Power to the Sisters: Qualitative Study Featuring the Barriers of African American Women Working in Higher Education

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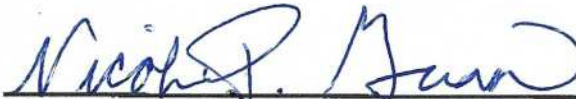B.A., Augusta State University, 2010

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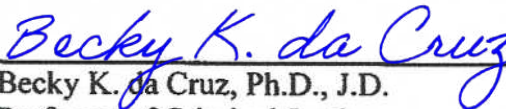
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the years, Black women have worked to advance their quality of life. Black women have been obtaining additional degrees and certifications. Despite the degrees, years of experience, and qualifications, Black women are still unable to secure positions of administration in higher education institutions. Studies have shown that there are low faculty numbers of African American women being full-time professors in higher education institutions.

This study revealed themes related to Black women in higher education as they shared their challenges to career advancement. To prevent some of these threats, only participants who were truly interested in the study and who would like to see change occur were asked to participate. Collecting as much data as possible during this study was pivotal. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions. It was important for a researcher to understand and interpret what the participant said. Initial coding and In Vivo Coding were for data analysis.

Interviews were conducted with eight Black women in various positions in multiple higher education institutions. Based on the data collected, six major themes arouse: 1) income and salary, 2) work-life balance, 3) career trajectory, 4) lack of mentorship, 5) PWI versus HBCU, and 6) racism and sexism. Findings indicated that Black women often feel undervalued and less supported in their work as compared to their counterparts. The researcher recommends that this new information can be used to further develop targeted administrative development programs for Black women working in higher education institutions.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mommy, Bessie Boyd. You rock! I could not do life without you.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In terms of other races and gender, Black women are lacking in the number of leadership

positions in higher education institutions. With adequate years of service, degrees earned, and

skills, Black women still fall behind in this field. Siegel, Barrett, and Smith (2015) found the

following:

> Studies have investigated market wages and their influence on higher education's ability
>
> to compete for doctoral-trained African Americans; feelings of exclusion, isolation,
>
> marginalization, and alienation experienced by minority faculty at predominantly White
>
> institutions; the socialization and incorporation of African American and women faculty
>
> into schools and colleges; and the contributions of African American faculty to the
>
> scholarship of discovery. (p. 593)

Blacks have struggled for years to gain senior-level positions at colleges and universities,

although making up a larger population of their prospective campuses. "By the early 1970s,

across all of the postsecondary education, women were 46 percent of undergraduates and 37

percent of graduate students, but only 27 percent of faculty" (Menges & Exum, 1983, p. 124).

Women tend to be viewed in the lower ranks. The U.S. Department of Education now allows

easy access to institution-level information about the number of tenured Black women at 1,458

American colleges and universities in 2019 -- providing many faculty and graduate students clear

evidence of just how dire the numbers are at their particular college or university. The lack of

Black women in tenured faculty positions reflects a much wider systemic failure than that of

individual institutions (Rucks-Ahidiana, 2021). Based on Menges and Exum's findings (1983),

"women held more responsible positions in the American Historical Association; and they got jobs more easily as professional historians. But within higher education they remained low on the ladder" (p. 124).

African American women continue to experience discrimination within the ranks of higher education administration that pose barriers and challenges that hinder their ability to access and achieve senior-level positions of authority (Gregory, 1995). Race and gender discrimination continue as barriers in the selection process even though laws have been passed to prevent discrimination (Rai & Critzer, 2000).

Quinta, Cotter, & Romenesko, 1998, identify the following barriers to promotion:

1. Power within the system,

2. Hiring and promotion practices,

3. Lack of professional development,

4. Tracking women in stereotypical areas,

5. Lack of available information,

6. Attitudes towards and stereotypes of administrators,

7. Perceptions of peers and administrators,

8. Family issues, and

9. The "old boy network."

There are stereotypical beliefs that women are not as competent as men. Although women are qualified, they tend to be viewed as tokens. "The overall experience has led to the belief that the glass ceiling representation of barriers is responsible for women's inability to climb the higher rungs of academic success" (Quinta et al., 1998, p. 215).

Statement of the Problem

The more barriers of access to higher education for African American women, the fewer African American women will be represented in the senior-level ranks of higher education administration arena (Bell, 1979). Women often face discrimination in the workplace based on their age, gender, and race. Black women in the higher education system face multiple challenges throughout the development of their careers. The challenges, growth, and development of Black women in higher education will provide more insight for leaders to make a change. Black women currently have more advanced degrees than their demographic held in the past; however, they still lack senior leadership positions. There has been significant growth in the number of Black women earning Ph.D.s. African women Ph.D. graduates grew from 10 in 1996 to 106 in 2012 - a 960% increase (Phakeng, 2015). Gasman, Abiola, and Travers (2015) found "people of color earn only 20.4% of the master's degrees awarded in the United States in 2012…[and] African Americans [hold] 6.2% of doctoral degrees awarded in the United States in 2012" (p. 2). These women remain in lower-level positions despite having doctorate degrees and they are still employed in low-skilled jobs. Throughout the years, Black women have struggled to obtain and maintain senior leadership positions despite their efforts. Phakeng (2015) suggested that "women have to be much better than men to land top jobs, they have to work doubly hard" (p. 11).

Black women in the higher education system face multiple challenges in the development of their careers. Women receive little or no encouragement in seeking leadership positions, while men are encouraged to enter administration to a greater degree than women (Growe & Montgomery, 1999). The lack of female social networks, or being a member of a male club, results in the lack of recognition that often leads to advancement. The isolation associated with

minority status, sex-typed expectations, gender bias, the enormous amount of stress that is part of the job, and the "lonely at the top" feelings are barriers many women face (Evelyn, 1998; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996; Williams, 1990). Men often are not accustomed to working with women of power. Boards tend to favor candidates for their "fit", and select candidates most like themselves in their traditionally male-dominated environment (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan, 2000). Women also battle with family responsibilities while attempting to build their careers. A woman's 70-hour work week as an administrator may conflict with family responsibilities (Evelyn, 1998; Tallerico, 1998; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996; Williams, 1990).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework allows the researcher to explain the problem based on related concepts that are directly related to the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined it this way:

> A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied-the key factors, constructs, or variables- and the presumed relationships among them. Frameworks can be rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive, or causal. (p. 18)

Critical Race Theory and how it directly affects the racial identity development of Black women working in higher education was explored in this research study. Critical Race Theory (CRT), while at times controversial and complex, was selected as a theoretical framework because it offers several explanations from varying perspectives for understanding race and racism and how they are applied to adult education (Bell, 1987).

CRT theorists in education seek to explain the continued inequalities that people of color in education experience (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Black women in the higher education system face multiple challenges throughout the development of their careers. Taylor, Gillborn, &

Ladson-Billings (2016) stated, "Critical legal studies scholars also challenged the notion that the civil rights struggle represents a long, steady, march towards social transformation" (p. 18). The challenges, growth, and development Black women in higher education face will provide more insight into the possibility of change in leadership. Individuality, identity theory, and ethnic identity development (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Josselson, 1973, 1980, 1987) may also contribute to the sociological, psychological, and structural factors that assist in the explanation as to why Black women are under-represented in the senior level positions of authority in higher education administration.

Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings (2016) quoted, "CRT departs from mainstream legal scholarship by sometimes employing storytelling to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdom that makes up the common culture about race that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down" (p. 18). Many have used affirmative action as a means to increase their educational opportunities and employment. There must be a means of social change to relate Critical Race Theory to affirmative action. According to Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings (2016), "African Americans represented a particular conundrum because not only were they not afforded individual civil rights because they were not White and owned no property, but they were constructed as property" (p. 22). Racial discrimination has always been a problem that we cannot seem to overcome. Black women not only face racial discrimination but they face gender discrimination as well. Women have gone above and beyond to become educated and earn senior-level administrative positions. Women and minority professionals are well represented in higher education positions overall. Six in 10 higher education professionals are women. One in five positions are held by racial and ethnic minorities. In a majority of employment areas, women and minorities hold far fewer leadership positions than their White

male counterparts (Whitford, 2020). Women seek degrees and have the qualifications, whether it is years of experience, training, or certification. They still seem to fall behind and cannot secure senior-level positions. This issue is the main reason that this type of research is important. Ladson-Billings (1998) stated "CRT suggests that current instructional strategies presume that African American students are deficient. As a consequence, classroom teachers are engaged in a never-ending quest for "the right strategy to technique" to deal with (read: control) 'at-risk' (read: African American) students" (p. 19).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research study was to identify challenges and barriers that African American women face while working in higher education as they are trying to reach senior-level administrative positions to bring about systemic change. It also seems that this group was confined to specific areas, such as assistant positions and entry-level positions. Even though Black women earn more advanced degrees, they still lack leadership roles. Fewer black women than men attain advanced degrees and those who do seldom rise through the ranks as far as their male counterparts (Menges & Exum, 1983). Women of Color, in particular, suffer wage and salary discrimination as well. After controlling for degrees, research, and publications, the salary differential between men and women professors ranges from 600 to 1500 dollars (Wilson, 1989).

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the experiences of Black women working in higher education in relation to how the influence of their race was either a factor or a non-factor in their advancement or responsibilities of leadership roles?

RQ1A: How do Black women working in higher education settings perceive race has impacted their advancement?

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

Narrative inquiry is a form of an individual's personal experience told through storytelling as a way to understand an experience. Polkinghorne (1998) focuses on two types of narrative inquiry: descriptive narrative and explanatory narrative. He describes the purpose of a descriptive narrative is to "to produce an accurate description of the interpretive narrative accounts individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or organizations meaningful" (p. 161). An explanatory narrative is described as "the interest to account for the connect between events in a casual sense and to provide the necessary narrative accounts that supply the connects" (p. 16).

The research design for this proposed study was a narrative inquiry qualitative research design. Narrative inquiry is a collaboration between the researcher and participants that can time place over a period of time when the participants relive and retell the stories that make up their lives, both socially and individually (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The study consisted of African American women working within the higher education system as they told their stories about working in the field and their experiences with career development and discrimination. Patton (2015) mentions that "stories organize and shape our experiences and also tell others about our lives, relationships, journeys, decisions, successes, and failures" (p. 128).

This method was chosen because the group of participants are similar in race and gender and share experiences in being higher education professionals. The researcher wanted to understand how the experiences of Black women affect their career trajectory as they navigate through obtaining senior-level administrative positions in higher education institutions.

"Narratives are first-person accounts of experiences that are in story format having a beginning, middle, and end" (Merriam, 2002, p. 286). This study consisted of participants who provided examples of their surroundings, experiences, and encounters. The purpose of narrative inquiry is to use the stories that people tell, analyze them, and understand the true meaning of their experiences as revealed in their stories (Merriam, 2002).

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

For this proposed study, the researcher conducted interviews using a qualitative research design with eight Black women working in various higher education settings. Interviews consisted of 23 open-ended questions (Appendix A) so that the participants could feel free to discuss their experiences while working in higher education. These interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. All participants self-identified as Black or African American females who are staff personnel at higher education institutions. The researcher conducted interviews via Microsoft Teams.

Seidman (2006) explains,

> To give the details of their experience a beginning, middle, and end, people must reflect on their experience. It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience. (p. 7).

Black women working in higher education share similar and different experiences when it comes to careers and the time that they spent as higher education professionals. Interviewing provides them the opportunity to be open about their experiences and voice their opinions in great detail. It gives the storyteller a sense of meaning for their own experiences. Seidman (2013) mentions that "Social abstractions like education are best understood through the experiences of

the individuals whose work and lives are the stuff upon which the abstractions are built" (p. 9). Interviewing is the best way for the researcher to inquire about the lives of the participants in the study.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can lead to positive and social change for Black women. This study encourages and empowers Black women based on experiences from their counterparts and other Black women working in higher education institutions. The researcher provides strategies and skills for those seeking to become successful in the field of higher education. This study also shows the importance of mentor relationships amongst Black women. Having academic and professional relationships is essential to the growth and development of these women and it also shows that having a supportive network is significant in higher education.

Limitations

The participants consisted of eight Black women who work in various higher education institutions: Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and community colleges. The participants were current or previous employees of higher education institutions. This study was done to provide meaningful insight to help other Black women who aspire to have a career in higher education or who are currently employed as a higher education professional and are looking to grow in their career into a leadership position. The study is limited to the perspectives of these Black women. They have similarities and differences in their stories.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

- *Academic bullying*- systematic long-term interpersonal aggressive behavior as it occurs in the academic workplace setting in both covert and overt forms against faculty who are unable to defend themselves against aggressive behavior committed by faculty in power in the workplace.

- *Affirmative Action*- the practice or policy of favoring individuals belonging to groups known to have been discriminated against previously.

- *Counterstories*- an alternative or opposing narrative or explanation.

- *Critical Race Theory (CRT)*- a radical legal movement that seeks to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power. (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001)

- *Glass ceiling*- an unofficially acknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities.

- *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)*- postsecondary educational institutions established before 1964 with their mission being solely to educate African American students (Lomotey, 2010).

- *Intersectionality*- the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

- *Narrative Inquiry*- the process of gathering stories, analyzing themes for key elements (e.g., time, place, plot, and environment), and then rewriting the stories to place them within a chronological sequence (Creswell, 2007).

- *Phenomenology*- an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience.

- *Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)*- used to describe an institution of

- higher learning in which White students account for 50% or greater of the student

- enrollment. However, the majority of these institutions may also be understood as

- historically White institutions (HWIs) in recognition of the segregation and exclusion

- supported by the United States before 1964 (Lomotey, 2010).

- *Racism*- prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people based on their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

- *Sexism*- prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, based on sex.

Organization of Study

This chapter provides an introduction, statement of the problem, conceptual framework, purpose of the study, research design, research questions, data collection, the significance of the study, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter II reviews literature relevant to Black women in higher education and their regard for

 senior leadership positions. Chapter III focuses on the research design, site selection, participant selection, sampling, data collection/procedures, and data analysis, including coding methods and trustworthiness. Chapter IV discusses the participant's narratives, along with the finding of themes and discussion. This study concludes with Chapter V, detailing each theme, answering the research questions, limitations to the study, and implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of literature focuses on Black women in higher education, more specifically,

those in or looking to enter administrative or senior-level positions. As related to the literature,

historical perspectives of Black women in higher education, the current status of Black women in

higher education, and barriers related to growth were examined. The researcher will review

hiring, promotion, mentoring, networking, and balancing career, family, and community, along

with attitudes and beliefs toward racism and sexism. Within higher education, minority women

describe their psychological situation as more difficult than that of minority males, possibly

because women suffer double discrimination or because their loyalties to two subgroups conflict,

being Black and being a woman (Menges & Exum, 1983). Much of the literature provided

suggests more barriers than opportunities for Black women.

Black women in higher education have very diverse educational backgrounds and they

serve in various positions at colleges and universities. Black women have been

disproportionately represented when it comes to senior-level positions in higher education

institutions even though they have a record number of doctorates in education and many other

applicable fields (Becks-Moody, 2004; Boyd, 2002; Johnson-Bailey, 2006; Jones et al., 2012;

Martin, 2011; Mayers, 2001; Myers, 2000, 2004). *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*

of Higher Education (2012) posted data on the race and ethnicity of college administrators,

faculty, and staff from Fall 2009 that listed the following statistics for women in the academy as

professional (senior level positions) total race known (1,364,893), American Indian (0.6%), Asian (6.1%), African American (9.4%), Hispanics (5.0%), White (74.4%), nonresident foreign (4.5%), and race unknown (4.6%). *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac of Higher Education* (2012) also listed the executive, administrative, and managerial positions within the academy with the total race known as 121,232, and breakdown of American Indian (0.6%), Asian (3.4%), African American (11.0%), Hispanics (5.6%), White (78.9%), non-resident foreign (0.4%), and 2% (race unknown). In the same data for Fall 2009, *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac of Higher Education* (2012) listed African American women as only comprising 8.6% of the total 641,836 faculty members reporting known race, yet they made up 17.7% of nonprofessional staff positions out of 569,176, and 11.5% of other employees that totaled 451,753 women. Given their education and background, these women should be far more advanced in the workforce, yet they are given entry-level positions with little or no room to grow.

Individuality, identity theory, and ethnic identity development (Josselson, 1973, 1980, 1987; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009) may also contribute to the psychological, social, and structural factors that explain why Black women are underrepresented in senior-level positions in higher education institutions. It becomes extremely difficult to build a career and grow without equal opportunities. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential for Black women to advance. They are underrepresented and businesses are slow to make changes. 3.3% of senior leadership and executive roles were held by Black professionals in the United States in 2018 (Olusis, 2021). Black women do excel in many fields, but when it comes to higher education, they are often overlooked for those senior-level positions.

Historical Context

From a historical perspective, women were first admitted into higher education institutions in the United States when Oberlin College admitted female students in 1837. This was more than 200 years after Harvard College was founded for the education of young men (Chamberlain, 1988). This was the beginning of formal education for women. Soon afterward, Black women were admitted to and obtained degrees from Oberlin College, graduating its first Black woman, Mary Jane Patterson, with a degree in 1850 (Littlefield, 1997). Black women continuously began to obtain degrees from higher education institutions. The first Black female medical student, Rebecca Lee, graduated from the New England Female Medical College in 1864. In 1869, Mary Ann Shadd Carey became the first Black woman student to enroll at Howard University's Law Department. She graduated in 1884 at the age of 61.

In 1869, Fanny Jackson Coppin was named principal of the Institution for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, making her the first woman to lead an institution of higher education in the United States (Littlefield, 1997). In 1976, Mar Francis Berry became the chancellor of the University of Colorado, serving as the first African American woman to head a major research university (Littlefield, 1997). Although Black women have made some strides in higher education, their presence is very minimal. Black women were deemed as outsiders in higher education institutions.

Black women continued to push forward to advance their learning. By 1890, only 30 Black women in the United States had earned baccalaureate degrees, as compared with 300 Black men and 2500 white women (Perkins, 1993). Through the years, African Americans rely on gaining education for success. Historically, during the 1970s, more women earned Ph.Ds. and were more responsible for positions in the American Historical Association and easily became

historians, but within higher education, they remained low on the ladder (Menges & Exum, 1983).

After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865, several other Whites established Black colleges, such as Fisk University in 1866, Howard University in 1867, Morehouse College in 1866, and Spelman College in 1881 (Cooper, 2018). In turn, several institutions and organizations were founded primarily for Black women in higher education. Spelman College is a private, historically Black, women's liberal arts college in Atlanta, Georgia. Spelman is the oldest private HBCU for women, as an Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary founded by two teachers, Harriet E. Giles, and Sophia B. Packard. The school started with 11 Black women. Packard was appointed as Spelman's first president in 1888 after the charter for the seminary was granted. Spelman was a leading institution for Black women administrators in higher education institutions. Throughout the years, women have made slow strides as higher education administrators, dealing with many challenges that arise.

HBCUs versus PWIs

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) traditionally have been a place of refuge and pride for the Black community, given that it is a place where other Blacks want to see each other thrive. In 2019, there were 100 HBCUs located in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Of the 100 HBCUs, 51 were public institutions and 49 were private nonprofit institutions. It can be assumed that the number of Black administrators at HBCUs would be much larger than those at PWIs. The future and success of HBCUs depend on their leadership (Cunningham, 1992). Black administrators at HBCUs tend to play the role of friend, advisor, mentor, counselor, etc. because they are in a position of hierarchy that allows for the ability to act on student problems, questions, and concerns (Cunningham, 1992).

