

Investigating the Differences Between Mentorship, Advanced Degrees, and Career Advancement
Among Mid-Level Black Women Administrators in Higher Education within the Southeastern
Region of the United States

A Dissertation submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Curriculum and Instruction

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

May 2026

PARRIS SHIRONA STORY

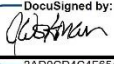
M.Ed., Georgia College & State University, 1999
B.B.A, Georgia Southern University, 1995

© Copyright 2026 Parris Shirona Story

All Rights Reserved

This dissertation, "Investigating the Relationship Between Mentorship, Advanced Degrees, and Career Advancement Among Mid-Level Black Women Administrators in Higher Education within the Southeastern Region of the United States", by Parris Shirona Story, is approved by:

**Dissertation
Committee
Chair**

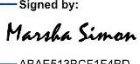
DocuSigned by:

24B0CDB4C4F8B4DC
Jamie Workman, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Higher Education Leadership

**Dissertation
Research Member**

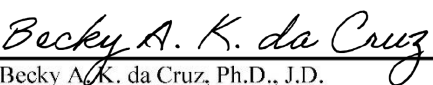
DocuSigned by:

44E044D487434E7
Matthew J. Smith, Ph.D.
Lecturer of Higher Education Leadership

**Committee
Members**

Signed by:

ABAE513BCF1F4BD...
Marsha Simon, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Educational Research

**Associate
Provost for
Graduate
Studies and
Research**


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

Defense Date

April 23, 2026

FAIR USE

This dissertation is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (public Law 94-533, revised in 1976). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of the material for financial gain without the author's expressed written permission is not allowed.

DUPLICATION

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

Signature *Parris Shirona Story*

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

Signature _____

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine differences in career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on educational attainment and institutional type, and to assess the extent to which mentoring predicts career advancement. Data were collected from mid-level African American women employed at colleges and universities in the southeastern region of the United States including, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. A quantitative, non-experimental design was employed, using a survey instrument to collect data on participants' educational attainment, years of professional experience, position classification, institution type, mentoring experiences, and perceptions of career advancement. Descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and simple linear regression were used to analyze the data. The findings indicated no statistically significant differences in years of professional experience and academic degree attainment. However, statistically significant differences in career advancement opportunities were found based on institutional type. In addition, mentoring was not a statistically significant predictor of career advancement. These findings suggest that, while mentoring is often emphasized as a key support resource, broader structural and organizational factors may play a more influential role in shaping career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. The findings have important implications for institutional leaders seeking to support career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators and highlight the need for future research that incorporates qualitative or mixed methods approaches to better understand the lived experiences underlying these outcomes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions	10
Conceptual Framework	12
Black Feminist Thought.....	13
Intersectionality.....	13
Methodological Premises.....	15
Significance of the Study	15
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations.....	16
Assumptions.....	16
Delimitations.....	17
Limitations	17
Definitions.....	18
Chapter Summary	20
Outline of the Study	20
Chapter II: Review of the Literature.....	22
Historical Overview of Black Women, Employment, and Education	23
Early Education and Higher Education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Primarily White Institutions.....	26
Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs).....	28
Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).....	30

Blacks and Higher Education Expectations and Degree Attainment.....	31
Challenges to Career Progression for Mid-level Black Women Managers at PWIs	33
Variability in Administrative Roles Across Institutional Contexts	34
Theoretical Frameworks	37
Black Feminist Thought.....	38
Intersectionality.....	40
Barriers to Career Advancement in Mid-Level Black Women Managers and Strategies.	42
Mentorship as a Strategic Tool for Career Advancement	43
Barriers to Effective Mentoring for Black Women.....	44
Strategies for Effective Mentoring.....	46
Chapter Summary	47
Chapter III: Method	50
Research Design.....	50
Research Questions and Hypotheses	51
Site and Participant Selection	53
Variables and Instrumentation.....	55
Data Collection	58
Data Analysis	61
Ethical Considerations	62
Chapter Summary	63
Chapter IV: Findings	64
Data Preparation and Variable Recoding	65
Participant Demographics.....	67

