Negro Education*, *64*(4), 409-422. https://doi.org/10.2307/2967264

Almquist, E. M. (1975). Untangling the effects of race and sex: The disadvantaged status of Black women. *Social Science Quarterly*, 129-142.

American Council on Education [ACE], (2017). American college president study: Tenure track policy increases representation of women in senior academic positions but is insufficient to achieve gender balance. *PLoS ONE*, *11*(9), 1–15 https://www.aceacps.org/

Ardoin, S., Broadhurst, C., Locke, L., & Johnson, J. (2019). Peacemakers and rabble rousers: Women leaders as activists in higher education. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, *12*(1), 35-53. https://doi.org/10.1080.19407882.2019.1565868

Ashley, R. C. (2019). *African American Women Middle Managers' Stories of Stereotype Threat and*

Leadership Aspirations (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Bakker, M. M., & Jacobs, M. H. (2016). Tenure track policy increases representation of women in senior academic positions, but is insufficient to achieve gender balance. *PLoS One*, *11*(9), e0163376.

Banks, L., Hopps, J. G., & Briggs, H. E. (2018). Cracks in the ceiling? Historical and contemporary trends of African American deans of schools of social work. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *28*(3), 288-299. https://doi.org/10.11177/1049731517706522

Barbers, J. (2016). For Women of color, the glass ceiling is actually made of concrete. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/for-women-of-color-the-glass-ceiling-is-actually-made-of-concrete/

Barnes, J. (2017). Climbing the stairs to leadership: Reflections on moving beyond the stained-glass ceiling. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 10*(4), 47–53. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21503

Baylor, K. M. (2016). African American female doctoral students: Experiences, motivation, and perceptions of hegemony in preparation for careers in educational leadership. *Urban Education Research & Policy Annuals*, *4*(1), 82-89. https://ww.journals.uncc.edu

Bhopal, K. (2019). For whose benefit? Black and Minority Ethnic training programs in higher education institutions in England, UK. *British Educational Research Journal.* https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3589

Brescoll, V. L. (2016). Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 415-428. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.005

Briggs, C. (2017). The policy of STEM diversity: Diversifying STEM programs in higher education. *Journal of STEM Education*, *17*(4). https://www.learntechlib.org

Brower, R. L., Schwartz, R. A., & Bertrand Jones, T. (2017). “Is it because I’m a woman?’ Gender-

based attributional ambiguity in higher education administration. *Gender and Education, 1–19.* https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1324131

Burrows, C. (2016). *Writing While Black: The Black Tax on African American Graduate Writers*. Repositories.lib.utexas.edu. https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/62578?show=full.

Carli, L. L., & Eagly, A. H. (2016). Women face a labyrinth: an examination of metaphors for women leaders. *Gender in Management: An International Journal, 31(8), 514–527.* https://doi.org/10.1108/gm-02-2015-0007

Carroll, D. (2017). A faculty woman of color and micro-invalidations at a white research institution: A case of intersectionality and institutional betrayal. *Administrative Issues Journal*, *7*(1), 4. https://www.swosu.edu

Catalyst, J. (2006). Women of color in corporate management: Opportunities and barriers. *New York: Catalyst*.

Cherng, H. Y. S., & Halpin, P. F. (2016). The importance of minority teachers: Student perceptions of minority versus White teachers. *Educational Researcher*, *45*(7), 407-420. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X1667118

Clarke, M. B. (2019). *The impact of race and gender on African American women's leadership attainment* (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University).

Cleveland, R., Sailes, J., Gilliam, E., & Watts, J. (2018). A theoretical focus on cultural taxation: Who pays for it in higher education. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, *5*(10). https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.510.5293

Cole, E. R., & Harper, S. R. (2017). Race and rhetoric: An analysis of college presidents' statements on campus racial incidents. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *10*(4), 318. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000444

Coleman, M. (2019). Women leaders in the workplace: Perceptions of career barriers, facilitators, and

change, 38(3), 328-348. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000444

Collins, P. H. (1990). Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, *138*(1990), 221-238.

Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, black feminism, and black political economy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *568*(1), 41-53.

Collins, P. H. (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. routledge.

Collins, P. H. (2009). Emerging intersections: Building knowledge and transforming institutions. *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and gender in theory, policy, and practice*, vii-xiv.