Since their inception in 1854 (Garibaldi, 1984), the interest was to provide:

1. education for newly freed slaves that was rich in Black history and tradition;

2. educational experiences that are consistent with the experiences and values of many Black families; and

3. service to the Black community and the country by aiding in the development of leadership, racial pride, and return service to the community. (Sims, 1994)

Although HBCUs were created to service African American students, they now serve students from all ethnicities and backgrounds. Faculty and staff are also racially diverse. Black faculty, staff, and administrators are committed to the success of their students. They work to prepare African American students academically, socially, culturally, and spiritually to become active and productive Black citizens (Jean-Marie, 2004). Institutions also promote equity and parity across HBCUs. HBCUs are critical in opening opportunities for Blacks in higher education.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics of the 14,100 full-time faculty at HBCUs in 2001, 72 percent were members of minority groups. Of full-time faculty, 58 percent were male and 42 percent were female. Blacks constituted 60 percent of the full-time faculty at HBCUs and Whites constituted 27 percent. In 2001, 54,551 persons were employed at HBCUs, of which 76 percent were Black. Still, only a handful are led by women. Twenty-five women are presidents of the nation's 100 HBCUs, according to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and the United Negro College Fund. They are more likely to serve in positions of external affairs and student services than in executive, administrative, and roles in academic affairs. Black women continue to be locked out of the upper echelons of power at HBCUs (Gasman, 2014). The number of Black female HBCU presidents should be much higher given that females make up

between 62 percent and 75 percent of HBCU student bodies. Black women have been continuously locked out of the HBCU presidency, which stems from white patriarchy (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021).

The challenge for HBCUs is to provide the leadership and direction to help prepare students, faculty, and administrators at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) and HBCUs to address issues of racism and sexism. At PWIs, Black women experience low evaluations, a lack of understanding of their research projects, and teaching interests by students and other faculty (Truehill, 2021). "Whether at a PWI or HBCU, the higher education sectors customarily ignored and diminished Black women's presence" (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021, p. 29). Addressing the phenomenon of sexism is particularly critical for HBCUs because they lag behind the PWIs in their capacity to systematically address gender in higher education (Bonner, 2001). HBCUs provide Black women with more supportive environments to advocate for one another. Black women struggle with working at PWIs because they tend to be the voice for all minorities. The challenges Black women experience at PWIs are goliath in comparison to their gendered and non-gendered counterparts as they endure daily bouts of sexism and racism while working at PWIs. However, the ill-treatment of Black women at PWIs is replicated in HBCUs (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). Regardless of how intelligent, savvy, and educated a Black woman may be, in both PWIs and HBCUs, they are still constrained by race and gender (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021).

Decuir-Gunby et al. (2009), conducted a study with Black professionals using Critical Race Theory on their experience and racial microaggressions at HBCUs and PWIs. The study included 15 participants, 10 women and five men, Black instructors/professors, and administrators. They focused on the personal experiences of Black educational professionals

working in higher education by sharing their stories regarding race and racism through one-on-one interviews. They found that "10 participants at PWIs mentioned 112 instances of racial microaggressions while eight participants at HBCUs discussed only 37 instances" (Decuir-Gunby et. al. 2019, p. 6). Participants dealt with insults such as ascription of intelligence, criminal assumptions, and pathologizing cultural values/communication styles. The participants used coping strategies such as, "confronting racism through open communication, establishing personal and professional support networks, engaging in self-care, setting boundaries and... using avoidance techniques, working harder" (Decuir-Gunbyet. al., 2019, p. 6). In conclusion the participants at PWIs experience microinsults in the forms of being viewed as second-class citizens or criminals. The participants at HBCUs experience ascriptions of intelligence and pathologizing cultural values and communication styles. The HBCU participants mentioned much fewer microaggressions experiences than those at PWIs.

<center>Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Theory (CRT)</center>

Racial discrimination is a huge barrier affecting Black women's higher education, affecting them both personally and professionally. CRT is critically important when it comes to understanding Black women's plight to become administrators in higher education institutions. Critical Race Theorists in education seek to explain the continuous inequities that people of color in education experience (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Iverson (2007) further discussed, "CRT adds to this by illuminating the use of Whiteness as a standard in policy against which to measure the progress and success of people of color and exposures the inherent racism in diversity policies" (p. 3). CRT questions race, diversity, and inclusion. Critical Race Theory is based on three major components:

1. the permanence of racism or the understanding that racism exists in every macro-and micro-elements in American culture and its institutional structures- especially in education;

2. interest conversion or confronting the notion that policies designed to benefit Black/Brown or women folk actually supports and sustains mostly white women (e.g., Affirmative Acton), thus reinforcing white supremacy, and

3. the critique of liberalism challenges institutional statements of diversity and inclusion and post-racial rhetoric. (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Hiraldo, 2010; Tate, 1997)

The discourses of racism and sexism fail to be simultaneously considered (Crenshaw, 1995). Black men will ignore the gender experiences and White women will ignore the racial experiences, leaving Black women to deal with both. While battling with intersectionality, Black women will often choose to support their race and leave their gender as a secondary issue. The intersection of oppression is essential in that it identifies the social construction of race but rather is multidimensional and intersects with various experiences (Delgado & Bernal, 2002). In alignment with Symington (2004), women's identities should not be divided and analyzed, instead, they should be an analysis of the whole person to include the truth of Black women's experiences.

CRT is a diverse movement that includes the permanence of racism, that the structures based on White privilege and White supremacy, maintain the discrimination and marginalization of persons of color; a rejection of liberalism, meritocracy, colorblindness, neutrality, and objectivity (Gasman et al., 2015). CRT framework questions race and uses data to make claims. Other races are urged to use their voices through storytelling, counterstories, narratives, and

personal accounts to prove the theory. Hiraldo (2010) states, "counterstories can assist in

analyzing the climate of a college campus and provide opportunities for further research in the

ways which an institution can become inclusive and not simply superficially diverse" (p. 54).

Effective strategies must be made, especially in colleges and universities, to advance women of

color. Higher education ignores the existence of systematic racism, diversity action plans become

ineffective and they only reinforce structural and institutional racism (Hiraldo, 2010).

CRT is based on the facts that race and racism are endemic and they are interested in

forms of oppression based on gender, class, sexuality, language, and culture (Delgado &

Stefanic, 1995). In higher education, CRT has created negative perceptions, barriers, and a lack

of progress for people of color. Higher education institutions should recognize and work towards

dismantling colorblind policies (Iverson, 2007). According to Mawhinney (2011),

> The other within regarding the academic landscape shows that when a Black woman
>
> earns a tenure-track position in a predominantly white school, she is laden with service,
>
> acting as the nurturer to scores of Black students who also feel ostracized in white
>
> environments; nonetheless, she typically performs such service silently. (p. 217)

Historically, Whites have held power in these institutions and people of color have been

underrepresented. Not seeing the issues at hand, diversity initiatives cannot be implemented and

are not being used to full capacity. A main theme in CRT shows that negative notions, structural

barriers, and inadequate progress for people of color have occurred within higher education

(Hiraldo, 2010).

CRT is explored as a theoretical framework to help understand Black women in higher

education institutions, as it relates to cultivation, mentorship, and retention (León & Thomas,

2016). Racism has become an issue for Black women in these institutions and CRT brings

awareness to the problem. It "engages in overt dialogue on the persistence and complexity of institutional racism and the system propagation of patterns that allow for intuition racism to continue existing" (León & Thomas, 2016, p. 9). Racism is alive and present in colleges and universities. CRT is utilized as a medium for Black women to tell their experiences in higher education in hopes that it will impact race and racism.

Critical Race Theory "attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, ad class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact on communities of color" (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 63). CRT explores personal and cultural contexts in terms of race, gender, class, and socioeconomic status. Racial oppression can be further explained by CRT. Ways to show the consciousness of disadvantaged groups expose microaggressions by creating counterstories (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Counterstories in CRT are used as a form of discussions, archives, and personal testimonies because it acknowledges marginalized groups by the status that was previously not told or have been given different stories based on experiences that challenge the discourse and beliefs of the dominant group (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

Storytelling is a major component of CRT. This research study will focus on storytelling and the experiences of Black women in higher education. Storytelling helps to "analyze the myths, presuppositions and received wisdom that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one-down" (Delgado, 1995, p. 14). This provides more insight into the challenges that are faced. Critical Race Theorists use storytelling and narratives to make connections between the voices of victims of racism while discussing institutional, overt, and covert racism (Hughes & Giles, 2010). Personal experiences are important sources of knowledge.

According to Calmore (1995), CRT is described as tending:

…towards a very personal expression that allows our experiences and lessons, learned as People of Color, to convey the knowledge we possess in a way that is empowering to us, and, it is hoped, ultimately empowering to those on whose behalf we act. (p. 321)

Counterstories help us to rethink what we have originally known to be true. CRT helps the oppressed to create their shared memory and history which can be used as a source of strength as they work within a system dominated by a narrative that excludes and minimizes their existence (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010). Black women in higher education must challenge their current narrative with counterstories. They were able to document evidence of discrimination and racism through qualitative studies.

Jean-Marie et al. (2009) conducted a study using Critical Race Theory, by way of narrative inquiry. Participants included 12 Black women from a previous study. They held positions such as President, Academic Dean, Vice Chancellor, Vice President, Executive Director, and University Attorney. They found that these women "endured harsh treatment and discrimination…in public schools, higher education, and other sectors of society" (Jean-Marie et al., 2009, p. 576). The study contended that Black women working in higher education administration are highly educated, competent, and can overcome problems. Even with the stereotype, Black women use their knowledge and creativity to become successful. They have a strong self-image and cultural understanding of their personal history to help with in unwelcoming professional settings (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). CRT helps to add to the depth of our understanding of the struggles that Black women face in academia.

Showunmi and Maylor (2013) produced a body of work through a reflective paper that examines the experiences of two Black women working in higher education in the United

Kingdom. The paper uses Critical Race Theory to provide narration of the self-inquiry of these women to tell how they constructed their Black identities in higher education institutions. Within this paper "the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Whiteness studies and intersectionality, in part to articulate our experiences within the context of being Black female academics, and within this construction of 'Blackness' and 'Whiteness' as they applied/are applied to our identities/experiences" (Showunmi & Maylor, 2013, p. 4). The purpose of the study was to focus on gender and class, which can often get overlooked by the focus on race. Counterstories were also used to provide new insight into Black women's experiences and identities in the academic journey to counter the current narrative. The two participants shared different experiences but related in the thoughts of fitting in or being out of place. They found that "CRT, Whiteness studies and intersectionality are useful theoretical/conceptual tools in conceptualizing the experiences of Black academics" (Showunmi & Maylor, 2013, p. 28). In conclusion, it was mentioned that a Black woman's experiences cannot be fully explained by racism, but more so fueled by embodied Whiteness.

In a study similar to this proposed study, Gunn (2016) conducted a study using CRT to identify strategies used by Black women to gain a director position at 4-year Predominately White Institutions. Interviews, observation, and document analysis were used to collect data. Five Black female directors were selected to participate and were interviewed using open-ended questions. The study had "questions that addressed their daily routines, how they interpreted and used current policies, and what they perceived as obstacles to their success" (Gunn, 2016, p. 67). This study found that "female directors in the current study expressed overt acts of caring and nurturing and a heightened sensitivity of race-related issues towards African American students at PWIs" (Gunn, 2016, p. 95). The participants served as mentors to the Black students at PWIs

and they gained a sense of fulfillment by helping them and providing resources for them. However, it was also found that Black women did not feel good enough or were undervalued in their workplace. The participants also discussed having a strong mother, who helped to shape their cultural identity. Lastly, the study also found that the participants went through conventional methods to gain their director position.

<div align="center">Affirmative Action</div>

Blacks have been denied equal protection under the law for centuries. From 1619 to 1865, the enslavement of Americans of African descent was legal and protected by the U.S. Constitution. For 50 years, Blacks were categorized as "chattel property, bartered, branded, brutalized, and dehumanized" (Allen et al., 2002, p. 442). Over the next 100 years, from 1865 to 1965, Blacks were legally segregated, humiliated, and defined as inferior human beings. By 1965, legal barriers to Black progress were torn down, leaving in their place a heritage of opposition, denial, and restraint no less potent in denying Blacks equality of opportunity (Allen et al., 2002). Racial discrimination continued for years, especially in the workforce. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson placed Executive Order 11246, which mandated affirmative action, which attempted to address slavery and "Jim Crowism," or historic and contemporary racial oppression, that kept African Americans mired in poverty and despair. President Johnson believed that competition should be fair, especially for those who had been disadvantaged for years.

According to Menges and Exum (1983), "Affirmative action aims at increasing opportunities for women and minorities to enter the academic job market and at ensuring equity in competition for faculty positions" (p. 129). Affirmative action is critical for dismantling institutional practices that limit opportunities for highly qualified African Americans and other

marginalized racial minorities. In many colleges and universities, federal funding has been given to increase the number of minorities and women gaining employment. Even with goals set in place, there is still not a large amount employed for many reasons such as the availability of women and minority candidates, departmental hiring goals, advertising and recruitment, positive leadership, and lack of effort by the government to enforce compliance (Menges & Exum, 1983). Thompson (2008) found that universities are focusing on recruitment rather than retention of Black faculty. Affirmative action does not accomplish what it hopes to set out to accomplish. It indirectly affects promotion.

For centuries African Americans have struggled and fought for equality. Equal opportunity programs, such as affirmative action have provided some sense of hope. Affirmative action programs do not mandate that women and minorities enter particular ranks or salaries, or that they progress through rank and salary at an equitable rate with their nonminority male counterparts (Menges & Exum, 1983). They do not guarantee success, but an opportunity to compete with their counterparts and prove their worth. Affirmative action is used to promote diversity and give those who have been shut out a chance at an opportunity.

Shteynberg et al. (2011) conducted two research studies, one with students from a large public university and one with working adults, all of whom were White. They found that White's reactions to affirmative action were not consistent, citing two beliefs. They found the first belief to "modern racism, as the idea that people of color are no longer discriminated against in contemporary society and receive special treatment based on race" (Baron, 2014, p. 36). The second belief was, "collective relative deprivation, as the notion that Whites are placed at a disadvantage in contemporary society" (Baron, 2014, p. 36). The study found that many of the participants perceived affirmative action to be unfair. They believe people of color who have

reached positions of power have had advantages such as affirmative action. Affirmative action can be a touchy subject. Black women who enter the ranks of administration in higher education institutions must constantly prove their worth or people will feel as though positions are handed to them.

White women have been by far the greatest beneficiaries of affirmative action, realizing significant gains in all areas of education, employment, contracting, and careers (Wilson, 1998). Affirmative Action allows White women increase to access education, which leads to higher pay in professional positions, increasing the income in White households (León & Thomas, 2016). Affirmative action focuses on inclusiveness and diversity, along with enriching the higher education experience. Women and people of color have struggled to gain entry into white spaces. Black women face the harshest realities when attempting to gain a foothold in white spaces (Melaku, 2022).

<center>Hiring and Barriers to Promotion</center>

College administrators require extensive knowledge, training, and skills. Black women often learn the positions as they go and sometimes have little to no preparation. Black women who aspire to be administrators have found that their higher education institutions and districts do not select or recruit them for training programs in the administration field, making it harder for them to break into the system (Murray et al., 1993). It takes time, effort, and financial means to reach promotion in higher education. Securing that advanced degree can be very costly and take many years to complete. Tillman (2001) mentioned three major factors that are roadblocks for Black women to be successful: (1) lack of socialization to faculty life, (2) lack of meaningful tutoring, and (3) the inability to articulate a viable and sustainable research agenda.

With advanced degrees, years of service, and superb skills, Black women still face several barriers when it comes to promotion. According to Sandler (1986), Black women are often placed in "dead-end positions." These positions are usually in multicultural affairs, minority affairs, and EEOC with no possibility for advancement. Despite many efforts, retention, and promotion have been unsuccessful. Black women continue to experience discrimination within the higher education administration system that poses challenges and barriers that hinder their ability to reach those senior-level positions (Gregory, 1995; 2001). Black women tend to give up on seeking leadership positions because they are faced with so much adversity and continuous obstacles. Menges and Exum (1983) state, "sustaining a career in academe requires more than securing a position; it requires surviving promotion and tenure, which usually determine who will remain and who will leave the academy" (p. 130). One must be consistent, persistent, and have a strong work ethic to continue in higher education. They describe their experiences as stressful, isolating, and at a severe disadvantage for tenure and promotion in post-secondary institutions' employment positions (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Clay (2005) identified the importance of work ethic, a sense of self-worth and self-confidence, and leadership style.

Black women are often faced with the challenges of balancing career, family, and community commitments. The time demands of higher education can be a huge barrier for Black women, especially because they are juggling so many hats. Many higher education institutions require faculty and staff to be responsible for teaching undergraduates, advising students, serving on committees, mentoring students, and a host of other duties that are not rewarded by tenure and promotion (Gregory, 2001). Higher education is often very time-consuming. It requires activities such as producing scholarly work, which can hinder career progress if not (Chamberlin, 1988). At many institutions, faculty are required to consistently conduct quality research and publish

scholarly journal articles. On top of dealing with sexism and the typical stereotypes, women tend to struggle in the career field. Sexism, equity in pay, isolation, and other marginalities also lend themselves to the sluggishness of African American women in higher education having full citizenship within academe (Barksdale, 2006; Kanter, 2006; Rai & Critzer, 2000; Strum, 2006; Turner, 2002). They battle sexism, racism, and classism to achieve significant gains in higher education as students, faculty, administrators, and college presidents (Bates, 2007; Campbell & Jones-Deweever, 2014).

Black women in leadership positions in education are perceived as aggressive, strong-willed, difficult to work with, or too pushy (Lais, 2018). Stereotypes have an impact on colleagues and they do not wish to collaborate with Black women professionally. They are often described as described working in cold, unwelcoming, insensitive, and isolating environments with little room for professional development and growth (West, 2017b). They often do extra duties and exceed expectations, yet they are not promoted nor compensated for their work because of stereotypical beliefs. McCombs (1989) mentioned the challenge for black women in the academy is "to enter and remain within the university and perform all responsibilities without losing integrity" (p. 141).

Several studies have indicated that minority faculty members often find promotion and tenure procedures to be ambiguous, inappropriate, unrealistic, or unfair (Banks, 1984; Gregory, 1999).

Due to a recognition of obvious shortages of ethnic and cultural diversity, and the effects of racism and sexism which have plagued the career development of Black females, recent commitments of institutions of higher education have been to diversify staff

profiles by hiring and promoting various minority group members and women. (Rusher, 1996, p. 32)

Despite the credentials and experience of Black women, racial identity always serves as a mitigating factor for determining their authority and legitimacy (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It is important to break down barriers that prevent Black women from being hired and promoted. Requiring that all interview panels be diverse in their makeup, changing the weight of the interview in the selection process, and reviewing jobs and job descriptions to focus on requirements as opposed to style preference can assist with hiring practices (Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004).

Recruitment activities at some institutions disadvantage Black women (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Due to de facto segregation, many hiring decisions are in favor of the race that is the dominant group on campus, which in turn, most commonly disadvantages Black women (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Oftentimes, they can also be expected to be paid less. According to Gregory (2001), women and minorities consistently receive lower starting salaries than those in the dominant culture who are equally qualified and experienced.

In Patitu and Hinton's (2003) research study, they found that Black women report more negative than positive tenure-related experiences. According to Patitu and Hinton (2003), the most common barriers that Black women face include: "conflicting information, unwritten rules, lack of direction and mentoring, and nitpicking or triviality" (p. 87). They also found that racism was a greater challenge for Black seeking promotion and tenure. They advised that women mentor and advise Black students who seek racially similar role models (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Gregory (2001), mentioned that these women may be less productive in their research endeavors which could jeopardize their opportunities for promotion and tenure.