Descriptive Statistics.....	72
Inferential Statistics by Research Question	74
Research Question One (RQ1).....	75
Research Question Two (RQ 2)	75
Research Question Three (RQ3).....	76
Chapter Summary	79
Chapter V: Discussion.....	81
Summary of Findings.....	81
Discussion for Research Question One (RQ1)	83
Discussion for Research Question Two (RQ2).....	85
Discussion for Research Question Three (RQ3).....	87
Implications for Practice	90
Recommendations for Future Research	92
Chapter Summary and Conclusion	94
References.....	97
Appendix A: Email Permissions to Use Survey Instrument.....	118
Appendix B: Adapted Survey Instrument	122
Appendix D: Approved IRB Letter.....	144
Appendix E: Participant Recruitment Flyer.....	146

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Representation of Black Women and White Women by Functional Area	37
Table 2: Participant Demographics by Institutional Type	68
Table 3: Participant Distribution by State of Employment.....	69
Table 4: Participant Distribution by Highest Degree Earned	70
Table 5: Participant Distribution by Functional Area.....	71
Table 6: Participant Distribution by Current Position Classification	72
Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables	74
Table 8: ANOVA Results for Years of Professional Experience by Academic Degree	75
Table 9: ANOVA Results for Career Advancement Opportunities by Institution	76
Table 10: Regression Analysis Predicting Career Advancement from Mentoring.....	77
Table 11: Regression Analysis Predicting Career Advancement ANOVA.....	77
Table 12: Regression Analysis Predicting Career Advancement Coefficients.....	78

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation chair and committee members for their guidance, support, and valuable feedback throughout this process. Your expertise and encouragement were instrumental in the completion of this study. I also extend my gratitude to Valdosta State University and the University System of Georgia for providing the academic environment and resources that supported the completion of this study.

This journey was not traveled alone but was shared with many of my loved ones. I am deeply grateful to my family for their unwavering love, patience, and support. To my son, you have been my inspiration through it all. You have kept me focused and silently reminded me of my purpose throughout this journey. Thank you for being a constant source of inspiration and motivation. Your quiet strength and determination helped me to stay the course and pushed me to be my very best.

To my father, my very first mentor, thank you for believing in me and guiding me long before I understood the path ahead. Your influence continues to shape who I am today.

I also extend my appreciation to my friends, colleagues, and peers who offered encouragement, guidance, and understanding along the way.

Finally, I thank God and his son, Jesus Christ, for the strength, knowledge, perseverance, and grace to see this journey through to completion.

Chapter I

Introduction to the Study

As societal norms surrounding women's roles in the workforce have evolved, along with advancements in women's rights, several key factors have contributed to the increased engagement and positioning of African American women within the job market. These factors include the enactment of The Civil Rights Act of 1964, advocacy efforts led by civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), expanded access to higher education, and technological advancements that have improved processes and services (Conrad, 2005). According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW, 2021), despite the progress facilitated by these advancements and legislation, African American women have historically encountered barriers that have hindered their ability to achieve parity in the labor force. Specifically, African American women "may have worse job outcomes" within certain industries such as higher education, as evidenced by disparities in wages, opportunities for career progression, and retention (Harvard Gazette, 2023, para 1). While colleges and universities have embraced hiring practices that promote equity and inclusion, the goal of achieving gender parity for African American women has not seen significant progress.

Despite having multiple degrees, certifications, and years of professional experience, African American women in professional roles in higher education encounter obstacles in advancing beyond mid-level managerial roles (Jean-Marie & Tickle, 2017). African American women in higher education professions often experience mistreatment and misogynoir, a term

used to capture the distinct discrimination African American women face, often resulting in their shifting perception from being perceived as pets to viewed as threats (Baily & Trudy, 2018).

Within this context, advancement for African American women in the workplace can be challenging when faced with scrutiny and criticism over attire, language, appearance, and behaviors that diverge from traditional workplace norms (Williams, 2023).