Cope, D.G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Oncology Nursing Forum, 41(1), 89- 91

Corneille, M., Lee, A., Allen, S., Cannady, J., & Guess, A. (2019). Barriers to the advancement of African American women faculty in STEM. *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal,* 38(3). https://doi.org/10.1108/edi-09-2017-0199

Crenshaw, K. (2018). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics [1989]. In *Feminist legal theory* (pp. 57-80). Routledge.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. (2011). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* SAGE Publication, Inc.

Croom, N., & Paton, L. (2011). The miner's canary: A critical race perspective on the Representation of Black women full professors. *The Negro Educational Review, 62 &*

63(1-4), 13-39. https://www.psu.edu

Curtis, S. (2017). Black women's intersectional complexities. *Management in Education, 31*(2), *94–102.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020617696635

Davis, D. R. (2016). The journey to the top: Stories on the intersection of race and gender for African American women in academia and business. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, *2*(1), 4. http://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/jri/vol2/iss1/4

Davis, S., & Brown, K. (2017). Automatically Discounted: Using Black Feminist Theory to Critically Analyze the Experiences of Black Female Faculty. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, *12*(1), n1.

Dear, R. W. (2016). *Surviving at the top: A critical case study of female administrators in higher education*. [unpublished doctoral Dissertation]. Georgia Southern.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic. (2012). *Critical race theory: An Introduction, second edition.* New York Press.

Derks, B., Van Laar, C., & Ellemers, N. (2016). The queen bee phenomenon: Why women leaders distance themselves from junior women. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 456-469. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.12.007

Dickens, D. D., & Chavez, E. L. (2018). Navigating the workplace: The costs and benefits of shifting identities at work among early career US Black women. *Sex Roles*, *78*(11), 760-774.

Dixson, A. D., Rousseau, C. K., & Anderson, C. R. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*. Taylor & Francis.

Dopson, S., Ferlie, E., McGivern, G., Fischer, M. D., Mitra, M., Ledger, J., & Behrens, S. (2019). Leadership development in Higher Education: A literature review and implications for program redesign. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *73*(2), 218-234.

https://doi.org/10.1111/heque.12194

Downer, Jason T., Goble, Priscilla, Myers, Sonya S., Pianta, Robert C. (2016). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.02.007.

Dunn, D., Gerlach, J. M., & Hyle, A. E. (2014). Gender and leadership: reflections of women in higher education administration. *International Journal of Leadership and Change, 2*(1), 2. https://www.wku.edu

Egalite, J., Kisida, B. & Winters, M.A. (2015). Representation in the classroom: the effect of own-race teachers on student achievement. *Economics of Education Review.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.01.007.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4.

Evans-Winters, V. E., & Esposito, J. (2010). Other people's daughters: Critical race feminism and Black girls' education. *Educational Foundations*, *24*, 11-24. https://www.caddogap.com

Ford, L. E. (2016). Two steps forward, one step back? Strengthening the foundations of women's leadership in higher education. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, *4*(3), 499-512.

Francis, L. (2021). *The African American Woman's Pursuit of Higher-Level Leadership Roles: A Phenomenological Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University).

Fuller, E., Hollingworth, L., & An, B. P. (2019). Exploring intersectionality and the employment of school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*. https://doi.org/10.1108/jea-07-2018-0133

Gender, Work & Organization, 21(3), 203-216. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12030

García, H. A., Nehls, K., Florence, K., Harwood, Y., & McClain, T. (2020). "The ones who move things along": How women mid-level managers navigate academic landscapes. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2020*(189), 25–39. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20358

Gatrell, C., Cooper, C. L., & Kossek, E. E. (2017). Maternal bodies as taboo at work: New perspectives on the marginalizing of senior-level women in organizations. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *31*(3), 239-252. https://doi.org/10.5464/amp.2014.0034

Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student–teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of education review*, *52*, 209-224. https://doi.org/10.101/j.econdeurev.2016.03.002

Glass, C., & Cook, A. (2019). Pathways to the glass cliff: A risk tax for women and minority leaders? *Social Problems, 67(4), 6347-653.* https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spz045

Gonzales, L. D., & Terosky, A. L. (2016). From the faculty perspective: Defining, earning, and keeping legitimacy across academia. *Teachers College Record*, *118*(7), 1-44. https://www.tcrecord.og

Grissom, J. A., Rodriguez, L. A., & Kern, E. C. (2017). Teacher and principal diversity and the representation of students of color in gifted programs: Evidence from national data. *The Elementary School Journal*, *117*(3), 396-422. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu

Hague, L. Y., & Okpala, C. O. (2017). Voices of African American women leaders on factors that impact their career advancement in North Carolina community colleges. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, *2*(3), 3. https://www.digitalcommons.unsfsu.edu

Harris, J. C., & Patton, L. D. (2018). Un/Doing Intersectionality through higher education research. *The Journal of Higher Education,* 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1536936

Hekman, D. R., Johnson, S. K., Foo, M. D., & Yang, W. (2017). Does diversity-valuing behavior result in diminished performance ratings for non-white and female leaders? *Academy of Management Journal*, *60*(2), 771-797. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0538

Hiel, K. (2016). *The influence of society's perceptions and stereotypes on African American women administrators' leadership practices*. [Unpublished doctoral Dissertation]. St. Cloud State

University.

Hollis, L. P. (2018). Bullied out of position: Black women's complex intersectionality, workplace bullying, and resulting career disruption. *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships*, *4*(3), 73-89. https://doi.org/10.1343/bsr.2018.0004

Howard, B. L. (2017). African American female administrators at predominantly white institutions in Tennessee: Is there a need for affirmative action? *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, *5*(2), 73-77. https://www.isejoournal.org

Hoyt, C. L., & Murphy, S. E. (2016). Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat, women, and leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 387-399. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.11.002.

Huang, B. L. (2016). African American somen advancing to senior leadership in U.S. academe. *The Changing Role of Women in Higher Education,* 155–172. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-42436-1_8

Jackson, L. C., & Bouchard, M. M. (2019). Mentoring: A key success factor for African American women in the US federal senior executive service. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, *84*(4), 35.

Jackson, V., & Jones, T. (2020). The 'Black Tax'Is Key to Understanding and Solving the Black Student Debt Crisis in the Time of COVID-19 and Beyond. *The Education Trust, April*, *16*.

Janesick, V. J. (2011). *"Stretching" exercises for qualitative researchers*. Sage Publications.

Johns, A., Fook, J., & Nath, V. (2019). *Systemic changes to crack the concrete ceiling: Initiatives from the leadership foundation for higher education.* Bloomsbury Press.

Johnson, H. L. (2017). *Pipelines, Pathways, and Institutional Leadership: An update on the status of women in higher education*. American Council on Education

Johnson, S. P. (2017). Ebony and the ivory tower: The voices of 4 African American women and the

factors that contribute to their career transition from K-12 administration into the higher education professoriate. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Texas A&M University.

Jones, C. P. (2000). Levels of racism: a theoretic framework and a gardener's tale. *American journal of public health*, *90*(8), 1212.

Jones, J. M., Dovidio, J. F., & Vietze, D. L. (2013). *The psychology of diversity: Beyond prejudice and racism*. John Wiley & Sons.

Julia S. Jordan-Zachery. (2004). Reflections on Mentoring: Black Women and the Academy. *PS: Political*

Science and Politics, *37*(4), 875–877. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488925

Kallio, H., Pietila, A., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi structured interview guide. *University of Stanford Manchester*, 72(12). https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031

Khosrovani, M., & Ward, J. W. (2011). African Americans perceptions of access toworkplace opportunities: A survey of employees in Houston, Texas. *Journal of Cutural Diversity, 18*(4), 134-141.

Kubu, C. S. (2017). Who does she think she is? Women, leadership and the "B"(ias) word. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist, 32*(2), 235–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/13854046.2017.1418022

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers college record*, *97*(1), 47-68.

Lindsay, C. A., & Hart, C. M. (2017). Exposure to same-race teachers and student disciplinary outcomes for Black students in North Carolina. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *39*(3), 485-510. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373717693109

Liu, H. (2016). Undoing Whiteness: The Dao of Anti-racist Diversity Practice. *Gender, Work & Organization, 24*(5), 457–471. doi:10.1111/gwao.12142

Logan, S. R., & Dudley, H. S. (2019). The "double-whammy" of being Black and a woman in higher education leadership. In *Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Higher Education Leadership* (pp. 84-104). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7056-1.ch006

Lomotey, K. (2019). Research on the Leadership of Black women Principals: Implications for Black students. *Educational Researcher, 48(6), 336-348.*

1. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x19858619

Lyness, K. S., & Grotto, A. R. (2018). Women and leadership in the United States: are we closing the gender gap? *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 5(1), 227–265.* https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104739

Macias, A., & Stephens, S. (2017). Intersectionality in the field of education: A critical look at race, gender, treatment, pay, and leadership. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1383912

Mangoma, A., & Wilson-Prangley, A. (2019). Black Tax: Understanding the financial transfers of the emerging black middle class. *Development Southern Africa*, *36*(4), 443-460.