Attitudes of Promotion of Administrators

Several factors contribute to their attitudes toward the workplace. Black women who do become administrators in higher education, often feel isolated from the network. The role of Black women administrators is to be dedicated and committed to the well-being of their students to make a difference. Black women are underappreciated, underrepresented, and undervalued in the workspace. According to Gregory (1995),

> Despite the high college enrollment and graduation rates, Black women in both faculty and staff positions continue to be concentrated among the lower ranks, primarily nontenured, promoted at a lower rate, and paid less than their Black male and white female counterparts. (p. 11)

Black women in leadership positions can be a great asset to their university community, in that, they can provide developmental support to majority and minority individuals, as well as their White male counterparts in terms of leadership (Davis, 2012). Black women are often faced with academic bullying in the workplace. Academic bullying is "systematic long-term interpersonal aggressive behavior as it occurs in the academic workplace setting in both covert and overt forms against faculty who are unable to defend themselves against aggressive behavior committed by faculty in power in the workplace" (Fraizer, 2011, p. 2). Administrators are usually the aggressor toward lower-level employees. Bullying in the workplace is when one person becomes the target of systematic negative social acts by an inferior White colleague (Fraizer, 2011). This in turn results in isolation and lower job satisfaction. Researchers have found that academic bullying reduces efficiency, increases absenteeism, increases job turnover, negative impact on health, negative impact on the organizational image, and has low job satisfaction among workers (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2010).

Stereotypes and bias are one of the leading obstacles to women's leadership (Hill et al, 2016). Black women only hold a small percentage of leadership positions. Based on history, Black women have been denied title power as administrators, not being hired and promoted into leadership (Tevis et al., 2020). Regardless of their behavior and personal accomplishments, Black women have been labeled as having controlling images (Collins, 1991). These controlling images have been accepted and they justify the poor treatment of Black women. They are powerful enough to dictate their relationships and professional experiences (Tevis et al., 2020). Black women must challenge these stereotypes and take control of their image to advance. In a study by Cook (2013), he reported that Black women overwhelmingly feel different and unappreciated. He also stated that they are "frustrated and tired of defending themselves against being labeled as angry, loud, aggressive, rude, and obnoxious" (Cook, 2013, p. 19). Miles et al. (2014), had Black women identify stereotypes:

> Specifically, terms describing Black women as angry, aggressive, difficult, having a bad attitude, or being emotional appeared in 47% of all the responses. Perceptions of Black women being less capable due to being less educated, lazy, single mothers, or hired solely based on affirmative action appeared in 14% of all the responses. Comments related to Black women being loud or opinionated appeared in 12% of all the responses. Statements related to Black women being bossy, pushy, unfriendly, or a bitch appeared in 11% of the responses. Compliments such as strong or hardworking appeared in 9.5% of all the responses (p. 44).

Being a Black woman working in higher education is not easy. Many times, they do not fit in with their colleagues. Black women who are not connected to the network in the fields, departments, and institutions, or if they are the only Black women in their department, often find

themselves feeling isolated and marginalization is inevitable (Atwater, 1995). Promotion is not easy to come by. Without a higher-ranking position, a person is not always involved in departmental conversations, even when it comes to promotion and tenure. Faculty do not always have the authority to promote or tenure someone, but with the diffusion of power across the institution, recommendations can be made by other faculty members (Adams, 1976). In academia having power is important. "Without power, influence, or the capacity to affect others in significant ways, is not possible" (Croom & Patton Davis, 2012, p. 21).

Black women in higher education deal with an overwhelming lack of support and respect from the dominant culture's elitist attitudes and exclusionary practices (Bagilhole, 1994). In Thomas & Hollenshead (2001), they found that Black women have a widespread lack of support, labeled as "a feeling of invisibleness" (p. 166). They mention that even in research, which is one of the most highly regarded academic activities, Black women often have little support, especially in areas that affect or are related to people of color. Black women believe that their research is not valued and that their opinions do not matter to their colleagues (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). They also believe that they are less likely to be asked by a senior White faculty member to be a co-author on a publication (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Glass Ceiling

The term glass ceiling implies that no matter how much progress is made, one cannot obtain beyond the level of the top ranks. According to King, 1993, the glass ceiling is described as:

Increasingly, although slowly, women are entering the upper echelons of management in higher education. They move into a predominantly male society and many find themselves operating in a radically different culture, with different perceptions and

33

assumptions, excluded from all sorts of male networks. It can be argued that women can, and do, bring different skills to management, as well as the more traditional professional skills. These female characteristics, which may be, for example, delegation, working in teams, sharing credit, and high social and interpersonal skills, are shared by some men and are highly regarded in some management systems, but can be undervalued in the traditional…male management and institutional culture (p. 94).

Black women continue to experience discrimination within higher-ranking positions in higher education administration. Challenges and barriers hinder them from achieving those positions of authority (Tuner & Quaye, 2010). The glass ceiling is an invisible yet perceived impermeable barrier within the upper echelons of management, administration, higher education, or the corporate ladder structure that prevents minorities and women from advancing to the higher ranks of authority regardless of their education, qualifications, and accomplishments. The glass ceiling is a metaphor for the "glass" through which minorities or women can see the 22 higher-level positions but they are not able to attain the positions because of the "ceiling" (Dace, 2012; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009b, 2011; King, 1993, 1997; Martin, 2011). Given so many barriers, Black women face much tougher challenges than their White male counterparts. Women do not lack ambition or education, but they do struggle with unconscious bias and the lack of opportunities. Many believe that because of the glass ceiling, Black women are set up to fail.

The glass ceiling refers to the highest level of achievement that one can obtain without reaching their maximum. The goal for Black women struggling with this is to break the glass ceiling. Black women must break down their barriers of oppression. We underscore and perceive the inter-structuring of racism, classism, and sexism that has typically denied equality and

ascendancy for marginal groups (Grant, 1995). A few ways to break the glass ceiling are to strengthen your network, set clear career goals to advocate for yourself and create opportunities.

<div align="center">Balancing Career, Family, and Community</div>

Black women often struggle to balance family and work. Black women college presidents revealed that working in higher education encompasses long hours and, often, a hectic work schedule (Jackson & Harris, 2007). Work hours make it hard to be domestic as well as parenting. Working within administration involves long, hard work hours that may become difficult when adding childcare responsibilities. Many jobs also require women to relocate. African American women, as well as White women, are often asked in interviews if their family would be willing to relocate, something which is rarely asked in an interview with a male (Evelyn, 1998). Black women have unique experiences regarding parenthood, as they have been stereotyped as bad mothers by the media, policymakers, employers, and in secondary education (Collins, 1991). Stereotypes, racism and sexism, isolated work environments, and lack of support from supervisors and colleagues create challenges related to balancing work and family commitments.

Black women also have to earn advanced degrees to advance in their perspective career fields, which takes a lot of time. Despite financial aid, the expensive cost of lengthy education programs is difficult for minorities to bear (Menges & Exum, 1983). It becomes very difficult to raise and support a family while being enrolled in a prolonged education program and it begins to weigh heavily on the family. These women often reject graduate training programs and find shorter, more lucrative opportunities in other fields. However, many of them still obtain advanced degrees. According to Menges and Exum, "professionally trained women are two to five times more likely to be unemployed and seeking work than their male counterparts" (p.

128). The higher the degree, the larger the disparity in rates of unemployment between men and women.

"The biggest barrier to women's advancement in academe is a lack of a supportive environment for combining family and work" (Hensel, 1997, p. 38). Balancing career, family, and community involvement makes it difficult to obtain administrative positions. Black women also have a deep connection with their faith and community. Community involvement is a significant part of the lives of Black women. These women tend to be heavily involved in their churches and various organizations in their communities. For Black women, roles and expectations regarding the external ethnic community are magnified. Interacting with the political, social, and spiritual Black community is an added professional responsibility beyond her White colleagues (Hughes, 1988). Their commitment to the community takes a toll on the advancement of their careers.

Black women often feel stretched to their limits physically, emotionally, and psychologically as they try to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives (Edwards & Camblin, 1998). Lack of personal time often manifests in commitments to students and campus services (Fraizer, 2011). Their commitments can become emotionally draining. They rely on support from their family members and social networks. Gregory (1999) stated, "family support and community involvement, particularly in church-related activities, were cited as critical factors supporting black women's career pursuits in higher education" (p. 17). Black women rely heavily on the church and spirituality for encouragement, guidance, training, and fellowship (Edwards & Camblin, 1998). The church allows them to receive additional support in their personal and professional lives.

Based on a (2004) study by Ward and Wolf-Wendel it was found that 29 women from nine research universities enjoyed their teaching and research, however, they face challenges with not having enough time for tasks, and they dealt with work overload and ambiguous tenure expectations. They also found that they had to carefully plan the timing of having children around their tenure. For those who were already mothers, their work made it more stressful for childcare needs and housework. Ward and Wolf-Wendel state:

> Today, as the demographic of faculty changes and the concerns about balancing work and family is becoming more public, it is incumbent upon academic institutions to rethink their policies. Understanding the experiences of women faculty with small children and responding proactively to their needs will provide institutions with the necessary returns on the investment that these institutions make in their faculties. It will also encourage more high-quality individuals to consider academic careers. (p. 255)

Underrepresentation

Traditionally, men have held more leadership positions in higher education. Black women continue to occupy a disproportionally low number of administrative-level positions in higher education, compared to their white female counterparts (Chamberlain, 1991). This serves as a constant challenge. Studies show that women are not equally represented at higher education institutions even though they possess the majority of higher education degrees and represent the majority of college enrollees (Bell, 1989; Hearn, 1992). Even though there are minorities in some executive administrative positions in higher education administration, "it should be noted that for women and people of color who do achieve these senior-level positions; they are disproportionately located in 2-year colleges and less prestigious 4-year institutions" (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009a, p. 461).

Although Black women have more advanced degrees, they still lack senior leadership positions in higher education institutions. "African women Ph.D. graduates grew from 10 in 1996 to 106 in 2012 - a 960% increase," (Phakeng, 2015, p. 10). Despite having the degree and qualifications, African American women still fall behind their counterparts. Obtaining and securing an administration position has become an alarming issue.

Gasman et al. (2015) stated statistics, "people of color earn only 20.4% of the master's degrees awarded in the United States in 2012…[and] African Americans [hold] 6.2% of doctoral degrees awarded in the United States in 2012" (p. 2). These women remained in lower-level positions despite having doctorate degrees. They were still employed in low-skilled jobs. Phakeng stated, "There are few women CEOs" (p. 10). Throughout the years, Black women struggled to obtain and maintain senior leadership positions despite their efforts. Phakeng also suggested that "women have to be much better than men to land top jobs, they have to work doubly hard" (p. 11).

The presence of Black women is lacking within Ivy League institutions as well. According to Gasman et al., (2015) "the lack of diversity in senior leadership at elite colleges and universities is a pervasive and growing concern among many scholars and intellectuals" (p. 9). Blacks are underrepresented in higher education institutions as a whole. They faced issues being admitted to and graduating from doctoral degree programs, which led to fewer faculty positions for that group. "Having an earned advanced degree is almost invariably a critical qualification for senior leadership positions, which is a barrier for many people of color," (Gasman et al., 2015, p. 2). Black women struggled to secure employment within their educational field.

There is a lack of Black women as faculty at predominately White institutions. According to Gasman et al. (2015), "more than half of African American faculty instruct at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), students enrolled in predominantly White institutions are less likely to have an African American professor" (p. 3). Blacks on White campuses handle diversity efforts.

> Historical legacies, prejudice, and racism appear to persist across predominantly White institutions as there are limited numbers of people of color at senior-level positions, as evidenced by the fact that at 4-year institutions of higher education in the United States, people of color are only 14% of all senior leaders on campus and only 12% of presidents. (Gasman et al., 2015, p. 3)

With less admittance into graduate programs and a lower chance of completion, the avenues to success are becoming less likely. Black women must brand themselves differently so they can become more marketable to employers despite the barriers that they are currently facing. Gasman et al. (2015) find:

> As a result of access and equity issues within the academy, there are limited numbers of people of color who are admitted to and persist through graduate and doctoral degree programs, which significantly restricts the applicant pool for faculty positions and in turn produces a dearth of faculty of color. As a result, senior-level administrators of color continue to be underrepresented relative to the higher education workforce. (p.2)

"The experiences of Black women in administrative and faculty roles is important because enrollment and persistence toward degree completion of Black students are linked to the number of Black faculty and administrators present on predominantly white campuses" (Fleming, 1984; Gardiner et al., 2000). "When minority students see African American and other minority faculty

on campus, they believe that they can also succeed and hold professional positions" (Patitu, &

Hinton, 2003, p. 80). Becoming a professor or a college administrator is not an option for many

young, Back female students. Their institution lacks representation; therefore, they feel it is non-

existence or impossible to become a tenured faculty member or an administrator. Tenure is an

important gateway to professional success and stability that leads to job security (Deo, 2018).

Black women administrators are severely underrepresented in higher education. Gardner,

Barrett, and Pearson (2014) state, "Despite the well-known underrepresentation of African

Americans in postsecondary administrative positions, higher education institutions continue to

struggle to increase representation" (p. 236). Gardner et al. (2014) found,

> Three institutional barriers to the success of African American student affairs
>
> administrators also emerged from the literature. One commonly known barrier to career
>
> advancement is discrimination, which refers to behavioral bias toward a person based on
>
> the person's group identity. A second barrier that emerged is the combination of a lack of
>
> a clear career path and a lack of a distinct professional identity. A third barrier to career
>
> success for African American student affairs administrators is the level of compensation
>
> and working conditions at some predominantly White institutions. (p. 236)

Administrators are expected to be compensated for their work and this is not always the

case. Discrimination has always been a problem that Black women can not seem to overcome.

Black women, do not only face racial discrimination but they face gender discrimination as well.

Hinton (2010) stated, "Black female faculty in a unique position, one where, to participate, they

must embrace their inferiority, their own 'otherness" (p 395). Hinton (2010) found that "the

alienation and isolation that Black women feel in academe is facilitated by the idea that Black

women do not fit the mold of an academic" (p. 398). There are several reasons that African

American women do not remain at the institutions that they are currently working at. A few reasons that they move include the lack of advancement, and lack of formal rank and they often receive promotions to move to other institutions.

"African American women represented 1.8% of all college CEOs and 8.4% of all women presidents, with an equal distribution between two and four-year institutions" (Lewis, 2016, p. 108). These are very low numbers compared to their counterparts who are males and of other racial backgrounds. Warren-Gordon and Mayes (2017) reported,

> African American women working at predominately white institutions of higher education often have isolated and lonely work-life experiences. We are often isolated because we are the only minority and/or woman in our department or college and lonely. After all, the workplace environment does not offer a safe place to vent our frustrations and triumphs. (p. 2356)

Black women who work in higher education institutions are also limited in the amount of research that they can do. Some institutions require faculty members to complete a certain amount of research. Teaching evaluations play a significant role in an individual's pre- and post-tenure career. "Research suggests the African American women tend to receive the lower teaching evaluations compared to their Anglo colleagues" (Warren-Gordon & Mayes, 2017, p. 2357.) Negative teaching evaluations can impact a person's ability to receive tenure and can influence an individual's income.

<div align="center">Sexism and Racism</div>

Black women experience racism and sexism throughout their lives, even in their careers. Sexism is discrimination based on gender. Black women in academia face challenges of racism quite often. Based on findings from Scheurich and Young (1997):

Institutional racism exists when institutions or organizations, including educational ones, have standard operating procedures (intended or unintended) that hurt members of one or more races about members of the dominant race…Institutional racism also exists when institutional or organizational cultures, rules, habits, or symbols have the same biasing effect. (p. 5)

Although Blacks have been allowed to attend and work at higher education institutions, racism still very much exists. The main reason why racism and racial prejudice continue to dominate university policies and classroom practices is that Afro-Americans continue to occupy the lowest sector of the American economy and are still viewed by white society as being socially inferior (Harvey, 1996). They deal with dual identities: being Black and being a woman. They struggle to navigate discriminatory practices as it relates to gender and ethnicity in higher education institutions (Davis & Brown, 2017). Current research shows that racial and gender inequality remains very much present within American higher education systems, especially for Black women working in higher education (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Black women not only face racism, but they also face sexism in many facets of their lives, including on the job. Sexism is "the belief in inherent superiority over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde, 1984, p. 45). Women tend to be hired less frequently, paid less, and promoted at a much lower rate than their male counterparts (Aguirre, 2000). As Black women move into faculty positions at Black colleges, it has been a tradition to pay them less than their male counterparts (Carby, 1982).

Racism and sexism exist very much in higher education institutions. Even with hiring practices being altered to be more inclusive, racist ideologies persist and impact the retention of Black women in higher education (León & Thomas, 2016). Research studies have shown that

institutions of higher education are not supportive of African American administrators, especially women, as they are of white men and women, and African American males (Moses, 1989). Sexism can occur in many forms, such as not appointment women to committees or giving them less desirable office spaces. Sexism and racism severely affect the lives of Black women. Black women are more disadvantaged because of sexism (non-equal pay with men for equal work) than because of racism (inequalities in occupational distribution) (Fleming, 1996). According to Edwards & Camblin (1998), "institutionalized systems of sex bias often create impenetrable barriers that halt women's progress and stifle their professional development. Though sexism can severely affect the lives of all women on campus, racism, and sexism compound the impact for African American women" (p. 33). Sex bias creates barriers to a Black women's professional development. Women can experience sexual harassment or other negative behavior from their male counterparts.

Rollock (2021) conducted a study with 20 UK-domiciled Black female professors in search of why there are so few Black women professors. Rollock also sought to find their experiences in higher education, along with how they navigated through to reach full professorship. Critical Race Theory was used as a theoretical framework and interviews were conducted. The study found that "Black female academics endured an uneven and convoluted pathway to professorship characterized by undermining, bullying, and the challenges of a largely opaque progression process (Rollock, 2021, p. 209). The participants discussed experiencing subjugation and bullying. They have to create strategies to navigate through the barriers that they were faced and make contributions to their fields. CRT situates these struggles within a wider context of Whiteness and White domination (Allen, 2004). "Strategies and resilience of these women must be understood as contextual and contingent, and as a direct result of the White

gendered and racialized norms that underpin UK higher education and enable White men (and women) to progress more readily and occupy decision-making roles" (Rollock, 2021, p. 209).

Mentoring

Mentorship is critical in the advancement of careers for Black women. According to Bauer (1999):

> A mentor is anyone who provides guidance, support, knowledge, and opportunity for the protégé during periods of need and is traditionally a more senior individual who uses his or her experience and influence to help the advancement of a protégé. Mentors have been found to provide two major functions: psychosocial support and vocational/career mentoring functions. (p. 212)

Networking through mentoring is essential because it provides access to significant information and opportunities for career advancement (Madsen, 1998; Wood, 1994). Most people have not been able to build their careers solely by education; networking is required. Having role models and mentors can positively affect a Black woman's life when trying to build her career. The lack of mentors is just another barrier that keeps women out of administration. Mentors more than likely have jobs to offer. Growe and Montgomery (1999), mention that "mentoring significantly enhances income and promotes possibilities, attracts and retains women and minority professional, accelerates assimilation into the culture, and supports women and minorities with advice and inside information" (p. 6). Mentoring is necessary for the advancement of Black women as higher education administrators. With there being such a low number of Black female administrators, finding a mentor creates another challenge.

Lack of mentorship and support can stand in the promotion. Edwards & Camblin (1998) stated,

African American women face an interesting challenge in searching for a mentor to

monitor their progress and facilitate their professional development. The scarcity of

African American women in the first-line administration on campus makes it difficult to

find enough mentors to meet demand. As a result, a functional but ironic professional

alliance has often been formed between African American women and white men. (p. 27)

They need a support system for career advancement as senior-level administrators. Having a

support system can aid in career development. Older administrators tend to select proteges for

grooming them as leaders or replicate themselves (Coursen et al., 1989). White men tend to

promote other White men (Shakeshaft, 1987). Shakeshaft also mentions that women who want to

succeed in the field must act like men. Growe and Montgomery (1999) found that Black women

receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions while men, particularly White

men, are "tapped" to pursue administrative roles to a greater degree than women. Black women

are overlooked and not considered for many positions.