Women are underrepresented in upper-level leadership positions in higher education, and African American women face greater challenges in attaining these roles (Jones et al., 2012). In higher education administrative roles, while women generally hold a majority presence, African American women constitute less than 6% whereas White women hold 43% of leadership positions (College and University Professional Association for Human Resources [CUPE-HR], 2024). Additionally, LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company's (2020) found that Black women seeking promotions at a rate comparable to White men were only 58% as likely to achieve promotion to a managerial role and 64% as likely to be hired into such roles. The glass ceiling is not limited to corporate America and the government sector. Similarly, "the presence of African American women in senior leadership is not readily visible in American higher education, and, in many cases, the racial makeup of the university is not reflected in high-ranking positions" (Johnson & Delmas, 2022, p. 90). It's crucial to consider the optics and perception of this on college and university campuses. According to 2021 higher education enrollment data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), African Americans constituted 15.7% of all higher education enrollments. Within this group, 17.2% were entering students at two-year colleges and 16.7% were entering students at four-year institutions. African Americans comprised 15% of full-time students and 16.7% of part-time students. Specifically, there were 995,000 Black men and 1,772,000 Black women enrolled in higher education in October 2021. Thus, Black women

accounted for 65% of all African American enrollments in higher education. Overall, women constitute 58% of total enrollments across all racial and ethnic groups (Black Enrollment in Post-Pandemic Higher Education, 2023).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), between 2021 and 2022, the percentage of degrees conferred to Black women were 13.6% of associate degrees, 11.5% of bachelor's degrees, 14% of master's degrees, and 11.9% of doctorate and comparable level degrees (NCES, n.d.). Despite high college participation and degree attainment rates, Black women continue to be concentrated among the lower ranks of management, promoted at a slower rate, and paid less than their male and White female counterparts (Johnson & Delmas, 2022). They often lag behind when it comes to reaping the benefits of career achievements such as promotions, increased salary, leadership opportunities, awards and recognitions, and career path diversification, compared to their White counterparts.

The labor market has historically and continues to serve as a pivotal arena for the dominance and exploitation experienced by non-White groups in the United States, contributing to enduring racial and economic disparities (Liu, 2019). Although African American women are enrolling in college at higher rates than any other racial or gender group, they face different treatment in the job market (Austin, 2018). African American women demonstrate academic ambition comparable to other demographics, as indicated by the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020 higher education enrollment data, yet they encounter significant challenges that hinder their professional advancement (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). How African American women's work is viewed is frequently based on who is doing the work and what type of work is being performed.

With 260 working days in a traditional five-day workweek in the United States, Monday to Friday, the average person spends approximately 71% of the days in a calendar year working. Considering this significant time commitment to employment and time invested in acquiring degrees and/or certifications, it is essential for an individual to pursue a professional journey that resonates with their passion, purpose, skills, and experience and provides financial security (Battle & Wigfield, 2003). Although many professional African American women have advanced degrees, are accomplished, and bring diversity to their experiences, they are likely to face unsupportive work conditions and wage disparities that limit their career progression. As outlined in LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company's (2020) annual report, Black women are less inclined than men, White women, Latinas, or Asian-American women to report that their manager supports them in seeking new opportunities (29%), provides them with chances to lead people and projects (36%), or assists them in navigating their career trajectory (22%). The power of promotion comes with substantial benefits like salary increases, bonuses, and signifies recognition of abilities and achievements, which improve earning potential, quality of life, and boost professional reputation.

Generally, African American women have faced a history marked by challenges and perseverance in their pursuit of rights and opportunities. African American women encounter specific obstacles like racial and gender biases and hostile work environments, are more frequently challenged and scrutinized, and lack representation, which often hinder their career advancement compared to individuals of other races or their peers (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). According to a 2024 study by Linos et al., which examined 9,037 new hire employees at a professional services firm, the racial composition of coworkers significantly impacts turnover and promotion. The study revealed that African American women in teams with a higher