Marquardt, D. J., Brown, L. W., & Casper, W. J. (2016). Ethical leadership perceptions: Does it matter if you're Black or white? *Journal of Business Ethics, 151(3), 599–612.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3250-3

Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research?: A review of qualitative interviews in IS research. *Journal of computer information systems*, *54*(1), 11-22.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (applied social research methods).

McChesney, J. (2018). *Representation and pay of African American somen in the higher education workforce.* https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/research-briefs/2018-representation-pay-women-

of-color-higher-ed-workforce/

McGee, E. O., & Kazembe, L. (2016). Entertainers or education researchers? The challenges associated with presenting while Black. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *19*(1), 96-120. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2015.1069263

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual review of sociology*, 415-444.

Medina, M. I., Perea, J. R., & Marty-Nelson, E. M. (2020). Roundtable on intersectionality and strengths and challenges in leadership. *Journal of Law and Social Change 23*, 51.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*, *1*(1), 1-17.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Motha, S., & Varghese, M. M. (2016). Rewriting dominant narratives of the academy: women faculty of color and identity management. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 21(4), 503–517.* https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248826

National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], (2018*). Characteristics of postsecondary faculty*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_csc.asp

Ndebele, C. (2018). Gender and school leadership: breaking the glass ceiling in South Africa. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*, *7*(2), 1582-1605. https://doi.org/10.17583/generos.2018.3179

Ngunjiri, F. W., & Hernandez, K. A. C. (2017). Problematizing authentic leadership: A collaborative autoethnography of immigrant African American somen leaders in higher education. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *19*(4), 393-406. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422317728735

Oikelome, G. (2017). Pathway to the president: The perceived impact of identity structures on the journey experiences of women college presidents. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *19*(3), 23-40. https://doi.org/10.18251.ijme.v1913.1377

O'Meara, K. Templeton, L. & Nyunt, G. (2018). Earning professional legitimacy: Challenges faced by women, under-represented minority and non-tenure track faculty. *Teachers College Record*, *120*(12), 1-38.

Ong, M., Smith, J. M., & Ko, L. T. (2018). Counterspaces for African American somen in STEM higher education: Marginal and central spaces for persistence and success. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *55*(2), 206-245. https://doi.org/10.1002.tea.21417

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 42*(5), 533-544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. SAGE Publications, inc.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications.

Patel, D. A., Sanders, G. D., Lundberg-Love, P. K., Gallien, J. A., & Smith, C. D. (2018). Issues confronting women leaders in academia: The quest for equality continues. *Women and Leadership*, 79–95. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72182-8_6

Percy, W. H., Kostere, K., & Kostere, S. (2015). Generic qualitative research in psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(2), 76-85. Rhttp://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/7

Pulido, D. Y. (2016). When giving birth becomes a liability: The intersection of reproductive oppression and the motherhood wage penalty for Latinas in Texas. *Scholar*, *19*, 111.

Rahman, S., Shore, J. B., & Lightner-Laws, C. (2016). African American women and leadership

positions: An analysis of young adults. *Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines*, *2*(4), 313-324. https://www.faculty.utrg.edu

Razzante, R. J. (2018). Intersectional agencies: Navigating predominantly White institutions as an administrator of color. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 11*(4), 339–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2018.1501082

Reynolds-Dobbs, W., Thomas, K. M., & Harrison, M. S. (2008). From mammy to superwoman: Images that hinder Black women's career development. *Journal of Career Development*, *35*(2), 129-150. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845308325645

Robinson, G., & Nelson, B. M. (2010). Pursuing upward mobility, African American professional women reflect on their journey. *Journal of Black Studies*, 40, 1168-1188. https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470832459

Rosette, A. S., Koval, C. Z., Ma, A., & Livingston, R. (2016). Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 429-445. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.01.008

Saldana, J. (2013). The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (2nd ed.). London: Sage

Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in nursing & health*, *33*(1), 77-84.

Sang, K. J. C. (2016). Gender, ethnicity and feminism: an intersectional analysis of the lived experiences feminist academic women in UK higher education. *Journal of Gender Studies, 27*(2), 192–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1199380

Scott, S. (2016). *Negotiating identity: Symbolic interactionist approaches to social identity*. John Wiley & Sons.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Teachers college press.