White males usually populate leadership positions and can lend legitimacy through

mentoring, such as advocacy, to help minoritize women's leadership efforts (Murrell, et al.,

2008). Bringing diversity into mentorship can help to identify challenges with race and gender.

Mentoring is a relationship where people can have dialogue, ask questions, and learn more about

diversity (Chandler & Ellis, 2011). Diversity in mentorship is more helpful than diversity

training because it is an equitable and inclusive culture conducive to minority women leaders

(Manonsong & Ghosh, 2021). Black women need support in both their personal and professional

lives. Mentoring leads to a positive leader identity and more successful leaders. Mentoring has

many benefits including, alleviating feelings of isolation and alienation that early career faculty

may experience (Zellers et al., 2008).

León and Thomas (2016), conducted an autoethnography study using Critical Race Theory. Anderson (2006) describes autoethnography as the researcher being "(1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published text, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focuses on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena" (p. 375). This study is particularly interesting because there were letter exchanges between mother and daughter. The mother was a Black woman in her 60s, who was seeking tenure at a small, rural college on the East Coast. She recently left a tenure position at another university. The daughter was a Black and Puerto Rican woman in her early 30s, who was in her first year as an assistant professor at a small, liberal arts college in a larger urban area. The letter exchanges discussed CRT as it relates to racial battle fatigue, the persistence and high frequency of microaggressions, stereotype threat, and the challenge of engaging in the academic lives of others, especially those of color (León & Thomas, 2016). This study is particularly important because it shows the dynamic between mother and daughter, who are both in different stages of their careers. The letters discussed the importance of service which can be complicated by race, gender, and class. They also mentioned being isolated and disconnected from the other faculty members and building learning experiences that benefit students. This study found that Black women should be mentored throughout the recruitment and hiring process, as well as going through the tenure process. Institutions should work on improving diversity in faculty, staff, and students. "Newly hired minority faculty need a mentor to guide and educate them in relation to this culture so that they will be successful" (León & Thomas, 2016, p. 15). This research also incorporated developing a supportive network outside of the university since they often find themselves alone in the workplace.

Summary

This research study is an attempt to understand the barriers, challenges, and uniqueness of Black women in higher education administration through their personal lived and lived experiences. Historically, the journey for Black women in a position of authority in higher education institutions has been through persistence and the ability to work through challenges across cultural systems. Black women have a lot to bring to the table and lead to change effect in our institutions. Being taken seriously is the basis for change. Black women have the power and effect to be positive influences within the higher education system.

Black women tend to be marginalized, therefore they are not taken seriously when it comes to senior-level administrative positions within higher education institutions. Much of the literature suggests more barriers for Black women than opportunities. Dealing with the battle of being both Black and a woman is an issue within itself. "Unfortunately, Back women have often been removed or removed themselves from gender equity struggles when it involves struggling within the race" (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021, p. 30). They must have the willpower to push through any challenges that they will face to obtain positions of authority.

Black women are the most isolated subgroup in academia; they have the least in common with White males who dominate the academy (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). As climbing through the ranks, these women are not being retained, promoted, or tenured. CRT was addressed to discuss the plights Black women face, especially dealing with racism sexism, classism, and microaggressions within higher education institutions. Being allowed to describe their experiences is imperative for survival in higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify challenges and barriers that African American women face while working in higher education as they are trying to reach senior-level administrative positions to bring about systemic change. I, the researcher, used narrative inquiry as the research methodology and Critical Race Theory as a way to explore the experiences of Black women. I was interested in gaining a better understanding of the personal and professional lives of women who have to succeed and those still in the process of building their careers. I was also interested in the psychological toll that it has taken on them while working in these institutions. Research questions that have guided this study:

RQ1: What are the experiences of Black women working in higher education in relation to how the influence of their race was either a factor or a non-factor in their advancement or responsibilities of leadership roles?

RQ1A: How do Black women working in higher education settings perceive race has impacted their advancement?

This chapter will outline the study, including the research design, site selection, participant selection, sampling, data collection/procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness. This chapter also provides an in-depth look into the demographics needed for the study. This chapter provides justification and rationale for using qualitative inquiry as a framework for the

study. This qualitative study allows for a deeper understanding of the challenges that Black women face in academia and how they deal with and work to overcome their struggles.

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative design to gain a better understanding of the issues that arise with Black women working in higher education institutions. According to Creswell (2008) qualitative research is described as "in which the researcher relies on the view of the participants; ask broad, general questions; describes and analyzed these words; and conducts the inquiry in a subject matter" (p. 46). Qualitative studies are used to explore, investigate, and examine patterns of meaning based on the participant's own words (Creswell, 2008).

As the researcher, I attempted to understand the experiences of each participant through their interviews and observations. I avoided assumptions that can be developed or hypotheses before data collection (Dobrovolny & Fuentes, 2008). Within this study, I inquired about the barriers that hindered success, specifically senior-level administration positions within higher education institutions for Black women. The data analysis enabled me to determine reoccurring patterns and themes that may have arisen. A qualitative study is an ideal methodology to use because it attempts to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experiences in a specific situation (Stake, 2010). In all, this study gave voices to those who may have otherwise gone unheard.

The research method used for this study was a narrative inquiry approach. According to Creswell (2007), narrative stories are important because "they may shed light on the identities of the individuals and how they see themselves (Creswell, 2007, p. 71). I used the experiences of each participant as a means to connect important themes and bring a much clearer understanding of the experiences that they have had. The participants described what they experienced, how

they experienced it, and what was learned from it. The narrative approach to qualitative study can be a phenomenon to be studied, such as an illness or a method to analyze individual stories and relate them chronologically to the subjects' lived events (Creswell, 2013). Narrative inquiry was an ideal approach because it uncovers the experiences of everyday life through storytelling, which I attempted to find. In this study, the participants were asked to describe their experiences, so I can better understand their challenges.

Within Critical Race Theory, counterstories are used to strategically amplify the voices of marginalized people to describe their racial experiences and to cast doubt on widely accepted assumptions that have been held by other groups (Delgado & Stefanic, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; & Tate, 1997). Counterstories center the narratives of participants from non-dominant groups, from their perspectives, and offer access to the characteristics of their experiential knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As research has shown, there is a huge underrepresentation of Black women administrators in higher education institutions (Gasman et al., 2015). With a current narrative in place and stereotypes placed on Black women, this study allows them to provide counterstories and challenge the current thought.

Site Selection

I, the researcher, conducted this study in Augusta, GA. I used Microsoft Teams software to hold meetings and interviews. Participants live in various locations around the CSRA (Central Savannah River Area), therefore no single location was selected to conduct interviews. The CSRA consists of 14 counties in Georgia and seven counties in South Carolina, with a total population of 767,478 according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2018. Findings from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 state 41.5 is the median age with 49% being males and 51% being females. The Census reports 48% White, 47% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% of others reside

within the CSRA. The median income is $39,801, with 60% earning under $50,000, 26% earning between $50,00 and $100,000, 12% earning between $100,000 and $200,000, and only 2% earning over $200,000. 80.6% have at least a high school diploma and 12.5% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Participants were selected from four colleges or universities in the CSRA; Lane College, a public PWI research university, Riverside University, a private religious-based HBCU, Greystone Community College, and Applecrest Institute.

Table 1

University Overview

Institution	Description	Degrees Offered	Enrollment	Tuition & Fees 2021-2022	Total Faculty
Lane College	Public, 4-year or above	Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctor's-research/scholarship, Doctor's-professional practice	Total: 8,920 Undergraduate: 5,674	In-state $8,832 Out-of-state $24,210	Full time 1,159 Part time 386
Riverside University	Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above	Bachelor's	Total: 189 Undergraduate: 189	$14,596	Full time 32 Part time 10
Greystone Community College	Public, 2-year	Associate's	Total: 3,863 Undergraduate: 3,863	$3,232	Full time 127 Part time 97
Applecrest Institute	Public, 4-year or above	Associate's, Bachelor's	Total: 1,972 Undergraduate: 1,972	$6,345	Full time 18 Part time 31

Note. Data retrieved from the National Center for Education Statistics (2001)

Participant Selection

According to Maxwell (2013), purposeful sampling is composed of five major goals; (1) to achieve representativeness of the setting, individuals or activities selected, (2) to capture the heterogeneity of the population, (3) to deliberately select participants that can test current theories of the study, (4) to establish comparisons that have been used to examine reasons why

differences exist between people and the setting, and (5) to create relationships with the participants that best answered the research questions. Participant recruitment occurred via purposeful sampling. Creswell (2007) describes purposeful sampling as the researcher "intentionally selects individuals and sites to learn or unlearn the phenomenon" (p. 214). Using purposeful sampling assists with the participants being more open and willing to share. In purposeful sampling, settings, participants, and strategies are deliberately selected to provide information that is specifically relevant to the questions and goals of the study (Maxwell, 2013).

I began by contacting various Black women who are employed at the four selected colleges and universities who may be interested in participating in a research study. Participants must identify as Black or African American and female. These women could be working full-time or part-time in a staff position at a higher education institution. There is no age limitation placed on participants. Each participant was asked to complete a demographic survey for screening purposes, to help me better understand the backgrounds of each participant. For this study, eight participants were used to gather information. Sampling is particularly important to ensure that each participant shares their experiences through narration.

All eight participants were delighted to take part in the study. They all took time out of their busy schedules to engage in virtual interviews. However, I did have two potential participants who told me that time would not allow for them to play a part in the study. Both of these women worked for a local PWI and they both asked would the research be anonymous before declining to participate, after being assured that it would be confidential. All of the contributors shared their unique experiences as Black women working in a higher education institution.

During the interview process, the women were asked to share demographic information as well as what led them to a career in higher education. They described their experiences with roles or their desire to obtain a leadership position. Many of them described their desire for leadership, while others discussed the barriers that have hindered them from achieving it. Despite their current circumstance, these women still have plans for their personal and professional career goals.

<div align="center">Sample Size</div>

Patton (2004) suggests determining a minimum sample size and increasing it if necessary to reach redundancy. For purposes of this study, the sample size was small, consisting of eight participants, because they aim to provide rich details about the perceptions of the participants and understandings of the group being studied, rather than making general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Sample sizes depend on the degree of the commitment level of analysis and reporting of individual narratives and the constraints under which the researcher is operating (Smith, 2007). Smith (2007) also discusses that small sample sizes are useful in that they allow for sufficient, in-depth engagement with each participant, along with a detailed examination of similarities and differences between the participants.

Many of the women share similar traits, they have various backgrounds and very different stories regarding their experiences working in higher education institutions. The participants ranged in age from 38 to 63 years old. Five participants are married and three are single. All of the participants except two have children. Their education levels varied from Bachelor's degrees to Doctoral degrees. Three received their undergraduate degree from an HBCU and five received their undergraduate degree from a PWI. Tables 2 and 3 represent a breakdown of the demographic information of each participant.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Information -Marital Status, Age, and Family Structure

Name	Marital Status	Age	Children
Rose	married	46	Yes
Daisy	married	58	Yes
Lily	married	58	Yes
Dahlia	married	63	No
Iris	single	38	Yes
Jasmine	single	39	Yes
Laurel	married	40	Yes
Coral	single	37	No

Note. Data retrieved from participant demographics

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information – Education & Work Experience

Name	Highest Degree Earned	Institution	Type	Years of Service	Current Position
Rose	Doctorate	Greystone Community College	PWI	18	Dean
Daisy	Bachelors	Greystone Community College	PWI	15	Special Populations Coordinator
Lily	Masters	Lane College	PWI	15	Academic Success Coordinator
Dahlia	Masters	Applecrest Institute	PWI	17	Associate Registrar
Iris	Masters	Lane College	PWI	13	Manager
Jasmine	Masters	Applecrest Institute	PWI	20	Graduation Coach Team Lead
Laurel	Masters	Riverside University College	HBCU	13	Administrative Secretary
Coral	Masters	Riverside University College	HBCU	9	Assistant Director

Note. Data retrieved from participant demographics

Data Collection/Procedures

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), data collection occurs in four phases. After IRB was approved (Appendix B) by Valdosta State University, data collection began. Phase 1 includes collecting demographic data so that the researcher can better understand the

participant's lived experiences with the phenomenon (Hughes et al., 2016). Phase 2 consists of the participants engaging in the first round of confidential open-ended interviews that are semi-structured to share their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The open-ended questions helped to facilitate dialogue on how the participants felt about their experiences with the challenges they faced while trying to obtain those senior-level leadership administration positions and their feelings on experiencing racism. Phase 3 allows for follow-up questions. This allows the participant to discuss their experiences in more detail. Phase 4 is for a follow-up interview session which allows the participants to share more details about the strategy, environment, and resources that may have impacted their experiences (Moustakas, 2011; Seidman, 2006). According to Patton (2015), the follow-up also provides an opportunity to discuss nonverbal gestures and body language that may not have been noticeable in virtual interviews.

In this study, I was the data collection instrument. This allowed for information to be processed immediately, and it assisted with summarizing and clarifying material, and for a more accurate interpretation of data (Miles et al., 2014). Data was collected through interviews and demographic surveys that analyzes each participant. Interviews were held in Microsoft Teams in a space where participants were free to speak and discuss their experiences as higher education professionals. Interview questions were derived from current literature that discusses Black women's experiences advancing their careers in higher education. Interview questions included such things as, background information, how they came about their positions, and how has the workplace negatively or positively impacted their careers as Black women. A general interview guide (Appendix A) with prepared open-ended questions was used to guide the interview. Each

interview was recorded on the videoconferencing software and a backup was recorded on an iPad. Interviews were held at mutual times agreed on by the interviewer and the participant.

Before each interview, the researcher sent the participants the interview protocol, interview questions, participant survey, and a consent form which requires a signature from each participant and the researcher. Seidman (2006) suggests implementing an interview protocol for qualitative research, that identifies pre-established interview questions. During this process, semi-structured interviews were conducted to better understand the participant's experiences regarding working in higher education. The interviews were semi-structured so it would be more of a conversation versus questions. Each interview lasted approximately one hour in time. This also allowed the participants and the researcher to be able to share their stories. All interviews were recorded to be transcribed and allowed for the researcher to go back and listen to the interviews for accuracy. Interview transcriptions and interview notes shall be kept electronically on external hard drives (Groenewald, 2004). All documents will be kept for three years and locked away safely in my home office in a locked desk drawer. The researcher used 23 open-ended questions to identify themes. By using open-ended questions, open-ended responses allowed the participants to express their true feelings. Interviews began with basic background questions to gather details on the participants' education and work experience. Interviews then proceed to more in-depth information, describing their campus climate and institutional barrier to career development. In-depth interviews give the participants a chance to give more details about their experiences (Seidman, 2006).

Data Analysis

The eight research interviews with Black women working as higher education professionals served as the primary data source for this study. Each interview was held via

Microsoft Teams where it was recorded for written transcriptions. Data were analyzed through transcriptions and coding. All participants agreed to be recorded for transcription purposes. According to Creswell (2007), interviews were transcribed and reviewed for significant statements and quotations, which helps to provide a better understanding of how the participants experience a specific phenomenon. Significant statements and emerging themes were essential for analyzing data. Coding data was used to help the researcher understand the perspectives of the participants and analyze their experiences. During the process of researching and interviewing the participants, codes were created to analyze data (Urquhart, 2013). Coding helps the researcher to prevent overemphasizing the importance of any one aspect early in the study to ensure a thorough analysis of data will be completed (Stake, 2010).

For this study, the researcher collected data and analyzed it from open-ended interview questions (Appendix A) for a better understanding of Black women's barriers in higher education. According to Patton (2015), "One distinction is to treat the story as data and the narrative as analysis, which involves interpreting the story, placing it in context, and comparing it with other stories" (p. 128). Narrative analysis was used to interpret the data in this research study. Additional data such as basic demographic information, the total number of years of experience working in higher education administration, years of education and training, the type of institutions that they work for, and experiences with career development and discrimination were also collected. A detailed descriptive analysis was completed for the data. Data was used to answer the research questions to identify emerging themes and the participants discussed their experiences. Researchers use qualitative studies to understand how people interpret their feelings, make sense of their worlds, and perceive the experiences which have occurred in their lives (Merriam, 2002). To answer the research questions, the participants were asked to answer a

series of questions, detailing their career journey in higher education and what barriers they have encountered to success.

To analyze data, the researcher used the following: memos, categorizing strategies, such as coding and thematic analysis, and connecting strategies, such as narrative analysis (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) mentions regularly writing memos to capture analytical thinking about your data during data analysis. Coding was the main categorizing strategy that was used. Maxwell (2013) states, "the goal of coding is not primarily to count things but to fracture that data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate the comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts" (p. 106). The researcher identified or categorized what was important in the interviews.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe that "Initial Coding breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences" (p. 102). Charmaz (2014) mentions that the goal of Initial Coding is to "remain open to all possible theoretical direction suggested by your interpretations of the data" (p. 115). Corbin and Strauss (2015) advise coding quickly and spontaneously after familiarizing yourself with the material. Interviews were transcribed and read multiple times for accuracy. During this process, I was looking for connections to make sense of related concepts that the participants spoke of. During the interviews, I took notes. After each interview, I went back and listened to the interviews to capture data that I may have missed. The recording and written notes were cross-referenced to ensure the accuracy of the data transcripts. Viewing the transcriptions helped me to begin with initial coding and categorizing common words or phrases.

Initial coding was used along with In Vivo Coding. Strauss (1987) uses In Vivo Coding as "a code [that] refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative

data record, the terms used by participants themselves" (p. 33). In Vivo Coding assists with capturing the meanings of people's experiences (Saldaña, 2016). When using Initial Coding and In Vivo Coding, I was track words or phrases that stood out in the participants' interviews. "If the same words, phrases, or variations, therefore, are used often by the participant, and seem to merit an In Vivo Code, apply it" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 107). As I was reviewing the transcriptions, I began organizing and listing, and categorizing phrases. In Vivo Coding also addresses behaviors and processes, which helped to provide meaning to the views and actions of the participants. In Vivo Coding contributed to conceptual and theoretical views about each participant's individual experience, which is how Black women overcome barriers and deal with racism while working in higher education institutions. After each interview was categorized using Initial Coding, In Vivo Coding was used to review emerging themes. Following the coding methods, I ensured narrative inquiry methodology was used throughout the data collection part of the research process by showing direct quotes from the contributors. Common words and phrases that were used to identify themes addressed the research questions of this study.

During data analysis, I looked for connections within the codes. I used NVivo software for data analysis. NVivo helped with finding significant statements and quotations and help to place them into clusters with similar meanings. For example, with data analysis, I grouped concepts such as campus resources, shared experiences, and career trajectory. I continuously checked the transcripts to ensure that I was making sense of the codes and the participants' experiences. I also developed coding categories that closely aligned with the research questions. Categories and themes were developed from here. Creswell (2007) mentions interviews that are transcribed are reviewed for significant statements and quotations that assist in providing an understanding of how the participants experience a phenomenon. The categories helped to

emerge themes where data has been provided. I used shared common experiences as themes, which are discussed in the next chapter.

Trustworthiness

Roberts (2010) refers to trustworthiness as the concept of validity in qualitative research as the credibility factor which demonstrates that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent manner. Trustworthiness is one of the most important elements of qualitative research. The researcher must first build a trusting and positive relationship with the participants in the study. By building trust with the participants, they are more willing to disclose personal and pertinent information. If the participants are guarded or unwilling to share, this could invalidate the study. When working with Critical Race Theory, I must be mindful of the racialization and inequalities of their participants as a person of color (Taylor et al., 2016).