proportion of White colleagues are more prone to receiving low-performance labels and experiencing poorer job outcomes compared to their counterparts of different racial or gender identities (Linos et al., 2024). The lived experiences, including encounters with discrimination, vary between an African American woman and a White woman, or an African American man. African American women are a quintessential example of a marginalized race-gender group, belonging to both the African American community and the female gender (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Unique workplace and societal barriers undermine African American women's ability to thrive and advance. Networking can foster professional growth and raise one's professional profile, but exclusion from professional networks can stifle upward mobility (Greguletz et al., 2019). African American women experience the double jeopardy of race and gender biases that shut them out from the informal networks that would grow one's personal brand and aid in finding jobs, mentors, and sponsors (Xu & Castle, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The experiences of African American women in education and the workplace are rooted in the past. African American women have participated in higher education since the 1800s with the establishment of Black colleges by White philanthropists and religious organizations (Anderson, 1988). Early abolitionists and free Black people in the North and South established schools and institutions, despite facing significant opposition (Butchart, 2010). The Second Morrill Act of 1890 established funding for land-grant colleges for Black students, leading to the creation of many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Hill, 1991). HBCU Connect (2013) highlighted that Cheyney University of Pennsylvania (1837), Lincoln University of Pennsylvania (1854), Harris-Stowe State College (1857), and Shaw University (1865), the

first HBCU in the South, specifically in Raleigh, NC, are some of the oldest 4-year public and private HBCUs.

Societal beliefs about gender and race have shaped perceptions of African American women's roles in the workforce. Stereotypes often depicted African American women as suited for menial or service-oriented jobs, reinforcing their exclusion from more prestigious or managerial positions (Lerner, 1972). African American women are disproportionately overrepresented in low-wage occupations characterized by fewer benefits and limited advancement opportunities (National Employment Law Center (NELP, 2024). These occupations, which include childcare workers, maids and housekeeping staff, personal care aides, and social workers, are typically characterized by lower wages, fewer benefits, and limited autonomy. In contrast, African American women are underrepresented in higher-paying and more stable occupations such as software developers, lawyers, and marketing or sales managers. Even with advanced degrees, Black women continue to encounter systemic barriers that limit their access to these underrepresented and more advantageous fields (National Employment Law Project (NELP), 2024). This broader pattern of occupational segregation reflects structural inequities that persist across the U.S. labor market and mirrors challenges African American women faced in higher education administration, where advancement into leadership roles are similarly constrained by race-gendered barriers despite their educational achievements and professional expertise.

When examining the career progression of African American women, evidence from the NCES 2020 report shows they are more underrepresented in senior-level positions of leadership than their counterparts (NCES, 2020). At Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), African American women are greatly underrepresented in senior leadership and managerial roles (Patitu

& Hinton, 2003), despite the growing percentage of African American women who enroll and acquire Bachelor's and Master-level degrees. According to Smith and Crawford (2007), "African American women are often placed in positions which are on the perimeter of the organization and have little guidance and direction" to advance their careers (p. 255).

In a White male culture, which is the dominant culture at the foundation of most U.S. based organizations, attitudes about race and gender, can play a significant role in the decision-making process as it relates to hiring, professional development, and recommendations (Valverde, 2003). This influence stems from the historical and systematic biases ingrained within such cultures, shaping perceptions and impacting opportunities. Viewed through Bolman and Deal's symbolic frame, organizations operate as cultures where values, rituals, stories, and symbols communicate who belongs and who holds legitimacy (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Taking a historical view, "universities and colleges are the most conservative institutions, due to their emphasis on maintaining the traditions of the past" (Valverde, 2003, p. 37).

Biases about African American women influence how their work is perceived and valued. Uneven perceptions of African American women as unintelligent, lazy, dangerous, hyper-sexualized, and undeserving, influence perceptions of impacting their access and ability to advance upward (Nuamah, 2021). Stereotypical representations of Black women as welfare queens, angry and menacing are more populous than representations of Black women as "intellectuals, persons of character, and productive colleagues" (Henderson et al., 2010, p. 29). Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that formally banned discrimination based on race and gender, pervasive attitudes about women are expected to be considerate, cooperative, and accommodative, typically filter them out of non-traditional areas such as leadership (Hays & Kearney, 1995).