Selzer, R. A., & Robles, R. (2019). Every woman has a story to tell: Experiential reflections on leadership in higher education. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, *12*(1), 106-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2018.1534246

Shank, G. (2006). Six alternatives to mixed methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(4), 346-356. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478088706070842.

Sim, J., Saunders, B., Waterfield, J., & Kingstone, T. (2018). The sample size debate: response to Norman Blaikie. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *21*(5), 643-646.

Simien, E. M. (2004). Black feminist theory: charting a course for black women's studies in political science. *Women & Politics*, *26*(2), 81-93.

Simms, J. (2018). *Experiences of African American women and their ascension to senior academic leadership positions in higher education institutions*. [Unpublished doctoral Dissertation]. St. Louis, MO. University of Missouri.

Sims, C. M., & Carter, A. D. (2019). Revisiting Parker & Ogilvie's African American women executive leadership model. *Journal of Business Diversity*, *19*(2). https://doi.org/10.33423/jbd.v1912.2058

Smith, P. A. (2016). Does Racism exist in the hiring and promotion of K-12 school administrators? *Urban Education Research & Policy Annuals*, *4*(1). https://www.journals.uncc.edu

Smooth, W. G. (2016). Intersectionality and women's advancement in the discipline and across the academy. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, *4*(3), 513-528. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1170706

Sulastri, S., Gistituati, N., Neviyarni, N., & Aimon, H. (2020). *The effect of female's administrative leadership on employee performance in higher education.* Atlantis Press.

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce.*

https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf

University System of Georgia [USG], (2020a). *USG facts*. *https://www.usg.edu/news/usgfacts*

University System of Georgia [USG], (2020b). *Faculty data*. https://www.usg.edu/research/faculty_data

Vial, A. C., Napier, J. L., & Brescoll, V. L. (2016). A bed of thorns: Female leaders and the self-reinforcing cycle of illegitimacy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *27*(3), 400-414. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.12.004

Vick, A. D., & Cunningham, G. (2018). Bias against Latina and African American women job applicants: a field experiment. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-11-2017-0073

Warner, J., & Corley, D. (2017). The Women's Leadership Gap. Washington DC: Centre for American Progress.

Warren-Gordon, K., & Mayes, R. D. (2017). Navigating the academy: An autoethnographic approach to examining the lived experience of African American women at predominantly white institutions of higher education. *Qualitative Report*, *22*(9). https://doi.org/10.1017/S368980018000198

Washington Lockett, A., Gasman, M., & Nguyen, T. H. (2018). Senior level administrators and HBCUs: The role of support for Black women's success in STEM. *Education Sciences*, *8*(2), 48.

Webster, L. (2019). *Enablers and barriers influencing African American administrators' career advancement at predominantly white institutions of higher learning.* [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. University of Southern Mississippi.

West, A. B. A. (2018). *African American women in New York state who overcame barriers to become superintendents of schools*. [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. St. John Fisher College.

West, N. M. (2019). In the company of my sister-colleagues: professional counterspaces for African American women student affairs administrators. *Gender and Education*, *31*(4), 543-559. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1533926

West, N. M. (2017a). The African American women's summit: A student affairs professional development program. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *54*(3), 329-342. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1202118

West, N. M. (2017b). Withstanding our status as outsiders-within: Professional counterspaces for African American women student affairs administrators. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, *10*(3), 281-300. https://doi.org/10.1080/194078822017.1363785

Woollen, S. (2016). The road less traveled: Career trajectories of six women presidents in higher education. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, *36*, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.18738/awl.v3610.15

Wright, A., Gottfried, M. A., & Le, V. N. (2017). A kindergarten teacher like me: The role of student-teacher race in social-emotional development. *American Educational Research Journal*, *54*(1_suppl), 78S-101S.