Ensuring ethical standards while conducting the study is just as important. Ethical and moral considerations are essential to qualitative research. Nespor and Groenke (2009) state,

> A key component of the researcher's obligation is to accurately explain to potential participants what is being asked of them, to lay out the risks and benefits of participation, and then to allow people the full exercise of their agency in giving or refusing informed consent (p. 997).

To build trust with the participants, I identified the purpose and objective of the study to provide comfort and understanding. I was also respectful of the participants' time and space. I spent as much time as possible with the participants to establish trustworthiness. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation, focusing on details that are most relevant to the study, are critical in establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants must be identified and described accurately.

Patton (2015) describes, "the credibility of your findings and interpretations depends on your careful attention to establishing trustworthiness" (p. 685). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, trustworthiness was established by ensuring the participants are safe and secure and they fully understand the goals and objectives of the research that is being conducted. For readers, "to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible" (Nowell, et. al, 2017, p.1).

To further establish trustworthiness of the reader, I had a peer review the study. He is a Director at a public college and a qualitative researcher. He was provided a copy of the pre-published work to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the data. This peer debriefing, with a non-involved person, provided a non-biased depiction of the data reviewed. I also had my faculty mentor review and discuss the findings with me to establish credibility of the data. She was able to provide timely redirection on any critiques during debriefing.

To find emerging themes, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed to identify common words and phrases by the participants and compared to themes of existing literature. The data analysis sought to find patterns and compare them with previous existing literature. The goal was to examine emergent themes from Black women's narratives and compare their narratives amongst each other and previous literature.

As I began to search for themes through open coding, I separated the interview notes and transcripts by each participant. I searched for consistent patterns and topics that in conjunction with my literature review, related to my topic. I wrote down words and phrases that kept coming

up. Words phrases that were mentioned several times throughout the interviews were salary, family, time commitment, and mentorship. I drew meaning from words or phrases that would arise from the transcriptions. Stake (2010) refers to this as direct interpretation, "as a process of pulling the data apart and then putting it back together in more meaningful ways" (p. 74). Themes then began to emerge through initial observations, data collection, and the formation of categories. The following themes (see Table 4) emerged regarding Black women's experiences at their perspective institutions. To be considered an emergent theme, at least three of the participants noted it as a problem.

I also used NVivo software for data analysis. In Vivo codes were used to pull emerging words from the participants. In vivo codes were used sparingly and only included if they appeared within multiple interviews and they aligned with the Critical Race Theory framework. Using NVivo, I found 22 codes that I placed into seven categories for data analysis. These codes were used to capture words and thoughts that came directly from the interview transcriptions. In vivo coding relies on participant-generated words for category development and is especially appropriate for research that prioritizes participants' voices (Saldaña, 2016). Themes are later discussed in this chapter.

Table 4

Emerging Themes

Participant	Income and Salary	Work-Life Balance	Career Trajectory	Lack of Mentorship	PWI vs HBCU	Racism and Sexism
Rose		X	X	X		X
Daisy	X	X	X	X		
Lily	X		X		X	X
Dahlia	X		X	X	X	
Iris	X	X	X	X		X
Jasmine	X	X	X		X	
Laurel	X	X	X	X	X	
Coral	X	X	X		X	

Summary

A qualitative research method was used to investigate Black women's experiences as they navigate through obstacles and barriers that hinder them from achieving senior-level administrative positions. The goal of this chapter is to establish the research method that was used to answer the research questions. A site was selected in a region near the researcher for better reliability and access to participants. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who fit the demographics to participate in the study. Data were analyzed by Initial Coding and In Vivo Coding methods to determine related themes. Trustworthiness was established to build a relationship with the participants for better chances of validity in the study and credibility for the readers.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify challenges and barriers African American women face while working in higher education as they try to reach senior-level administrative positions to bring about systemic change. I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explain how race directly affects the racial identity development of Black women in higher education. This study also addresses how the participants were able to navigate through their perspective career trajectories. This chapter explores how data was collected and analyzed by each participant. This chapter also includes a discussion that the analysis conducted was consistent with narrative inquiry methodology and how the analysis ties back to the research questions:

> **RQ1:** What are the experiences of Black women working in higher education in relation to how the influence of their race was either a factor or a non-factor in their advancement or responsibilities of leadership roles?
>
> **RQ1A:** How do Black women working in higher education settings perceive race has impacted their advancement?

This chapter details the stories of eight Black women working in higher education as they reflect on their challenges, experiences, and barrier to success. The narratives told have been both consistent and inconsistent with findings from previous studies around the same topic.

As the researcher, I was invested in this study because I worked as a Black woman in a higher education institution professionally for 10 years before I decided to leave the field and pursue other career opportunities. Despite having years of experience and advanced degrees, I

remained stuck in entry to mid-level positions throughout my time in the field. This research will serve as a basis for Black women considering entering higher education as a professor and for those in the field that are looking to advance their careers. I felt like my hard work and commitment went unnoticed and no longer aligned with my career goals. I wanted to remain in education, in an area that was more suitable for me. I transitioned into a local public high school, where I almost doubled my salary, and now have a schedule that is more flexible for my lifestyle. Just like many women in this study, I have felt discriminated against and passed up on positions that I know I was more than qualified for.

The next section details each participant's background, biography, positions in higher education, and personal experiences as they shared their challenges in a broader context. The background provides basic demographic information about each participant. The biography gives us insight into their personal and professional lives. The positions held in higher education provide us with their career trajectory and what their positions entail. This section also helps us to understand the climate of the university in which each participant works. The narratives help us to envision the working environment and the day-to-day dealings of the participants.

Each participant was given a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes in this study. "Pseudonyms are often used to de-identify participants and other people, organizations, and places mentioned in interviews and other textual data collected for research purposes" (Heaton, 2022, p. 123). I decided to name the participants after flowers, in that, they grow and bloom beautifully at their own pace. Here are the stories of Rose, Daisy, Lily, Dahlia, Iris, Jasmine, Laurel, and Coral.

Participant's Narrative Stories

Rose

Rose is a 46-year-old Black woman, who currently serves as the Dean for the School of Health Sciences at Greystone Community College. She is a wife, a mother, and a minister. Rose has been working in higher education for 18 years. She was Department Chair at her current institution for 17 years before gaining the Dean position in January of this year. In this position, she has been mainly working to move the entire college to a new location, off campus. Rose has a certification in Radiological Technology, a Bachelor's in Health Sciences, a certification in Medical Sonography, a Master's in Health Services Management, a Doctorate in Education Leadership, and an additional Masters in Theology. Among all of her degrees and certifications, she is also certified as a Professional Coach, where she helps others navigate through life personally, professionally, and spirituality.

Rose stated that "she wanted to become an English teacher after she graduated from high school, but life led her down a different path." She received a scholarship from Winthrop University but did not attend. Her dad was diagnosed with cancer during her senior year in high school and was told he had three months to live. He ultimately lived six years after his diagnosis. Rose felt it would be better if she stayed closer to home after high school to be there for her father, so she attended a local technical college for Radiology. She worked as a Radiological Technician for many years before she transitioned into higher education.

She began her education career working as the Clinical Coordinator at a technical college. She loved the position however, she had a horrible experience with her White male counterparts. She felt like she was working in a racist environment by being treated poorly and begin that she was the only Black person in her department. She was good at her job and the

students loved her. She was working in a much smaller town than her hometown and she thought it was just something that happened in the South in small towns. Rose was referred to another technical college after two years of begin in that position. She was asked to become the Department Chair of a new Radiological Tech program at her current institution. She was hired as Department Chair and worked in that position for 17 years until she entered her new position as Dean.

When the Dean position became available, Rose did not apply for it. The former Dean was also a Black woman, who was her supervisor. As she saw Rose grow, she became distant and angry and did not want to support her. She mentions that the former Dean "groomed another individual for the position", so Rose felt as though the position was not for her. After the position was open for a while, she was encouraged by colleagues to apply for it. She had an excellent interview. Rose then became Dean of the School of Health Sciences, which she has been thoroughly enjoying.

In total, Rose has worked in higher education for 19 years. At the time of this interview, she had been in the Dean position for nine months. She served as a Department Chair for 17 years prior. She also worked for another institution, University of Phoenix, where she was an Associate Professor and Department Chair for six years. Although she has worked full-time and part-time in higher education, she continued to work PRN at the hospital until starting the Dean position. Working another job and serving as Dean would be too much for her, especially having family responsibilities, church obligations, and community involvement.

When asked if she would consider leaving higher education, she responded, "no, I love education". She was afraid to leave the classroom and teaching her students as she entered the Dean's position. She still stops by the classrooms and interacts with the students and they are

delighted to see her. Since entering the field, she has remained. She has not left the field for other career opportunities. Rose used to say that she had no desire to become Dean. However, now she is open to whatever is next in life for her. She allows God to lead and believes that nothing He allows is wasted. She is leaving the door open for what is next in her life. She did feel limited under the old leadership at her institution. Her supervisor, who was the former Dean, treated her badly after she saw her progress. She thought Department Chair was the last position for her. With her new President, in her new position, she does not feel limited at all. She no longer sees the glass ceiling as she did in the past. She stated with her new President, who is a Black male, "sky is the limit".

Rose has not worked with a mentor in higher education, but she says that she "is a mentor by nature." She teaches and learns. She learns from different women in various capacities. She collaborates with a group of women in ministry whom she learns from. She also has a mentor in her sorority whom she leans on often for support. She helps her with leadership challenges and how to overcome obstacles. Despite her many hats, Rose is learning to have energy for the things she is passionate about. She loves what she does and prioritizes the day. One thing she loves about her sorority is that she can be as active or inactive as she wants to be. She loves to spend time with her family and it is very important to her. She mentioned that "she prioritizes date night with her husband once a week, whether it is to watch a movie or stop for sushi after work before they go home and become parents." She is very intentional about her marriage.

When asked about her experiences with HBCUs and PWIs, she did not attend or work for an HBCU however, her husband did attend an HBCU. Her interaction with HBCUs is very limited. She attended a PWI and works for one. She enjoys her leadership experiences. She likes that she can change lives. She is in a position to have influence. She has been influenced by bad

leaders and has learned what not to do. Since entering her Dean position, she has watched the morale of her department go up. She leads how she wants to lead. Her education and experience helped her advance her career.

Her experience at her previous institution was a time when she faced discrimination. She was treated like she was uneducated and given fewer responsibilities. Since coming to her current institution, which has Black leadership, she has not faced discrimination. She has always worked for a Black President there and a Black Dean. She is currently on the Board of Trustees at a local hospital, where she is the only Black woman. She feels as though she is the token Black person and she is being used to show diversity. She says, "despite my experiences, good and bad, my career is meaningful." She can change lives every day. She likes her new position as Dean. She would like to do more work in Faculty Development. She wants to stay connected to the faculty. She mentioned that "people do not quit their job, they quit their leader." She does not want to be the person that people quit. If she had to put a title on her next position, it would be Vice President of Academic Affairs. She can be the best at her job because she has help and assistance. She also knows her strengths but she knows her limitations as well. As a Black woman, her strengths include experience and determination. She is committed to growing and developing. She has the confidence not to fail. She is proud that leadership can trust her because she showed development in her department by increasing graduation rates and providing more clinical rotation opportunities for students.

Daisy

Daisy is a 58-year-old Black woman, who is the Special Populations Coordinator at Greystone Community College. She also serves as an Academic Advisor. Her job entails her connecting students to resources. She works with students who are homeless, single parents,

women who are pregnant, minorities, non-traditional students, and children of parents who are on active duty in the military. She is known as the "Chief Happiness Officer" at her institution. She has been in this position since 2020. Her position is funded through the Perkins Grants. The position is 78% grant funded and 22% state funded. When asked about her job security due to her position being grant-funded, Daisy replied, "I am not concerned about losing my position due to the grant running out." Daisy has a Bachelor of Science in Communication Arts with a concentration in Radio, Television, and Public Relations. Her background is in marketing. She would like to obtain some graduate certificates, but she is not sure how beneficial earning a Master's degree would be to her. She mentioned, "is it worth spending $18,000 on a degree and would not get a salary increase." She started working in television after college. She worked in that field for about 20 years, but it was not paying well. She never obtained her Master's degree because, in television, a degree was not needed.

She left television and started working as the Director of College Communications at a small community college. She worked there for one year. She liked the school and the job but she mentioned "having a small child at the time, the commute was a lot with rising gas prices." She has had various positions in higher education institutions aside from that one. Once she came to her current institution, she started as the Director of Marketing and Public Relations and she held that position for eight years. She also served as the Military Navigator for six years and the Veterans Education Coordinator/Special Populations Coordinator for two years. She has worked in higher education for a total of 15 years. Daisy says she "has considered leaving higher education." She is currently in the process of figuring out what she wants to do next. She would like to take marketing classes on navigating social media. She is very interested in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion if she stays in higher education. She is also interested in Human

Resources training. She also mentioned that she "is not sure what she wants to do with the rest of her life." She does attend webinars to continue her education. She said, "I like the flexibility of my job but I am not satisfied with the salary." Her institution is very family-oriented. If she needs to leave work to pick her son up, she does not have any issues. She also stated that she "would like to work remotely if possible."

Since she started in higher education she has not left the field however, she has interviewed elsewhere. She says, "I love non-profits but they do not pay well." She is ready for change. She wants to make a difference in the community. She feels like she has the perfect job in higher education. She loved providing resources to the students. She would love to have the school's daycare back open to help students who need childcare. She wishes there were better funding opportunities to help students. The school receives funds from the grant but she is limited in what she can do with the funding. Daisy shared a story of a student needing $2,400 for rent or she would be evicted. Unfortunately, she was not able to provide the student with the funds. She can only provide resources. "These are the things that tug at my heart," Daisy mentioned. She has community resources, but she has to go through the college's avenues and rules. She can only do what she is told and that is to get the job done. Some things are just not effective at her institution. Daisy mentioned that "you can have as many ideas as you want, but I can not execute them unless it is under the state's order and it is hard for me."

She had a White male mentor when she worked in television. She said, "he made me confident and taught me how to be assertive and to go after what I wanted." She has not had a mentor since she has been in higher education. She wishes she had one. At her institution, she stated that "leadership is out for themselves." She also said, "they do not want to help you get ahead and the lack of support is not beneficial for me or the students." As an alumnus of her

undergraduate institution, she is currently mentoring two students who are interested in working in film and television.

Daisy is a very busy woman, who has a lot on her plate. She said, "it can get overwhelming." She is about to become to President of her sorority. She is the President of the Booster Club, Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, and President of the Advisory Council. She has two children and a husband. She says "it helps her to put everything into projects." She has to stay organized to be efficient. She was told by the President of her sorority, whose position she will be taking, that you have to find one day to handle business if not, she will become overwhelmed. She said that she "has to figure out her way to balance things." Daisy also says, "she always looks ahead and prepares for what is to come."

She does not have any experience at HBCUs. She was thinking about getting her Master's at an HBCU if she decides to return to school. She has only had experiences through her family and visiting their schools for Homecomings. By the visits, she can tell it is a different experience from the experience at a PWI. She mentioned that "HBCUs feel more like family."

Daisy said that she "would like to work in a leadership position." She would like to become a marketing director. She loves community involvement. The President at her current institution recently had a leadership class. She was not selected to join the class although she was more than qualified. Everyone was telling her that he did not select her because she already knows everything. She felt if that was the case, he could have asked her to co-lead the class because she knows the school and the community. She said that she "wants to ask him why she was not selected because her feelings were hurt." Applications are open for the new leadership class. She does not plan to apply. To advance her career, she mentioned that she "attends webinars to continue her education." She also joined the Georgia Association of Women in

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Higher Education. Daisy states that "it has been great learning and networking from them." She recently applied for a leadership fellowship. If she gets in that would be great, if not she is not afraid of rejection and wants to continue to work with them. It helps her to stay connected to higher education.

Daisy said that "she has not experienced discrimination in higher education as she did in television." She feels left out at her institution. She mentioned that she "feels like my institution is done with me and I am done with them, that's why I've been passed up on positions." She also said that "I think my President discriminated against me due to her community connectivity." She has been nominated for awards that she did not get. She had a White female Vice President that has treated her badly. She had to call HR because of her treatment. She was belittled and constantly picked on by her White superiors and colleagues. She says "it is still awkward for them at work." She only speaks to her when she needs to. I have "a strong personality and people hate that," said Daisy. Having a Black male President has helped her to grow as a professional and pushed her to her highest potential. He has a team of Vice Presidents who are not strong or good for the college.

Daisy said feels like she is "more valued at a conference than at my home institution." At conferences, she can gain ideas and express herself. She feels like they do not like her at school. She would like to be in leadership somewhere else, but not at her current institution. Her ideal career would be to work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She wants to make sure everyone is included. She also wants to learn more about the LGBTQ community and be a support system for them, especially with everything happening in the world. When asked what can she bring to her institution as a Black woman she said she "brings diversity to her institution." She can uphold Black women as leaders. She has connections and resources. She wants to help Black

women get their foot in the door. She would recommend the field of higher education to other Black women. She stated, "we need Black women in leadership." She recommends finding a mentor in your sorority and it does not have to be someone located locally. She suggests "get a mentor that looks like you and one that does not look like you." She states, "our identity has been taken from us." She also suggests that Black women should join organizations for Black women.

Lily

Lily is a 58-year-old Black woman who works as an Academic Success Coordinator at Lane College. She started at her institution eight years ago. Her position entails making sure students are successful by providing student success programs and tutoring services. She loves the position and being a campus resource. She has a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. She also has a Master of Arts in Teaching- Secondary Education Science. Her original plan after high school was to become a television show host of an animal show. Her parents were both high school educators so they instilled in the importance of getting a quality education into her. She has two siblings, a brother, and a sister. She said, "our parents encouraged us to go into education as a career."

Lily worked in corporate America for 17 years before transitioning into higher education. She started as adjunct faculty at a local community college. She worked in that position for four years. She taught Anatomy and Physiology, given her educational background in science. She enjoyed working with the faculty and staff. She said that she "enjoyed the school and the position because it allowed students to get an education who could not otherwise be admitted into other colleges or universities." Lily has worked in various capacities in higher education. She has been Adjunct Faculty for a traditional university, an Academic Advisor, and an Academic Success Coordinator. She also worked as adjunct faculty at a for-profit institution. She

would not advise students to attend those types of schools because the cost of the degree and the hiring potential for those institutions is low. She left that institution and came to her current institution, where she started as an Academic Advisor. In total, she has worked in higher education for 15 years. She also worked as a substitute teacher while working on her Master's degree. That's when she discovered that "K-12 education was not for me."

When asked if she has ever considered leaving higher education, she said "Every day!" She plans to leave. She discussed that "the amount of work does not equal the salary and the ability to move up to higher positions is lower." She mentioned that you can get stuck in a position and will not be able to advance your career. She has maintained a career in higher education since entering the field. She said that she "does desire to move up, maybe to an Assistant Director position." She is close to the end of her professional career, so she is not necessarily looking for advancement at this time. She also mentioned that "I want to start working for myself." She plans to start a small business in real estate. Lily says that feels like "limitations have been placed on me as a Black woman in higher education." She can only provide little to no input in the dealings of her department. She stated that "Black women could not be on certain committees to advance their careers." She blames this on poor leadership. She was held back from things that she was qualified for, such as advanced positions and leading programs at her institution. She mentions that the university appears that things may be changing. She mentions that her institution "has been hiring more people of color, who have been more than qualified for the positions however, they have to give 200% effort compared to their counterparts." When asked about her experience with mentorship, she stated that she "mentors my students mostly." She has been mentored by Black women at her institution, who are faculty. They have helped her in her career. She said, "they help me to stay calm and I can

bounce ideas off of them." They offer advice on how to move and network through the university.