Traditional workplace practices and standards on professionalism and values are rooted in “systematic, institutionalize centering of whiteness” (Gray, 2019, para.1). Stereotypical perspectives on gender have created circumstances that have oppressed the growth of women into senior leadership positions because organizations equate strong leadership with the ability to be masculine (Leech, 2023). African American women encounter negative workplace experiences when moving between the dominant culture and one’s own culture (Gardner et al., 2014). Institutional characteristics and culture influence many aspects of organizational life, particularly leadership, because organizational leaders establish and reinforce organizational priorities, values and norm (Schein & Schein, 2016). A lack of professional and personal support/teamwork, isolation, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and alienation can cause Black women administrators to be ineffective in their positions (Smith & Crawford, 2007). Bicultural stress is often a contributing factor to some African American professionals at PWIs leaving their jobs (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Underrepresentation or lack of critical mass in professional roles make participation in the workforce more difficult for African American women administrators. In Turner’s (2002) qualitative investigation of 64 Women of Color Faculty, participants indicated feelings of isolation and lack of respect, being underemployed and overused by departments or institutions, and torn between family, community, and career, as consequences of underrepresentation. Furthermore, despite educational gains, African American women are more likely to work in the lowest- paying occupations such as the service industry and healthcare, and less likely to occupy higher- paying fields or managerial positions (Katz, 2024).

African American women are expanding their presence in employment at colleges and universities across the nation, however, at PWIs, mid-level Black women administrators struggle

to survive, thrive, and grow professionally where they are significantly underrepresented (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). In fall 2020, there were a total of 2,116,104 women employed in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, among whom 230,960 or 10.91% were Black women. In the management category specifically, which comprised of 151,785 women, the percentage of Black women was approximately 11.99% of all women employed in those positions (NCES, 2020). Although Black women have established careers in higher education, as seen in the NCES data, their ascension to top-ranking roles has progressed more slowly.

Research have shown African American women at PWIs experience lower job satisfaction, confidence, upward mobility, and a sense of empowerment because of a lack of resources, and limited advancement opportunities (GARY et al., 2014). Mentoring serves as a crucial resource for professional development, providing guidance, support, and knowledge transfer from experienced individuals to mentees (Ogunsola et al., 2023). It facilitates skill enhancement, career advancement, and broader understanding of organizational dynamics, ultimately fostering personal growth and professional success (Farrow, 2008). A study investigating the financial impact of mentoring found that participants in mentoring programs were promoted six times more frequently as mentors and five times more frequently as mentees compared to those not involved in such programs (Knowledge at Wharton, 2007). However, the scarcity of mentors available to African American women administrators aspiring to reach senior roles complicates their ability to find mentors who share their race and gender (Patton, 2009).

White privilege is the unseen hand of prestige and support that allows White colleagues to be supported, advocated for, and given access to important knowledge and opportunities like mentoring and job opportunities (McIntosh, 1988). Given that White men lead most

organizations and hold most senior positions across various sectors (Leech, 2023), women often encounter challenges in securing mentorship opportunities (Greguletz et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the factors influencing career advancement in educated and experienced mid-level African American women administrators in higher education in the southeastern region of the United States. African American women are gaining admission and employment in higher education but experience limited professional advancement. While the disparities of African American women in the workplace have been well documented, information and needs specific to career advancement in degreed and experienced African American women in mid-level management are limited and seldom acknowledged. More specifically, this study seeks to raise awareness that can serve as a catalyst for change in higher education's understanding of the experiences and professional development needs of mid-level African American women administrators to positively improve their career mobility.

Research Questions

Based on the problem identified, three guiding questions frame this study. The research questions are:

RQ1: What is the difference, if any, in the years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on their academic degree attainment?

Hypothesis 01: There is a significant difference between academic degree attainment and years of professional experience among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant difference between academic degree attainment and professional years of experience among mid-level African American women administrators.

RQ2: What is the difference, if any, in the perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on institutional type (Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)?

Hypothesis 01: There is a significant difference between working at a PWI and career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Hypothesis 02: There is a significant difference between working at an HBCU and of career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Hypothesis 03: There is a significant difference between working at an HSI and career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant difference in the frequency of career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators working at PWIs.