Wright, D. A., & Salinas, C. (2016). African American women leaders in higher education. In *Racially and ethnically diverse women leading education: A worldview*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Zheng, W., Surgevil, O., & Kark, R. (2018). Dancing on the razor's edge: How top-level women leaders manage the paradoxical tensions between agency and communion. *Sex Roles*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0908-6

Appendix A:

Institutional Review Board Approval (IRB) Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04169-2021 **Responsible Researcher(s):** Annie L. Curtis

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Rudo Tsemunhu

Project Title: *Underrepresentation of African American Female Senior Administrators in Southeastern Colleges and Universities in the US.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2.** Your research study may begin immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *This research study has been approved at the following institutions:* ***College A, College B, University A (06.30.21), University B (07.13.21), & the University C (06.26.21). You have been authorized to use publicly available information to recruit individuals from University C (06.30.21).***
- *Exempt protocol guidelines* ***prohibit*** *the collection, storage, or sharing of identifiable participant information (e.g. audio recordings). Audio recordings are* ***permitted*** *provided the recordings are used for the sole purpose of creating an accurate transcript. The recordings must be deleted immediately from all recording devices.*
- *The research statement must be read aloud at the start of each recorded session. A copy must be made available to each participant.*
- *In an effort to ensure confidentiality of participants from accidental discovery, pseudonym lists are to be maintained separately from collected data (name lists, data sheets, transcripts, etc.).*
- *Upon completion of this research study all collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

☒ ***If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *05.17.2021*
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix B:

EMAIL SENT TO POTENTIAL STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Dear Senior-Level Administrator:

You are an integral part of the overall college leadership team for each faculty member and staff member you encounter. Many researchers are concerned about the underrepresentation of female African American senior administrators in post-secondary U.S colleges and universities, specifically at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Despite the many qualified African-American women who exist, African American women have made slow gains toward fair representation among Senior-Level Administrators (SLAs) in U.S. post-secondary education institutions. I believe that as an African-American female senior administrator, you can make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge that highlights the life and career experiences of female African-American senior administrators.

Suppose you are currently an African-American female senior-level administrator in a southeastern college and university in the US. In that case, I invite you to participate in this study to explore female African Americans' life and career experiences in senior-level Academic Affairs administration positions within southeastern colleges and universities in the US. Specifically, I will ask to share your life and career experiences, any barriers encountered, strategies you employed, recommendations for African American women seeking senior-level administrative positions in southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

While there will not be any monetary compensation for your participation, your contribution to this study will provide valuable information. It will add to and enhance the body of knowledge that focuses on the life and career experiences of African-American female senior-level administrators employed in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. Additionally, the findings of this study will provide current and future African-American women with strategies to achieve their desired career aspirations. Furthermore, it will provide university leadership and human-resources departments with helpful guidance and strategies to improve African American women's experiences and promote racial and gender equality in senior administration.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to complete a preliminary participant profile form to determine if you meet the selection criteria. If you are selected, you will be required to have three interviews with the researcher to gather the study's data. If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me at anncurtis@valdosta.edu with the subject line “Interested in doctoral study.”

Thank you in advance for your assistance,
Annie Curtis
Doctoral Candidate
Valdosta State University

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Annie Curtis at anncurtis@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix C:

PRELIMINARY PARTICIPANT PROFILE FORM

Participant Demographic Information

1. Name: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Ethnicity: _____
4. Age: _____

Participant Selection Criteria

1. Please circle if you currently work in a senior- level administrative position in Academic Affairs in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. Yes No

2. Please circle your administrative level while employed in southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

   Program Director Dean Vice-President Vice-Chancellor Higher
   Other:_____
3. Please circle your highest degree awarded. Masters Ph. D Ed. D

4. Indicate what year you became a senior-level administrator at your institution.

   _____

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Annie Curtis at anncurtis@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix D:

PARTICIPANT FOLLOWUP EMAIL SENT

Good Morning Dr. (Name),

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study, "*Underrepresentation of African American Female Senior Administrators in Southeastern Colleges and Universities in the US."* The next step in the process is to set-up dates and times to complete the interviews. Due to the recent rise in COVID 19 cases, the interviews will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. However, I am also willing to conduct interviews by telephone or in-person if you are not comfortable with the Microsoft Teams platform. Please let me know which mode of communication that you are comfortable with. I will be asking you to participate in 3 interview sessions and each interview session should last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. For me to set up the interviews on days and times that are good for you, please provide me with dates and times that you are available for the month of September including weekends if you like to interview on those days. I have attached a copy of the research statement which will be read aloud to you at each interview sessions as well as the interview questions for review. If you have any questions about the interview process, please feel free to reach out to me by email at anncurtis@valdosta.edu.