Lily is a wife and a mother. Her children are grown now so she said "balancing her career and family time works out." Her husband is retired. He makes her want to retire so she can enjoy her life more. She also mentioned that she has "a graduate assistant at work that helps to balance my schedule." She also does work in her community with a partnership from her institution. She is a graduate of an HBCU. Her sister and her brother both attended HBCUs. Her parents encouraged education from HBCUs. She has never worked for one. She describes the atmosphere as much different from a PWI. She mentions that "HBCUs are more inclusive, the quality education was fantastic, and faculty and staff cheer the students on throughout their educational journey."

She said that she is "on the fence about going into a leadership position." Part of her says yes and part of her says no. She stated, "if it happens, it happens." She worked in leadership in corporate America. She worked in pharmaceuticals in the area of quality control. She led a team to make sure everything was in order. She did that for 17 years. She says "it takes a lot to lead people in a positive direction." To advance her career in higher education, she started working on her doctorate in Higher Education Leadership. She has only completed about one-fourth of the program. She says that "I put it on pause while I decide if I will use the degree and if paying for it is worth it." If she decided to finish the program, she will most definitely leave her current institution. She does not see room for advancement there. She also attends seminars and workshops to stay current and relevant with today's policies and practices.

Lily, like many Black women, has faced discrimination in the workplace. As she was trying to move up in her previous department, she was held back. She applied for a position that

required a Master's degree, which she has. She said, "A White woman in my department without a Master's degree was hired over me." At that point, she was ready to leave. She stated, "you can see the writing on the wall". She has also been blocked from joining a committee that leads to certification, which would allow her to move up the ladder. She mentioned that she has "only experienced discrimination at my current institution, which is a PWI."

Despite her many challenges and barrier, Lily still sees her career as meaningful. She can help students each day. Her work allows her to see student success. She can build programs that ensure student academic success. She said her "ideal career would be to work in Student Affairs." She would like to work more hands-on with students. She would love to connect students to resources such as housing, financial aid, healthcare, and food options, just to name a few. She stated that "being a Black woman at a PWI, allows the students of color to see someone they can relate to." She says, "it eases their anxiety when they see that they have someone who understands them and where they are coming from." She can encourage students to continue to pursue their education. She tells her students "not to just seek a job, but seek higher positions; the highest position as possible in leadership." She says she would recommend the field of higher education to Black women. There are so many paths that they can go in higher education and grants are available to Black women to build programs. She also mentioned that "if you have not moved up in three or four years, then move on." You can easily get stuck in these entries to mid-level positions. She stated that her "parents influenced her life hugely." They have always encouraged advanced degrees. She wishes she would have listened to her parents and followed their directions earlier in life.

Dahlia

Dahlia is a 63-year-old Black woman who works as the Associate Registrar at her institution, Applecrest Institute. She handles student records, grades, transcripts, consent forms, etc. She manages three campuses and has four Assistant Registrars that she supervises. Dahlia has an Associate of Applied Science in General Studies from a community college, a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from an HBCU, and a Master of Education, with a concentration in Psychology and Counseling from a PWI. She went to college as a non-traditional student. It was more like self-fulfillment for her. She wanted to become a social worker, as her original plan. She knew wanted to help people. She applied for a job after college at a local institution and became a freshman Counselor/Advisor at Riverside University College. She worked in that position for 10 years. She has also worked as an Associate Registrar for Applecrest Institute for seven years. She started her new position overseeing the three campuses in May 2022. She has worked in higher education for a total of 18 years.

Dahlia said she has "considered leaving higher education due to burnout." She also stated, "the money is not where I want it to be." She enjoys helping the students. She is thinking about retiring. She may stay in higher education until she retires. She has remained in higher education since she started in the field. She would like to leave higher education but she wants to stay in education; maybe enter the public school system. She says that "I stayed in higher education for so long because I just became content with the position and the work." She desires so much more from the field. She also mentioned that "I am not appreciated and do not get the recognition or pay I deserve". She has seen Black women excel in higher education institutions, but these are the women who are working all night and doing whatever the administrator says. She mentions that "Black women have to do more to get ahead." She has sat in on people's exit

interviews, who have left the institution, and they have not been saying great things about the field, such as low wages and long, exhausting work hours.

She says she "has not had the opportunity to work with a mentor", but she built relationships with her colleagues at her previous institution. She stated, "they inspired me and we can share ideas." Dahlia describes herself as having a good work/life balance. She is married but does not have children. She also works a part-time job at a dentist's office. She has had that job for 40 years. She has been working part-time there and full-time in higher education for 18 years. She works three evenings a week. She likes to stay busy. Her husband has been instrumental in helping her balance life She says her husband "is very supportive and he helps cook and clean."

Dahlia graduated from an HBCU. She has worked at both a PWI and HBCU. She says, "the HBCU was relaxed and she worked with people like her." You did not have to worry about being watched for time. She stated that she could go to a doctor's appointment if you need to. There is also a difference in students. She stated that "you are recognized more if you graduate from a PWI and those who graduated from an HBCU feel slighted in their careers and job opportunities."

She is currently in a leadership role now. Four Registrar Assistants report to her. She says that she "does not care for all the meetings in leadership." As of now, Dahlia does not want to move up. She has turned down positions because of the workload. It's more stressful in leadership. To advance her career, she has earned multiple degrees and participated in training sessions offered by the college. She stated that she "has become stagnant in her career." She feels like she should have done more when she was younger. She would have had the energy and drive when she was younger to advance her career. She feels like she should be making more money with a degree.

Dahlia says "I do not feel like I have been discriminated against in higher education." She is harder on herself than anyone else. She says she "sees discrimination in males, not necessarily in Black females." She feels like she sold herself short. She has seen Black women excel in higher education. She has experienced Black females getting degrees and positions and looking down on others. When she started working at a PWI after leaving an HBCU, she ordered pens one day and was told "you're not at an HBCU and you do not have to watch what you spend." This implies that HBCUs have budget constraints and have to monitor their spending. She felt not only discrimination within herself but within her people and their beloved institutions.

Dahlia feels as though her career is meaningful. She always wanted to be a social worker. She loves to see people excel. She loves working with the students. Her ideal career in higher education is actually what she's doing now. She said she "would like to have more face-to-face contact with students." She stated that she "does not want to be so worried about the numbers. She wants a smooth work environment." In her current position, she is more focused on numbers, recruiting, and retaining students, and budget cuts. She is tired of that. She wants less focus on that. She would like to just service the students but that does not pay well. She said her "strengths as a Black woman include being dedicated, educated, and knowledgeable." She has a Master's degree and she is loyal. She mentioned that she 'would take a pay cut for peace of mind." She would recommend higher education as a career choice for Black women. She mentioned that "if you come in as an entry-level position, work towards a higher position." She also stated that if a Black woman has an advanced degree, you would do better. If she was younger, she would like to advance. Now with her age, it's a lot to carry. She has to overcome her fears. She said that Black women have to work harder to prove themselves.

Iris

Iris is a 38-year-old Black woman that works as a Manager for the College of Nursing in the Dean's Office. She assists the Dean with day to day operations of the college. She does strategic planning for the college as well. She helps with the department and planning events. She manages promotion and tenure for the faculty and she assists with getting the faculty portfolios together. She supervises the Communication Specialist, who is in charge of the website, pamphlets, and social media for the department. Iris has an Associate's degree in Human Services, an Alcohol and Drug Certification, and Social Services Certification. She also has a Bachelor's in Psychology and a Master's in Public Administration. She said, "I had no career plan when I entered college." She was just told to "go to school" by her parents. Eventually, she decided to become a social worker. After further research, the pay was not enough in social work. She was pregnant at the time and needed to make enough money to support her child.

She started her career in higher education by working at Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home as an Administrative Assistant to the Director of Nursing. Georgia War was part of Lane College, so that's how her education service began. She still did not have a plan even after working there. She later became interested in Human Resources. She started to look for positions to support her family. She worked there for four years. At this point in her life, she then had two children. Before Georgia War, she worked as an Associate in Customer Service at Walmart but the hours were not great for a mom. She transitioned to an Office Specialist position in the College of Nursing. She worked in that position for one year. Afterward, she became an Administrative Assistant 2 in the College of Nursing, where she held that position for four years. She then moved to the College of Education as an Administrative Assistant 3. She worked under that title for a few months before she provided proof to change the title to Business Manager 1,

which she served for two years. She is currently the Manager, back in the College of Nursing. She has been in this position for the last two years. She has worked for one institution for a total of 13 years.

Iris has considered leaving higher education several times. She stated that "it is challenging for professional Black females at her institution", which is a PWI. She noted that it is hard to move up. She stated that "I have the skills and qualifications for higher-ranking positions, but I am not been able to climb the ladder in the way that I would like." She also mentions that there is not a lot of money in the field. Iris said at her institution, "it's more about who you know, not what you know." She would see her White female and White male counterparts move up and get a title change and a raise very quickly, whereas that was not the case for people of color. She mentioned that she has "not been fortunate to work with a mentor." She has had to train people because that was the job. She feels like she would have benefited her more if she had someone to look at and ask how to handle situations.

She has been in higher education since the start of her career. It took a while to find what type of work was for her. She is a task-oriented person. Her goal is to find a job in HR and be paid well for her years of service and qualifications. She has had to earn everything. Nothing has been given to her. She feels like she has been limited in what she can say and what she can do. She stated that she "has made complaints to HR in the past about the unfair treatment at my institution." She discussed HR keeping nothing confidential. People do not say anything because they will be retaliated against you. Iris said that you learn to "keep your mouth shut and your head down."

Iris is a mother of two boys. She says in order "to balance my career, family, and community involvements, I take it one day at a time." She has to stay organized. Iris has stayed

in positions because it was beneficial with kids. Those positions were flexible for her life. She makes sure she plans ahead of time. She stated that "she just makes it work."

She has not had a long-standing relationship with HBCUs. When she was in high school, she was a part of the Upward bound program at Riverside University College, an HBCU. She also attended her first semester of college at Riverside University College because the Upward Bound program paid for it. She stated that "HBCUs cater to people of color." She enjoyed seeing Black in higher positions. The says "the culture and events catered to people of color at HBCUs and I do not see that at PWIs."

Iris would like a leadership position and she is qualified for one. She stated that "a major obstacle for my is needing more money." Higher education institutions do not pay well, especially in lower-level positions. She would like to change the politics of the university and provide more auditing. Her goal is "to listen more to employees' needs and wants." She says "it provides for a better university culture." To advance her career, she has earned more degrees and certifications. She has thought about doing more but there is no motivation or incentive, especially monetary. She has everything that she needs to move up. She is patiently waiting on the opportunity to arise. She recently interviewed for an Assistant Director position. She said, "if God wants her to have it, He will give it to her."

Throughout her many years in higher education, Iris has faced discrimination several times. She has been in a toxic work environment. She was told from day one that "she was hired because they need a Black person." She details a story of one day at work she had a piece of cake and was asked if it was cornbread. Black people have been stereotyped for decades about the food that they eat, and cornbread is one of them. She has also experienced a co-worker putting racial verbiage on their door. For example, a co-worker had a quote on her door from the movie

The Help, a movie based on the Civil Rights Movement where Black women served as maids for White families. The quote stated, "You is Kind, You is Smart, You is Important." The co-worker did not see any problem with this. Iris was told to recruit Black males to become education majors. They told her to talk to the basketball team, implying that most Blacks on campus can be found on the basketball team. She also spoke on a time when a co-worker asked her "what do yall like to eat." Iris was taken aback. She politely stated that "we like to eat the same things that yall like to eat." She has also heard a co-worker say "I do not know why they are called African Americans, it's not like they've been to Africa." She felt like she could not say anything out of fear that something could happen with her job.

Iris said she "feels like the token Black person at my job." Her boss likes people in lower positions than her to do things. She feels like they do not have confidence in her and her work. She feels like she was hired to meet a quota. She has applied for a job that was qualified for. The job required a Master's degree, which she has. A White female was hired who only had a Bachelor's degree. The hiring manager knew her and Iris was severely disappointed.

Her current position is not as meaningful as she would like for it to be. She says 'it is not aligned with my personal life and career goals." She came to that position to get away from a previous toxic position. Her purpose in life is to serve. She would like to merge education with the service. She instills education in her children. She tells them that they need a degree to even compete with their counterparts. Her ideal career would be a Business Administrator or Director of Human Resources. Her strengths are event planning and working with donors. Donors of the university and students, especially Blacks, gravitate more toward her. She says that she "is more relatable to them because she is Black." She maybe would recommend the field to a Black woman if she could come in as an administrator, not as entry-level. A Black woman has to work

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harder. She cannot bend the rules. She is expected to produce more. Black women are strong. Iris stated that "people ignore the racism topic but it is alive and well."

Jasmine

Jasmine is a 39-year-old Black woman, who works as the Graduation Coach Team Lead for Applecrest Institute. She supervises the advising center, financial aid, and registration. She works with students all day and provides student services. She started this position on April 1, 2022. Before this, she was the Advising Center Supervisor but restructured the institution, giving her more responsibilities. Jasmine has a Bachelor's of Social Work from an HBCU and a Masters in Counseling, concentration in Mental Health, from a PWI. She went to college because she had to go, as told by her parents. She was undeclared on a major for two years. She knew she wanted to help people so she majored in Social Work. Her internships turned her off from social work. She fell into higher education, like many of the other women in this study. In graduate school, she told her mentor that she needed a job and she began working in the grant-funded TRIO program.

Jasmine has been working in higher education for a total of 20 years, working in 10 different positions at five different institutions. Her positions include TRIO program Coordinator for six months, Coordinator of Upward Bound Math and Science for one year), Disability Enhancement for years, Academic Advisor for freshmen for four years, Assistant Director then Director of Academic Advisement for six years, Coordinator of the First Pace program for two years, Academic Advisor for two months, Academic Advisor for one year, Academic Advisement Supervisor for six years; now team lead, and various adjunct positions at multiple institutions. Since the start of her career in higher education she said she has "never considered

leaving the field." She says she is "able to hone her skills in higher education." She has run programs and written grants, which she enjoys.

Jasmine says she does want more out of the field. She desires to learn something new and she is all about learning. She has not identified being limited in higher education as an issue for her. Age has played a major factor in her progression than anything. She was the youngest Director at her institution. She says that "she can not break down barriers because of skin color." She is mindful of the things she says and how she acts as a Black woman. While working to make more money and find different avenues, she has been told that she is too young to make that kind of money. When asked about her experience working with a mentor, Jasmine says she has worked with a mentor. She says her mentor "was a Black male, who pushed her a lot." She helped her not to be stagnant. He also helped her find things that set her apart from everyone else. She also entails how she has mentored hundreds of students.

She still has not found that work/life balance. She says that she "did not have a balance." Everything was 100% work for her. As a woman, she tried to be 100% visible all of the time. She was trying to prove that being a mother did not limit her. She discusses how her students were raising her child and how her son spent a lot of time on campus. She stated that "she neglected her responsibilities as a mother trying to prove her worth." She details a story about how her students would pick up her son from elementary school and bring him back to campus where she worked for countless hours.

Jasmine has experience attending and working in both a PWI and HBCUs. She felt like she had to prove her worth much more when working at an HBCU. She a "PWI belief system is different. The social aspect is more important at PWI, whereas at an HBCU, academics are first." She is currently in the biggest leadership position that she has ever had. She oversees and

manages a lot of aspects of the institution. She says that "leadership is exhausting". She has not taken any additional steps to advance her career besides her education.

When asked if she felt like she had ever been discriminated against, she said age was a factor. She said she "did not have issues at PWI, only at an HBCU." She was treated as if she was too young to hold those positions. She does not think she has been discriminated against because of her skin color. She also does not think she has been discriminated against being a woman either. She says that she "stands her ground and does not take any mess." She used to be soft-spoken and people would take advantage of her for that.

Jasmine does feel as if her career is meaningful. She also teaches freshmen and orientation courses at her institution. At the end of the quarter, her students complete a student survey. They speak highly of her. She makes her students comfortable. She helps them learn more about themselves. Her job entails her telling students to think about what they want to do with their lives and she does not know what she wants to do with hers, so she does not know where the field will take her next. She does know that she would like to "make more money." She would recommend Black women to enter the field of higher education. She says, "people need to see Black women. Students have to see someone who looks like them." This can help them say, "if she made it then so can I." Black men, White men, and White women need to us represented as well. Jasmine is very passionate about people of color. She states, "Black students to take ownership of their education." It bothers her to see Blacks not take advantage of education. Blacks have to work harder to advance in her opinion.

Laurel

Laurel is a 40-year-old Black woman, who works as an Administrative Secretary/Budget Assistant for the TRIO program at Riverside University College. She works in student supports.

She advises students, does clerical work, collects student data, and does all front desk, and administrative work for the department. Laurel has a Bachelor's in Accounting and a Master's in Management. She did not follow initial her career path. She was a full-time caregiver of her grandmother for two years after college, which led to her moving away from her career. She is still interested in accounting but she will need a lot of reinforcement and it's like going backward. She does not know if she has the time and drive to go back into it.

She began her career in higher education in 2008 as a Clerical Assistant. She mentioned that she "went through a temporary agency to gain employment." She did not get any interviews with accounting firms. She was told that she should have done an internship as an undergrad and it hindered her from being hired in the accounting field. She was hired full-time by Riverside University College in 2009. She was an Administrative Secretary until 2017. She then became the Education Specialist for the program. She went back to the Administrative Secretary position in August 2022 due to restructuring. She has considered leaving higher education. She says her "reason for staying is the student relationships." She can provide services for students. She helps them with their career goals. She has been in higher education, at one institution, since the beginning of her career. As of right now, she does not have any desire to advance in higher education. She just had a baby and she wants to spend more time with her child. She said, "trying to progress in the field requires a lot." She is not in the frame of mind to pursue more at the moment. She may consider doing more when her son gets older. She expressed that did want more out of her career before she became a mother.

Laurel feels limited by working at HBCU. There are mostly Blacks that work at and attend HBCUs. If she was a PWI, she would not feel like limitations have been placed on her. She feels like she would have been able to do more at a PWI. She was a student at a PWI but

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works at an HBCU. She says a "PWI has a different atmosphere." It is more hands-on at an HBCU. She stated that "they do more than just scheduling and sending them on." At an HBCU, they give the students guidance. She can do for students what she did not have. She has not had the opportunity to work with a mentor. She mentioned that her career development would have been more beneficial if she had a mentor. She says, "a mentor would have helped her step outside of her comfort zone." They could have helped elevate. Maybe a mentor could have helped her continue with accounting as well.

Balancing life as a new mom has been an adjustment for her. She says, "it is very challenging with a new baby." Her job caused her to travel a lot before Covid-19. She says balancing life "was okay because most things were virtual." Now that she has returned to work she does not like being away from her son. She has a huge church commitment as well. She was her pastor's assistant. It was hard to figure out what she could continue or not continue doing. Her work supervisors give her grace, having a newborn and she is thankful. Right now, she does not want a leadership position but it was not always that way. Now she does not want all the responsibility. To advance her career, she has been seeking other positions. She joined professional organizations and attended conferences to perform better in her role. Laurel says that "she has not experienced any type of discrimination because she is surrounded by people that look like her."

Her career is very meaningful to her because she impacts her students every day. She can assist them. She can take her knowledge and can share it with others. She also takes what she learns from the job and can improve the functions of her church. She works for a grant-funded program. She would look for a higher position within the program, such as Assistant Director or Director but that is not her ultimate goal right now. She would like to work in Student Affairs.