Null Hypothesis (H_{02}): There is no significant difference in the frequency of career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators working at HBCUs.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₃): There is no significant difference in the frequency of career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators working at HSIs.

RQ3: To what extent do institutional support systems, specifically mentoring programs impact the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators?

Hypothesis 01: Institutional support systems, such as mentoring programs have a significant impact on the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₁) Mentoring programs have no significant impact on the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators.

Conceptual Framework

Two compelling theories serve as a foundation for understanding the research that exist on education and career progression in African American women. It is important to promote an understanding of the contents of this study by examining the theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). While these theories vary, they are derived from the literature, aiding in understanding how they interact within the context of mid-level African American women administrators working in higher education and their professional advancement. How decisions are made, who makes them, how rewards such as promotions are distributed, how people are treated according to gender, and how the organization responds to the environment ties directly into Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality, as it relates to career advancement (Thompson, 2000).

Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist Thought, a framework developed by Patricia Hill Collins, emphasizes the unique experiences of Black women and the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. It offers a crucial lens for understanding the career advancement challenges faced by Black women. The theoretical framework articulates how intersecting factors such as race, gender, and class create systematic barriers that hinder career progression (Collins, 2000). The marginalization of African American women's voices and limited socialization experiences within PWIs often result in limited access to mentorship and promotional opportunities, reinforcing their disadvantage in professional settings (Garrett, 2023). By applying Black Feminist Thought, it becomes evident that addressing these barriers requires recognizing and addressing the multi-layered nature of discrimination Black women face (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998), ensuring that their experiences and contributions are acknowledged and integrated into career advancement strategies.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a theoretical framework developed and coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, provides a critical lens for understanding ways in which heterogeneous members of specific groups, such as women, might experience the workplace differently depending on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or class and other social characteristics (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (2013) argues that examining how race and gender intersect challenges the common belief that these categories operate independently. By focusing on where they overlap, she proposes an approach that pushes back the idea that race and gender should be treated as isolated or unrelated aspects of identity (Crenshaw, 1991). The challenges African American women encounter in employment can be traced to the unique and compounded forms of discrimination

resulting from their intersecting identities (Carastathis, 2016). According to the framework, Black women face the dual challenges of racism and sexism (Crenshaw, 1991).

As both Black and female, they encounter unique forms of discrimination that Black men, or White women might not. David French, quoted in Coaston (2019), stated that “somebody who’s LGBT and African American is going to experience the world differently than somebody who’s LGBT and Latina. It’s sort of this commonsense notion that different categories of people have different kinds of experience (para 30). The framework helps us understand how power works by examining multiple factors at a time. It looks at how different aspects of identity, like race and gender, intersect and affect people in various ways. For example, intersectionality can help us explore why certain ideas about race are created and maintained in everyday systems that favor whiteness, such as through behavior codes, language, and dress (Dhamoon, 2011).

The inequalities faced by African American women in the labor force have longstanding origins, deeply rooted in negative characterizations that have been “reinforced in the minds of the mostly predominantly white audience” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, p. 7). Spaight and Whitaker (1995) noted that “Historically, institutional racism has been imposed on Black women physically, psychologically, occupationally, and economically as a means of maintaining the status quo, that of the dominant Anglo-Saxon society” (p.284). While racial and gender discrimination are significant, their intersection in the workplace can lead to compounded obstacles such as stress, low job satisfaction, isolation, reduced access to mentorship opportunities, biased performance evaluations, and limited career advancement (Gatta, 2024).

The experiences of women of color differ from those of White women and men of color due to the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 2013). African American women

experience the dualism of race and gender as their identities are shaped simultaneously by both race and gender (Collins, 2000). An example of this would be the exclusion of African American women in senior leadership roles such as president, provost, vice president, and associate vice president etc., which historically have been designated for White men (Thelin, 2019). Black women continue to experience persistent wage disparities driven by systematic discrimination, occupation segregation, unequal access to advancement opportunities, and enduring racial and gender bias in the workforce (National Partnership for Women & Families, 2023).