Warm Regards,

Annie Curtis.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Annie Curtis at anncurtis@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix E:

PARTICPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM

Three Interview Series

A. Interview One: Focus on Life History
B. Interview Two: The Details of Experience
C. Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning

Spacing of the Interviews

Interviews will be spaced 3 days to a week a part.

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate note taking and data analysis, I would like to record our conversation today. For your information, only researchers on this project will be privy to the recordings which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. Essentially, this documents states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm.

Thank you for agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt to push and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction

You have been selected to interview with me today because you have been identified as someone with a great deal to share about being an African American woman working as a senior-level administrator in southeastern colleges and universities in the US. My research study focuses on the underrepresentation of African American Female Senior Administrators in southeastern colleges and universities in the US with a particular interest in exploring the life and career experiences that they have encountered during their rise to a leadership position and what future recommendation they would like to share to improve the success of African American Female currently working in and seeking to obtain a senior-level administrative position in southeastern colleges and universities in the US.

Interview Questions

First Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself including your background, education, and professional career leading up to your role as a Senior-level administrator in Academic Affairs Administration.
2. What is your highest degree obtained?
3. Describe your overall college experience. What impact did they have on your education and career goals?
4. Tell me about your career experience since graduating from college.
5. How did you get in to working in higher education?
6. Please describe the person (s) who encouraged you the most during your career? How were they instrumental?
7. Describe your overall career experiences as an African-American woman?

8. Do you think race and gender have impacted your overall career experiences while working in higher education?

9. Have you ever worked at an HBCU? If so, please provide a comparison of your experiences at a HBCU vs a PWI.

10. What are you proudest of in your career?

11. Is there anything more you would like to add pertaining to your early career experiences?

Second Interview Questions:

1. What is your current position in Academic Affairs? In addition, what are your roles and responsibilities?

2. How long have you been in the positions?

3. At what point in your professional career, did you decide to become an administrator? And can you describe that decision-making process?

4. Tell me about your hiring process. Did you have a positive or negative experience?

5. Do you feel like you play an integral part in your department? Are you able to express your concerns or thoughts freely?

6. Can you tell me a story that best describes your work experiences as a senior-level administrator working in the area of academic affairs?

7. In what ways do your race and gender impact your relationships with the following:
    i. Faculty?
    ii. Staff?

8. Have you encountered any barriers as an African-American female senior-level administrator working in academic affairs? If so, what were they?

9. What strategies have you used to overcome these barriers?

10. What has been your best experience as an African-American female senior-level administrator working in academic affairs?

11. What has been the most challenging experience as an African-American female administrator working in academic affairs?

12. Do you feel respected by your White peers?

13. What is the sex and gender of your department head? What is your overall relationship with your department head? Do you feel like you have the support of your department head and peers to be successful as an African-American female senior-level administrator?
14. Do you feel like you have the same advantages for career progression as your White counterparts?

Third Interview Questions:

1. What advice could you offer future African American female senior-level administrators or African America females seeking to obtain a senior-level administrative position in the area of academic affairs?
2. What would you recommend to improve the success of African American females currently working in or seeking to obtain a Senior-Level administrative position in southeastern colleges and universities in the US?
3. Is diversity a significant focus at your university? If yes, how so?
4. From your perspective, do you think African American women are underrepresented in senior administrative roles in higher education institutions, especially in academic affairs?
5. If so, what are some of the reasons you think they are underrepresented?
6. How many other African-American female Senior Administrator work at your university?
7. What recommendations could you offer to institutional leaders from your personal and professional experiences during your ascension to senior administration in academic affairs?
8. What can institutional leaders do to better prepare African American women for Senior-level academic affairs leadership roles?
9. From your perspective, how does an African American female administrator in the area of academic affairs add value to the academy?
10. How do you feel this study will benefit universities and African-American female senior-level administrators in the area of academic affairs?
11. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Appendix F:

INTERVIEW RESEARCH STATEMENT

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a research study entitled *"Underrepresentation of African American Female Senior Administrators in* Southeastern Colleges and Universities in the US*",* which is being conducted by Annie Curtis*,* a student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to explore the life and career experiences of female African Americans in senior-level administration positions within southeastern colleges and universities in the US. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the obstacles, institutional policies, and practices that were positive and negative for you as you pursued your career trajectories. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately 60 to 90 minutes per interview. The interviews will be audio taped in order to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the audio will be destroyed. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interviews will serve as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 years or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Annie Curtis at anncurtis@valdosta.edu*. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee, established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or* irb@valdosta.edu*.*