She says, "the students need a voice." She would love to be a part of campus life. She feels like her strengths as a Black woman include being understanding of situations. She details a story where she grew up in a house with two parents and her home shifted to a one-parent home in an apartment so she can see both sides. She stated, "life happens." Through this, she can help students move forward. She is an advocate for them. She would recommend the field of higher education to Black women. She would also encourage students to attend an HBCU so they can learn about their heritage. She states that students should "seek higher education because we need it." She also guides young men as well as women.

Coral

Coral is a 37-year-old single Assistant Director of the TRIO program at Riverside University College, an HBCU. Coral currently works with first-generation students and low-income students in the program. She provides academic support, counseling, and financial literacy for students. Riverside University College currently has 400-500 students after experiencing financial problems and accreditation issues. There are approximately 140 students in the TRIO program that she works with. Coral holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Resources and a Master's in Public Administration, both from PWIs.

After high school, Coral did not plan to become a higher education professional. She wanted to work in Business, training others. Her goal was to work in talent management at the time. Her dream was to be a counselor in the Upward Bound program. She, like Iris, is a product of Upward Bound. She was in the program in high school and it changed her life. After graduate school, she worked at the Boys & Girls Club in Human Resources. Then a job came open in Upward Bound TRIO. Her entire higher education career has been working in Upward Bound. She started as a Counselor in Upward Bound. She held that position for four years. She then

became the Coordinator for four years. She is now the Assistant Director, which she has been for the past year. Her Director is getting prepared to transition out and she hopes to obtain the position. She has been at one institution for a total of nine years.

Coral has considered leaving higher education. She stated that "education is different now and we are working and educating in a broken system." Students come from broken homes, which makes it harder to help them succeed. She feels as though she does not have the resources to do enough. She experienced burnout during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Coral cares for the students and the job. She says, "it's not a traditional 9-5 job." She talks about scarifying herself for the job. She has given a lot of time and energy to her institution. She has considered going back into HR. She is looking to transition to another institution. She feels like her work is not done in higher education. Coral is deeply invested in her spirituality. She said, "God is keeping her there." She would like for people at the institution need to be competent, more supportive, and empathetic of the student's needs. That's why she desires to train people. She does desire so much more from the field. She is looking through the lens of a broken system. She wants to provide more resources, balance, and intentionality. She wants to level the playing field for all students. According to Coral, "a lack of resources makes it hard for you to do the best of what the students deserve." There has been a disservice to students. She says there needs to be an up-to-date model of what education should be.

Coral says "I feel limited in what I can provide for the students." She is limited because of exhaustion. She spends many days and long hours in the office. There are not a lot of people in higher education with a heart and passion like hers. She has to carry a heavier load to provide for and support her students. She says that "the strategic plan of the college should be student-centered." Coral also talked about a lack of Black males in higher education. She stated that "I

feel as though I have to work harder for Black and Brown male students because they rarely see someone who looks like them." She is limited in her voice and forward-thinking. She also discussed "the salary does not equate to the workload." Luckily for Coral, she has had the opportunity to work with mentors inside and outside of higher education. They have helped advise her through situations. Her mentors have been Black men and women. She says, "it has been beneficial having those sources of wisdom." She is thankful that people are willing to walk her through life.

Coral, like many Black women, spends a lot of time in the office. She has been making a recent effort to balance her personal and professional life. She used to be the first one in and the last one out. She serves on regional and executive boards for the Upward Bound Program, which can be time-consuming but she thoroughly enjoys it. She has been intentional with planning moments of rest.

Coral spend the first year of her undergraduate studies at an HBCU, but she ultimately graduated from a PWI. When asked about her experiences at HBUs versus PWIs, Coral stated that "at a PWI, you feel like you have to be aware, conscious, and perfect." There is a consistent fear of judgment and being stereotyped. She regrets not spending more time and graduating from HBCUs as an undergrad. She said, "even if you're at the table, you do not have access to all the food." To her, HBCUs represent the pride and progress of their people and that is why she loves working for her institution.

She is currently in a leadership position at her institution. She is the face of her program. She interacts with parents, students, and guidance counselors at the schools they service. She even coordinates events for the program. She serves in professional associations. She does not necessarily like leadership. She likes to be in the background. Coral stated that she will "choose

influence over leader." To advance her career, she has taken on leadership roles, attended trainings, served on a college advising program, and has a Diversity and Inclusion Certificate of Completion. She is also looking into a certificate program to start in the spring. She says "I do not feel like I have been discriminated against in higher education." She attributes that to her being at an HBCU and most of her colleagues are Black.

Coral described her career as being very meaningful. She teaches college skills and she says students are finally getting it. They are starting to care about the importance of their education. She loves what she does. She can help students that are like the student that she was. She wants to create an environment and culture that is intentional, innovative, and effective. Her Director is getting ready to transition out and he is training her on his position. She would like to become the Director of TRIO Student Supports. She also would like to train her colleagues and the next set of leaders. As the Director, she would have to sacrifice her day-to-day work with students. She says "the tradeoff would be balancing." She would be working a lot more in that position than she is now. Coral describes her strengths as having empathy and understanding of students. She provides a standard of excellence and innovation. She is all about student engagement and feedback. She wants her students to seek more knowledge. She feels like students are not ready for higher education and they are far less prepared that their counterparts. She would recommend the field of higher education to Black women. She says "they are needed." She also "says to take care of yourself first…you can not give it your all." Coral mentions that Black women carry a heavier load. Black women are passionate and they uplift people.

Findings

Critical Race Theory has several key components when discussing themes. Within this study, CRT considers the intersection of race, class, and gender, as well as storytelling/counterstorying and naming the participants' own reality. This study is particularly important because it allows the participants to name their reality as a central theme and it places value on the experience of people of color in a world in which race and racism permeates all of their experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The themes are used to analyze and interpret the data to explore the barriers and challenges that Black women in higher education institutions face as they are working to reach senior-level administrative positions.

Income and Salary

Every participant except one, Rose, complained about their salary and the pay not equating to the work. Rose mentioned that she gets paid as a healthcare worker and not as an educator. Daisy discussed not furthering her education because earning another degree will not increase her salary. Iris talked about having multiple degrees and certifications and several years of service and she still is not paid enough for her work. She is constantly seeking positions that will pay her what she is worth. Iris even mentioned transitioning to another company that pays far better wages and does not require a degree. A lot of the participants did not see when and where they could ever make enough money in higher education and it equates to the workload. Laurel seems to be most content with her life and salary. She has been in her position for a while and has become comfortable with her living wage. Income and salary are addressed as major concerns. Coral even discussed her hesitancy about going into leadership and the salary not matching the workload.

According to Kochhar & Cilluffo (2017) and the 2016 *Survey of Consumer Finances*, "the median white household has a net worth of $171,000, 10 times the net worth of the median Black household, $17,100." Critical Race Theory outlines the racial disparities that Black face, with incoming being a major contributor. Black households are overrepresented among the poor, although they make up a huge population of the working class. "Even when Black people have advanced degrees, own their home, have high-paying jobs, and engage in other behaviors associated with asset building, their wealth is typically much lower than their white peers" (Williamson, 2020, p. 1). This proves to be true by the participants in this study.

Work-Life Balance

Many of the participants expressed concerns about balancing careers and family. Higher education requires long work hours and oftentimes leaves family obligations lacking. These women struggle with maintaining balancing their personal life with their professional life and being physically and emotionally available for all parties. All of the participants expressed how important family was to them. Rose and Laurel even mentioned not following their original dreams to become caregivers for family members. The participants are not in a financial place to not work, therefore they must balance both.

Coral discussed being more intentional with her work-life balance. She has spent a lot of time at her institution. She loves her students and the programs and services that she provides. Sometimes that requires long work hours. Jasmine was in a much similar situation. Jasmine said her institution and students practically raised her son. She said he would come to her job after school, eat dinner there and do his homework, all while she was still in the office working. She regrets putting her job first but she was working so he could have a better life. She became

burned out with that position. She stated, "I was there for 12 years I could not do it no more and so I just left. I quit, I hated to leave my students."

Daisy may have the busiest schedule of them all. She is about to become to President of her sorority, starting next month. She is the President of the Booster Club, Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, and President of the Advisory Council, and she serves on multiple boards. She also has a husband and two children, who are involved in many extracurricular activities. Daisy has a really good support system that helps her to stay organized. She loves to be involved in the community so it does not feel like work to her. Dahlia works two jobs. She has been working two jobs for the last 18 years. She leaves her full-time job and works part-time a few nights during the week. Dahlia mentioned that her husband has been supportive and she likes to stay busy. Rose, Laurel, and Coral talked about being heavily involved in their church. Coral discussed how her spirituality helps her push through. Laurel discussed working as her pastor's assistant and being able to intertwine what she learns at her institution and can use it in her church duties. Lily may have the easiest work/life balance. Her children are grown and her husband is retired. She is not as involved in many community activities are the other participants. She also "turns work off." She leaves work on time and does not check her email until she returns the next day.

Black women are overworked and underpaid. It has been a struggle to balance both. This has been a trend for decades. The findings in this study are consistent with previous literature. Black women are not afforded opportunities, like their counterparts, such as being a stay-at-home wife or mom, working part-time or fewer hours. Therefore, they must find a balance to do it all.

I was not surprised to find out that higher education was not the intended career path for the participants because it was the same for me. Many of the participants fell into the field by looking for a job after college. Dahlia, Iris, and Jasmine all wanted to go into social work. They each have the desire to help people. Coral was the only participant who wanted to work in a higher education institution. She was a product of a program and she wanted to go back and work in that program because it was so impactful on her life. All of the participants did not how to climb the ranks of administration in higher education. Rose's journey is different from the others, in that, she also worked in a faculty position. In healthcare, she was able to teach in her field, which lead her toward her Dean's position. Lily and Jasmine also worked in an adjunct faculty position for a while. Jasmine, Dahlia, Laurel, and Iris started in higher education after college, just searching for a job and a position became available. They all have bounced around in multiple positions throughout the years searching for their perfect fit. Laurel is probably the most far from her original plan. She wanted to be an accountant. Her undergraduate degree is in accounting. Laurel's journey is particularly interesting because it shows how she puts her family first. She did not pursue accounting after high school because she was a caretaker for her sick grandmother. She also is not currently seeking leadership opportunities because she is a new mother and her priority is to focus on raising her son.

Only two participants, Rose and Jasmine, have not considered leaving higher education. Rose loves education and she loves the students. Jasmine feels like she can work her skills best in higher education. She can provide programming, which she loves. All of the other participants have considered leaving the field. Lily and Iris, who both work at a PWI, discussed the workload does not equal the pay. They also both discussed their challenges with not being able to move up

the ladder. Daisy would like to leave the field but she is not sure what she wants to do. Dahlia is experiencing burnout. She also talked about the lack of money. She is even considering retiring. Laurel has considered leaving, but she only stays because of her love for the students. Coral feels like she is working in a broken system and she cannot provide the proper resources to help students become successful.

Lack of Mentorship

Very few participants mentioned having a mentor who has guided them toward success. Jasmine and Coral have both worked with a mentor in higher education. Jasmine says her mentor "pushed her to find things that set her apart from others." Coral stated that her mentor provided "sources of wisdom" for her. Those without a mentor said how beneficial it would be to have a mentor. They feel as though they would have had a better experience in their careers if they had a mentor. Those others with mentors did not come out of higher education. Their mentors were people they have worked with in another capacity. Daisy worked with a mentor in television, but not in higher education. Rose has not had a mentor in higher education. She has learned from women in other various capacities such as in her sorority, ministry, and leadership. Lily has had faculty mentors whom she has worked with. They helped her stay grounded and she can bounce ideas off of them. Dahlia has not had a mentor in higher education, but she worked with colleagues who have inspired her and whom she can share ideas with. Iris and Laurel both felt like they would have greatly benefited from having a mentor. Iris says a mentor would have helped her handle situations better. Laurel felt like a mentor would have pushed her out of her comfort zone and helped her to elevate.

Coral and Daisy discussed how the lack of resources hinders them from doing their jobs to the best of their abilities. Having mentors can assist them with using the resources that they

have to provide the best for their institutions. Many of the women have a network of professionals that they are surrounded by. Being able to network makes one more marketable and able to be successful in their perspective fields. This study has found that the participants described their mentorship as a positive experience.

There are such a low number of Black women in higher education, it is hard to find a mentor that looks like them and that wants to help. One participant described that Black women are often unwilling to help out of fear that you may get ahead of them. Many do have colleagues that they interact and with whom they can share their experiences and expertise. Mentoring is necessary for Black women to increase their visibility in higher education. The participants also discussed being a mentor to the students that they serve. They are often seen as mentors, mothers, and an overall support system. One participant mentioned that it is vastly important for Black boys and girls to see Black people working in their institutions. It shows that if she can make it, then so can I.

PWI versus HBCU

Of the eight participants, three attended an HBCU for undergraduate studies. The five others attended a PWI. Coral attended an HBCU for a short period and transferred to a PWI. She regrets this decision and wishes she graduated from an HBCU. Two of the participants currently work at an HBCU and the six others work at a PWI. All of the participants had very different experiences with PWIs versus HBCUs. Lily and all of her siblings attended different HBCUs across the country. She said her parents pushed for getting an HBCU education and she was thankful that she did. She stated that HBCUs are "more inclusive, they provide a quality education and the faculty and staff cheer you on." Coral stated at a PWI, "you always have to be aware and conscious and perfect." She enjoys working at an HBCU. She likes being around

people like her and teaching students that are like her. Laurel discussed how they take time with students at an HBCU. She stated that at a PWI, "you're just a number and they send you on your way." I found one thing particularly interesting when speaking with the participants. Those who work at an HBCU felt like they could have done more with their careers at a PWI and the participants who worked at a PWI felt like they could have progressed quicker at an HBCU.

HBCUs and PWIs are very different in the manner that they educate students and conduct business. Jasmine and Dahlia have experienced working at both, an HBCU and a PWI. Dahlia stated that the "HBCU was more relaxed." She also mentioned how they work with you and you do not have to worry about being watched. She also noted the difference in the students. Most of the participants agreed that HBCUs are more centered on the students, whereas PWIs are more business focused. Coral describes an HBCU as having "a sense of pride for people of color." There was no difference in obtaining a senior-level position among the participants who worked at a PWI or HBCU. They both still struggle to climb up the ladder regardless of institution type.

Racism and Sexism

During the interviews, I anticipated racism and sexism to be more prevalent among the participants, but that was not the case. A few of the participants identified racism being a primary factor in their growth. Iris and Lily, who work at a PWI, identified having experienced some type of racism at their institution much more than the other participants. Racism was identified in more insistences than sexism. One of the participants, Jasmine, even identified as having experienced ageism. She felt like she has been discriminated against because of her age and had been turned down for positions because she was not old enough.

This study also found that women in the study are double marginalized by being black and being a woman. It was not as prevalent as it has been shown in many other previous studies.

Iris was probably the most vocal about her experiences with racism and sexism at her university. She stated that racism is "alive and well and people ignore the topic." She also said that at her institution, you "keep your mouth closed and your head down." Most of the participants discussed helping their Black and Brown students. They instill education in their children and the students that they serve. One participant even mentioned that Black students need a degree to even compete with their counterparts. Coral discussed how her students are so far behind the marker from their counterparts and they need every tool and resource to keep up.

Rose discusses how she experienced racism at her first institution and she attributed that to working in a small, country town. She also feels like she's the token Black person on the Board of Trustees at a local hospital. Iris had a similar experience after being told she was hired because they needed a Black person in the department. Lily and Iris both had bad experiences by being turned down for a position that they were qualified for and seeing someone else not as qualified get hired. They felt like it was blatant disrespect and a slap in the face.

Daisy's experience was different from Iris's and Lily's. She feels discriminated against due to her community involvement. Daisy has a huge personality and she thinks people hate that. Iris and Daisy have contacted HR concerning racial discriminatory practices that they experienced at their institutions. Dahlia does not feel like she has personally experienced racial or sexual discrimination, but she has seen it happen to Black males. White males have been hired over them, where they were qualified. The participants discussed racism and sexism, and even ageism. They are all very prevalent and have shown up within this study.

Conclusion

The data collected in the study allowed researchers to provide insight into some of the challenges that Black women face while working in higher education institutions. A variety of

barriers were found that prevented Black women from reaching senior-level administrative positions in higher education institutions. These women discussed barriers such as work-life balance, salary not equating to the workload, lack of mentorship, variations between HBCUs and PWIs, and racism and sexism. Many of these women discussed leaving the field. Some are torn between trying to advance elsewhere or just retiring from their current institution because it is comfortable. Although many of these women shared similar experiences, there were some differences based on their position and intuitions. Experiences at a PWI are much different from those at an HBCU and those working at a technical or community college.

This study was based on challenges and barriers to career advancement however, I found that not all participants want to advance in higher education. Some would like to leave the field altogether and some have just become stagnant and complacent in their current positions. This study found that Black women strive for excellence, no matter what their perspective field is. They have been refusing to let the lack of support and discrimination hinder their achievement. This chapter outlines emerging themes that affected the participants and their barriers to success in higher education. The following themes were identified: income/salary, work/life balance, career trajectory, mentorship, PWI versus HBCU, and racism/sexism. These themes helped to provide insight into the experiences of Black women working in higher education.

Each of the participants has their own strengths that they bring to the institution in their own ways. One thing I noticed from each participant was their desire to help. They all came into higher education in various capacities and they each will leave their mark in their own way. Rose, who has the highest ranking position amongst the participants, sees herself as confident and committed to growing and developing. Lily, who is down to Earth, is someone to whom her students can relate. She takes pride in being a woman of color that can encourage other students

of color to seek leadership. Daisy, the "Chief Happiness Officer", is a resource for her community and institution. She wants to uphold other women as leaders. Dahlia, who is sweet and delightful, is dedicated to her work. She is educated and knowledgeable. She also describes herself as loyal. Iris, the bold and determined one, has strengths in event planning and being relatable to those around her. Laurel, the most reserved, is an advocate and she is very understanding of situations and can pivot at a moment's notice. Jasmine, who enjoys higher education the most, has experienced a lot and she can share what she has learned to be a positive influence in her students' lives. Coral is very empathic and understanding. She provides a standard of excellence and she expects the same from her students. One commonality between the participants is their love for the students that they serve.

Each of the participants has a wealth of knowledge and they have brought so much to their institutions and higher education as a whole. They have experienced so much in their combined total of 120 years in higher education. Some have had great experiences and some have had poor experiences. I hope that the participants find their way, whether it is to stay in higher education or to transition to another area that aligns with their career and life goals. Higher education is a field that can be very rewarding but also has some disappointments. This study found that being Black and being a woman can be very challenging and not necessarily easy to navigate through. With proper resources and support, a Black woman can be successful in higher education institutions. The next chapter provides a final discussion on the challenges and barriers that Black women working in higher education face. There is a comparison of how the previous literature surrounding this topic compares to this study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges and barriers Black women face as they work to achieve senior-level administrative positions in higher education institutions. This qualitative study also sought to bring about awareness of the need for systemic change for Black women to advance in the field of higher education. This study helps to gain knowledge on how the participants, "interpret their experiences, how they construct their world and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). The participants each have different experiences that shaped their perspectives and feelings towards their career growth and development in higher education institutions. Critical Race Theory was used to analyze the experiences of the participants (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). With their background, education, experiences, and various institutions, challenges were questioned and examined for this study. Emerging themes that arose were income/salary, work/life balance, career trajectory, lack of mentorship, PWI vs HBCU, and racism/sexism. These themes, developed through analysis, showed the perceptions of how Black women feel and how their careers have been impacted in higher education institutions.