Methodological Premises

This study employs a nonexperimental research design to examine differences in years of professional experience, academic degree attainment, and perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in the southeastern region of the United States. Specifically, comparative analyses are used to assess differences in years of professional experience based on academic degree attainment and differences in perceived career advancement opportunities based on institutional type. Additionally, the study examines the extent to which mentoring influences career advancement. An online survey, data set, and statistical analyses will be incorporated in the study. Quantitative methods are selected for their ability to systematically collect and analyze numerical data to address the study's research questions and test the proposed hypotheses.

Significance of the Study

The research questions align with the purpose of the study by examining factors that may contribute to African American women administrators in higher education remaining in mid-level positions despite possessing credentials and professional experience comparable to their peers. The answers to the research questions may provide insight into factors associated with

career advancement among African American women administrators at the mid-level in higher education, including differences related to academic degree attainment, intuitional type, and perceptions of mentoring support. The findings may also inform organizational practices and professional development initiatives aimed at supporting leadership advancement opportunities for African American women in higher education. The study focuses on key concepts such as career advancement, racial and gender identity, and mentoring.

This study promises to add to the literature on career advancement in African American women administrators in mid-level management roles in higher education. The study has significant implications for organizations amidst the U.S. Supreme Court reversal of affirmative action in college admissions (*Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. [SFFA] v. President & Fellows of Harvard College [Harvard]*, 2023; *SFFA v. University of North Carolina*, 2023) and the dismantling of diversity and inclusion practices and programs at public and private colleges and universities nationwide (Gretzinger et al., 2024). It could contribute to improving practice and policy in advancing African American women in higher education leadership, by offering insights into how career advancement intersects with race and gender and peer mentorship.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

This study is based on several underlying assumptions. It is assumed that participants will respond to the survey items honestly, providing accurate responses about their degree attainments, access and/or experience with mentorship opportunities, and career advancement. It is also assumed that the survey instrument is a valid and reliable tool for capturing the variables under investigation. Furthermore, it assumed that the sample of mid-level African American women administrators recruited for participation from professional higher education

organizations and higher education networks adequately represents the population of mid-level administrators. Finally, it is assumed that Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality are appropriate theoretical frameworks to guide the interpretation of the data.

Delimitations

The results of this study do not generalize to other populations. The quantitative data methods concentrate exclusively on mid-level African American women managers in higher education institutions within the southeastern region of the United States, thereby restricting the generalizability of its findings based on geographical location. In the context of mid-level administrators, these positions are classified under the job titles associate dean, assistant dean, executive director, director, associate director, assistant director, manager, assistant manager, administrative manager, operations manager, and coordinator.

Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations. First, participant sampling may be constrained by limited access to the full population of mid-level African American women administrators in higher education in the southeastern United States. The use of voluntary participation may result in a sample that is not fully representative, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Second, the representation of institutional types may be uneven. Although participants from PWIs and HBCUs, may be included, other institutional contexts such as, Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), technical colleges, university system offices, and variations among public, private, and for-profit institutions may not be fully represented. This may limit the extent to which findings capture differences across institutional environments.

Third, the study relies on self-reported survey data, which may introduce response bias, including social desirability bias. Participants' responses may be influenced by their perceptions, willingness to disclose information, and interpretation of survey items.

Fourth, the study is limited to the variables, academic degree attainment, mentoring experiences, institutional type, and years of professional experience. Other factors may influence career advancement.

Finally, researcher bias is acknowledged as a potential limitation. The researcher's personal and professional background in higher education may shape the interpretation of the data. Efforts will be made to minimize bias through use established research procedures and objective analytical methods.

Definitions

For this study, the following definitions are provided to assist the reader in understanding their use and application.

Administrators. For the purpose of this study, leaders who manage a higher education institution or a division within it. Includes senior level-positions (e.g., presidents, provosts, chief positions, deputy positions, deans, and department heads).

African American women. For the purpose of this study, women of the United States who are descendants of enslaved Africans and identify as part of the African American community.

Barriers. For the purpose of this study, factors that hinder an individual's ability to engage in career advancement or upward mobility (i.e., gender and racial discrimination, lack of professional development resources, lack of mentoring relationships, and negative labels).