This chapter highlights the conceptual framework and methodology used to interpret the findings of this study. This chapter also details the emerging themes and how they relate to the previous literature. Themes were found from interview transcriptions and NVivo software where codes were identified from common words and phrases. Although this study sought to investigate barriers and challenges for Black women, I was able to see systems of support for

women in higher education. This chapter also answers the research questions and addresses the limitations of the study. Finally, this chapter also outlines implications for future research.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

Each of the Black women serves as a voice for this underrepresented population. The researcher's goal was to use the narratives of the participants to provide insight into challenges that Black women face while trying to attain leadership positions in higher education institutions. The results of this study have been both consistent and inconsistent with previous literature as they have encountered some type of roadblock to success.

Many of the participants find it difficult to work in this particular field. Many of them discussed leaving the field, seeing nowhere to grow in that area. Black women often leave when organizational limits restrain their self-development (Collins, 2000). The women discussed wanting to be valued and treated equally to their counterparts. Oftentimes, they did not have this experience in higher education. Race is shown to be prevalent in Black women's success in higher education. They do not grow professionally as Whites or women from other ethnicities.

Intersectionality between race and gender seems to be a key factor for participants. They identified facing not only discrimination by their race but their gender and age as well. The participants working in HBCUs have not faced racial discrimination in ways that the other participants have. Each of the participants in the study has similarities in their values and experiences. Their perception of the field also varied based on their institution.

Discussion of Themes

The major themes were supported by the conceptual framework, Critical Race Theory, to identify challenges and barriers that Black women working in higher education institutions face (Hiraldo, 2010). CRT was used as a lens to explore the themes and shed light on how race and

gender advanced career development for Black women in higher education institutions. The themes: of income/salary, work/life balance, career trajectory, lack of mentorship, PWIs versus HBCUs, and racism and sexism, helped to identify the areas in that Black women struggle. Each of the themes that emerged are all representative of the participants and their experience working in higher education.

These themes were found to have a great impact on these women and their career trajectories. Each of the participants holds at least a Bachelor's degree. They all discussed how higher education was not the first or intended career after college. Since entering the field, they each have worked in more than one position, seeking advancement or the perfect fit. Following CRT, their racial identity has affected their career trajectory. Many of them stay in higher education because of the students, while others stay because they are comfortable with their jobs and do not see an outlet. Although the participants discussed many barriers to success, they also mentioned strategies that could be useful to navigate through their challenges.

<div align="center">Themes</div>

Income and Salary

Wage compensation continues to be a trend in the field of higher education. According to Whitford (2022), "Nearly nine in 10 respondents said that salaries and compensation packages are not competitive enough given the level of experience and education required for the job. Eight in 10 said they felt undervalued by their institution" (p. 1). This is consistent with the findings in this study. Each of the participants, besides Rose, complained about the low wage of their current position. Higher education requires a lot of time…time away from family and long, late hours in the office. The participants felt as though the work hours and workload did not equate to the amount of money that they are paid.

Based on a *Forbes* article by Conroy (2022), "Pandemic fatigue comes on top of decades of low pay, infrequent raises, and heavy workloads" (p.1) in higher education. Work burnout in staff makes it difficult to retain and recruit employees. This leaves many students unsupported at their institutions. Most of the participants experienced or are experiencing high levels of burnout, especially those who work in student services. Jasmine and Coral have both spent a lot of time in student services or student activities, which causes them to work long, exhausting hours. Laurel and Coral both discussed how their workload increased after the Covid-19 pandemic as they worked to play catch up. They love what they do as a profession but they discussed spending a lot of time at work and away from their families. They also discussed not making enough money based on their workload. Some of the participants expressed that their low salary is directly related to their race. Since they are Black women, it is hard for them to obtain positions that pay a higher salary.

Work-Life Balance

Working to advance their careers, while raising children, maintaining a marriage, and spending time with various community obligations is not easy for many of the participants. Historically, Black women have served as mothers, and teachers, and worked within their community. bell hooks (1994) states:

> Their lives were not easy. Their lives were hard. They were Black women who for the most part worked outside of the home serving White folks, cleaning their houses, washing their clothes, and tending to their children-Black women who worked in the fields or the streets, whatever they could do to make ends meet, whatever was necessary. Then they returned to their homes to make life happen there. This tension between service outside one home, family, and kin network, service provided to white folks which

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took time and energy, and the effort of Black women to conserve enough of themselves

to provide service (care and nurturance) within their own families and communities is

one of the many factors that has historically distinguished a lot of Black women in

patriarchal White supremacist society from that of Black men. (p. 42)

All of the women work outside of the home, in higher education institutions, then return

home to care for their family and household obligations. Family and finding balance seemed to

be a consistent theme. Many of the participants would like to grow their careers but finding time

to be wives, and mothers, and tend to household duties has been a strain. Coral has a newborn

and she is a first-time mom. She has struggled with balancing motherhood and work. Luckily for

her, her job has been supportive and has been allowing her to adjust. For the participants, their

race directly affected them in terms that they have to work and provide for their families. Based

on finding from Wilson (2017) and the *EcoPolicyPloicy Institute* (2015), "married black women

with children worked over 200 hours more per year than married white or Hispanic women with

children, and 339 hours more than black single mothers. Married black working moms also

worked 132 hours more per year than childless non-elderly black working women, despite

having the added responsibility of caring for children."

Career Trajectory

This study is particularly interesting because none of the participants chose higher

education as an intended career choice initially. They all fell into the profession in various ways.

Coral was the only participant who thought about working in higher education before entering

the field. She was a part of the Upward Bound program in high school and she always had a

desire to come back and work with the program, although that was not her first career out of

college. All of the other participants worked in other areas before finding their way to higher education.

Most of the participants in the study have intentions of leaving the field. There are mentions of not feeling valued in the workplace, low wages, and not being able to move up. Lily and Dahlia are close to retirement but they still would like to leave higher education before that time.

> Research shows that employees' intention to leave their professions and affective professional commitment are closely related while organizational commitment (i.e., personal connection with the organization) and the other dimensions of professional commitment (normative and continuance commitment) play smaller roles in explaining the intention to leave the profession. (Dorenkamp & Weiß, 2018, p. 753)

Daisy wants to leave, but she is not sure what she wants to do next. Iris and Coral have feelings of burnout in higher education. Rose and Laurel expressed staying because of their love for the students.

Lack of mentorship

Mentoring or lack thereof was consistent with the literature; Black women need mentorship to advance to senior-level positions of authority in higher education administration. For higher education institutions, mentoring future leaders is very important, for not only succession planning but for goal attainment and organizational growth (Jernigan, Dudley & Hatch, 2020). Some of the participants had mentors, others did not. Lily, Jasmine, and Coral are the only participants who directly worked with a mentor in higher education. Rose and Daisy have learned from various people around them in different capacities.

Studies have shown that is imperative to have a mentor, especially for Black women to be successful. Lily has been mentored by other Black women at her university. They have helped guide her through situations and helped with her career growth. Lack of mentorship not only leaves employees in a poor position, but it is also not beneficial for staff. "Lack of leadership development could result in organizational inefficiencies and career stagnation" (Jernigan, Dudley, & Hatch, 2020, p. 43). Based on the findings, the participants did not mention that their institution had any type of mentorship program in place. They agreed that having a mentor could have helped them be more successful in higher education.

Jernigan et al., (2020) mentions that "successful navigation of one's social networks is important for the leadership development and trajectory of Black men and women in higher education leadership" (p. 45). Rose and Daisy are both actively involved in their sorority and they discussed leaning on their sorority sisters for support. Daisy even mentioned finding mentors for Black women in various capacities for networking and support.

PWI versus HBCU

Blackshear & Hollis (2021) states that:

No matter how intelligent, how savvy, and how educated, the Black woman in both PWIs and HBCUs is constrained by race and gender. The binds of race and gender typically lead to economic subjugation, though the field of higher education relies on resources, social capital, and economic stability to participate in a manner that earns tenure and promotion. (p. 33)

The study details how different it is between working at a PWI and an HBCU. Campus climate can directly affect one's position and leverage to move into a leadership position. Jasmine, who has worked in both a PWI and HBCUs, felt as though she was held back at an HBCU. She felt as

though she could have done more at PWI. The women at the HBCU have not experienced racism stating, "everyone there looks like" them. Laurel and Coral, both employees of an HBUC felt the same. On the other hand, participants such as Iris and Lily, who work for a PWI felt completely different. They have experienced more racism at their university and felt like working at a PWI holds them back in their careers. They also both discussed the fear of being judged and stereotyped so they refrain from saying and doing certain things at work. One positive note for the women at a PWI is that they feel connected to students of color because they have someone at their institution that looks like them and supports them through their education journey. Working at a PWI or an HBCU did not make a difference in obtaining a senior-level administrative position in this study.

Racism and Sexism

This study found that race does play a significant role in career advancement for Black women in higher education as they try to reach leadership positions. This varied across participants and institutions. Rose, who is a Dean, and supersedes another Black woman in the position before her, was not as challenging in terms of racism and sexism as some of the other participants. Rose comes from a health sciences background and worked in the field for many years before transitioning to higher education. Health science has become a readily available career for Black women. This is consistent with Dill and Duffer's (2022) findings that more than one in five Black women in the labor force (23 percent) are employed in the healthcare sector. Rose has had support from other Black women in her field, although her previous Dean was not as supportive once she saw her rising the ranks.

Some of the other participants felt as though their race had a negative impact on their advancement. Iris and Lily both discussed being turned down for positions that they were

qualified for and they saw someone of another race, who was less qualified, be hired. They attributed this directly to their race. They often feel they must hold back in their positions of out fear of being the confrontational Black woman. Black women working in PWIs often try to balance their existence by trying to avoid and dismantle negative stereotypes and being labeled as "the angry Black woman" (Ashley, 2014). They both work at a PWI and feel as though their institution does not encourage Black women to get ahead. Some of the other participants did not have any issues with their race affecting their career advancement. Although they did not speak of race being a factor, they mentioned other things that hindered them, such as ageism and family obligations. Some are just comfortable in their positions and do not want to add more to their plates.

Research Questions

Challenges included balancing career and family, lack of mentorship and support by colleagues, feeling underrepresented, and dealing with racism and sexism in the workplace. Many of the participants have dealt with racism and sexism on multiple occasions and it has been a challenge for them as far as their careers go. This study gives a better understanding of how women of color are perceived and how their efforts go unnoticed. In terms of race and racial identity impacting the advancement of Black women, Rose, Lily, and Iris felt as though their race has directly affected their career growth. This study found that additional factors, such as lack of mentorship and the type of institution that they worked at impacted their careers more often.

The research questions that guided this study helped to dive deeper into the stories and experiences of Black women working in higher education institutions as they work to advance their careers. The participants provided information that helped to gather data and assist in

answering the research questions. Much of the data gathered directly related to findings in the literature review. Other findings provided answers that differed from previous literature. I found that Black women have achieved senior-level administrative positions, while many others have not. Lily and Dahlia are nearing retirement age and are not sure if they wish to continue to pursue high-ranking positions. All of the participants except Rose and Jasmine are considering leaving the field altogether, due to the challenges and barriers that they have faced. The participants voiced their opinions and discussed not feeling rewarded in the field of higher education. Financial compensation and time constraints continue to be major factors that these women deal with at their institutions.

Although this qualitative study had a small number of participants, they provided demographic information and detailed stories about their personal experiences in higher education institutions. This study is important because it discussed the challenges and barriers that Black women face while working in higher education. The participants also provided recommendations for Black women who are considering entering the field. This study can be used to help future administrators with career development and it can help institutions with recruiting and retaining Black women.

Limitations

The findings are individual perceptions of each participant as they discuss their career experiences, therefore it cannot be guaranteed that all responses were accurate or factual. The interview questions were used as an open discussion to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Black women working in higher education institutions. This study was also limited to eight participants working with institutions in the CSRA. The lack of a broader participant sample creates limitations for the study in other areas. Rose, Daisy, and Jasmine have

worked in a neighboring state and they shared their experiences there, which were not much different from their current institutions.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and time constraints, interviews were held virtually. Days and times were set up that were convenient for both parties. Virtual interviews limited interactions, therefore full observations could not be made.

This study was also limited to Black women in staff positions rather than those in faculty positions. Further research can occur with participants in faculty positions. Their experiences and challenges could vary from those in staff positions. This study also provided a small insight into the lives of the participants and did not give full details into the complete racial identity and career development of each participant.

<p style="text-align:center">Implications for Future Research</p>

This study provides counterstories on previous narratives about Black women working in higher education. I found that, despite the years of service and educational level, Black women are still somewhat low achieving in higher education and often passed up on positions that they are more than qualified for. Although this study was based on Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory could have been used in conjunction with CRT to further expound on Black women's experiences and struggles to self-define themselves. The participants in the study gave insight into what is like to work in higher education institutions and whether they would recommend the field to other Black women. One of the main key pieces of advice that they offered is not to enter the field in an entry-level position, and if you do, move on if you have not moved up in a couple of years.

Given the insight provided by the eight participants, a qualitative research approach would be best to further capture the essence of Black women in higher education. There are

opportunities for further research in areas such as social behavior after experiencing racism or rejection of a position. I would also recommend conducting a similar study outside of this minor region. Many believe that racism is still very prevalent in the South. Viewing the perspectives of Black women in other areas of the country could yield different results. It could also be useful to understand the experiences of Black men working in higher education. Black men would have similar experiences as Black women or they could have better or far way challenges while working in higher education.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

The results from this study can also be used to develop mentoring programs for Black women in higher education. Although there are many professional organizations for Blacks in higher education, such as the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education and The Association of Black Women in Higher Education, this study can shed light on organizations as such and encourage Black women to join more professional organizations. The voices and professional development of Black women are often overlooked. This research study can help to develop programs to ensure the success of Black women working in higher education institutions and advance their careers.

Diversity and inclusion practices regarding Black women's plight can also be added to institutional policies and procedures. Many do not understand the challenges that people of color face. Allowing trainings and modules can identify the needs of Black women in academia. Many institutions do have diversity trainings and summits however they are only as good as the institution allows. Training can include sensitivity training, skill building, leadership development, and mentoring. These practices must be reviewed and evaluated for success.

Programs such as mentoring and diversity training need to be long-term and continue to stay current with policies. Identifying problems with Black women within intuitions need to continue to be monitored. Identifying major concerns of employees can help facilitate the recruitment and retention of Black women in more institutions. Black women play a major role in colleges and universities. They are educated and qualified to lead, as long as they have the tools to be successful.

<p align="center">Conclusion</p>

The participants represent Black women in various positions with higher education institutions; PWIs, HBCUs, and technical and community colleges. Given their diverse working backgrounds, their experiences similar and different, race and gender have been deemed to be a driving force in their career trajectory. It either pushed them forward or hold them back from obtaining senior-level administrative positions. A couple of the participants even expressed getting in their way and not working as hard to advance.

Historically, Black women have been limited in their career opportunities. The participants have approved and also disproved these claims. It is important to continue to study the journey of Black women in the academy and continue to break barriers. Black women need support systems as they navigate through their careers. Many of the participants rely on their family, friends, and social networks for support while they work to develop professionally. Although they have support systems outside of the workplace, they cannot always be protected from racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), "During the past 50 years, the U.S. has seen racial and ethnic disparities in higher education enrollment and attainment, as well as gaps in earnings, employment, and other related outcomes for communities of color" (p. 1).

Institutions should be actively working towards increasing diversity and inclusion within their faculty and staff. Institutions should also note their demographic changes. For example, if Black women are leaving their institutions, they should focus on retention in that area. Conversations about racism and sexism should be relevant topics. People of color and females need constant support from their institutions. This is another reason that mentorship is so important in and outside of higher education institutions.

The results from this study are consistent with themes of Critical Race Theory. As found in previous literature, counterstories, intersectionality, and identity theory are prevalent within this study. Solórzano (1998) states, "employing CRT challenges the traditional claims of educational systems and its institutions to objectivity, meritocracy, color, and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equality opportunity" (p. 122). This study incorporates CRT with the purpose to bring about systemic change, in that, it can be used to analyze race and racism by hearing the voices of people of color tell their stories. Many of the participants in the study encountered racism on multiple occasions. Their encounters with racism relate to the advancement of their careers and gaining senior-level positions at their institutions. Iris and Lily, who both work at a PWI, have seen a White person be hired instead of them who was less qualified, for positions that they were more than qualified for.

For me, this study was eye-opening in terms that I found that I was not the only Black woman who has experienced struggles in higher education. This study also solidified my decision to leave higher education. I did not want to end up in a job for 20 or 30 years and be unable to advance in my career. I have hopes that this literature will be added to the collection of existing literature to help shed light on Black women's struggles in higher education.

With the limited amount of research on women in leadership, this study was important to discuss the matters that Black women deal with trying to get into leadership positions, especially in higher education administration. For women in higher education and those considering entering or leaving the field should be aware of the challenges that Black women encounter with racism and sexism, among other things. Attention to this matter needs to be called upon to bring about change.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date: Interviewer: Interviewee:
Teleconference Method: State time: End time:

Goal: The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of barriers to success affecting
Black women working in higher education institutions. This will help other Black women who
desire careers in higher education further their professional development and overcome
challenges to success.

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: (Opening) The following questions are part of a study in which you are currently
participating to examine the perceptions of Black women in higher education. The interview
could last approximately one hour; the length of the interview is dependent upon your responses.

All of your responses will be kept confidential and stored securely. This is your opportunity to
make sure I understand what you think about discipline in your setting.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Questions:
 Background
1. Tell me about your work and what do you do?

2. What degree(s)/certification(s) have you earned?

3. In college, was your career to become a college professional? If not, what were your

    original plans?

4. How did you begin working in higher education?

5. What was your first position at a higher education institution?

6. How many positions have you had at higher education institutions?

7. How many years have you worked in higher education institutions?

8. How many institutions have you worked for?

9. Have you considered leaving higher education? If yes, why?

10. Have you ever left working in higher education, then returned?

11. Do you desire more from your career field? If so, what are your desires?

Experiences

12. What limitations do you feel have been placed on you as a Black woman?

13. Have you worked with a mentor? Please describe your experiences. Was it helpful in

building your career?

14. Please describe how you balance your career, family, and community involvements.

15. If any, tell me about your experiences at PWIs versus HBCUs.

16. Would you like a leadership position? Why?

17. What steps have you taken to advance your career?

18. Do you feel as though you have been discriminated against while working in higher

education?

19. If yes to number 18, please describe a situation where you have faced discrimination.

20. Do you feel as if your career is meaningful?

21. What would your ideal career in higher education look like?

22. What strengths do you feel you bring to your institution as a Black woman?

Follow up
23. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments that you would like to share?

Interviewer: I want to take a moment to thank you for your time and honesty in this interview. I greatly appreciate that you have taken a moment to share your thoughts and experiences. All of your responses shall be kept confidential, and you will not be identified in any way in the results of this study. Before we end our formal interview, are there any questions or responses you would like to review? Are there any responses you would like to omit? After your responses are transcribed, they will be sent to you so you can review them for accuracy. This will be done in the next two weeks. Again, thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04326-2022

Responsible Researcher(s): Bridgett Hill

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Jamie Workman

Project Title: *Power to the Sisters: Qualitative Study Featuring the Barrier of African American Women Working in Higher Education.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of the research study, all collected data (e.g. data set, name lists, email lists, etc.) must be securely maintained and accessible only by the researcher(s) for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*
- *Pseudonym lists and corresponding name lists must be kept in separate, secure files.*
- *Qualtrics platform settings must allow participants to skip questions and/or not provide answers. The settings must prohibit the collection of IP addresses.*
- *Exempt guidelines **permit** recording interviews for the purpose of creating an accurate transcript. Recordings must be deleted immediately upon creation of the transcript. Participant recorded testimonies, must be deleted upon creation of the transcript.*
- *Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings.*
- *The research consent statement must be read aloud to participants at the start of each interview session, and documented in the transcript.*

☒ *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   09.14.2022

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.

Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.