Black women. For the purpose of this study, the term Black women are American women of African descent or any American woman who identifies as being of African descent.

Glass ceiling. An invisible barrier that prevents women and minorities from advancing to higher-level leadership positions despite having the qualifications and experience to do so (Carnes et al., 2008).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). For the purpose of this study, a college or university that was originally founded to educate students of African American descent (Historically Black Colleges and Universities (hbcus), 2010).

Mentor. For the purpose of this study, an individual in a position of influence and wisdom can effectively guide the path of another person who is seeking growth, career advancement, and learning opportunities.

Mid-level manager. For the purpose of this study, an individual who is in a leadership position and reports to senior-level or top management.

Misogynoir. A term used to describe the unique form of discrimination experienced by Black women where racism and sexism intersect to produce distinct forms of bias and marginalization (Bailey & Trudy, 2018).

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). An institution of higher education where White students historically and currently constitute the majority of the student population, often shaping the institution's culture and organizational norms (Bourke, 2016).

Professionals: For the purpose of this study, an individual possessing specialized expertise that typically requires the completion of a college degree.

Upper management. For the purpose of this study, an individual or group who is responsible for making primary decisions within a company, institution, or organization. The rank may also be understood as executive management, higher management, or senior-level management.

Terminology Note. The terms Black women and African American women are used in the literature, sometimes interchangeably, to describe women of African descent. In this study, the term African American women is used to reflect the specific sociocultural and historical context of the participants within the United States, while Black women is used when referencing broader scholarly literature. Additionally, the terms predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and primarily White institutions (PWIs) are used interchangeably to refer to colleges and universities in which White students comprise the majority of the student population. While predominantly White institutions appears in some literature and informal discourse, for consistency, the abbreviation PWIs will be used throughout this study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter I introduces the study by presenting the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, significance, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. This chapter also provided definitions of key terms and highlighted the theoretical frameworks guiding the study. Together, these elements establish the foundation for examining differences in career advancement by educational attainment and institutional context, as well as the role of mentorship among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Outline of the Study

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduce the study, including the problem, purpose, research questions, significance, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations, along with key definitions. Chapter II reviews the literature on the history of African American women, employment, education, careers in higher education leadership, mentorship, and career advancement and discusses the theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality. Chapter III outlines the methodology, including the research design,

population and sample, variables and instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques. Chapter IV will present the results of the statistical analyses. Finally, Chapter V will discuss the findings in relation to the literature, highlight implications for policy and practices, and offer recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the study of career advancement in African American women in mid-level management roles in higher education. While research on leadership in higher education is extensive, the unique experiences and challenges faced by African American women in middle management positions remain limited in scope. The literature review aims to set the stage for discussion through the examination of key theories, research studies, and findings that have informed and shaped current understanding, which informs the current study.

This chapter is organized as follows: first, a historical overview of African American women in society, employment and education; second, an analysis of types of institutions of higher learning, academic hierarchy, and institutional infrastructure in higher education; third, an exploration of key frameworks and theories that inform on the intersection of race and gender, focusing on how systems of power and oppression shape the lives of African American women; and fourth, a discussion on barriers to mentorship in supporting professional development, including its impact on career advancement. This literature review on African American women's experience as higher education professionals and career mobility in higher education provides the background needed for understanding the broader context of the topic. The analysis presented here plays an important role in shaping the agenda for change and creating more opportunities for advancement to non-faculty, senior-level roles in higher education for African American women.

Historical Overview of Black Women, Employment, and Education

The early nineteenth century in America was marked by profound racial and gender inequalities, particular for African American women, who faced the dual burden of racism, classicism, and sexism (Collins, 2008). In the early 1800s, Black people were unfairly labeled with negative traits such as laziness and lack of intelligence, which fueled the widespread belief that they were both incapable and uninterested in achieving at high levels (Sandles, 2023). The widespread belief in Black intellectual inferiority – reinforced by both popular culture and pseudoscientific claims – was frequently used to justify the denial of educational opportunities to African Americans (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries in the Northern U.S., Black women came to be idealized as domestic service workers. This designation was rooted in the performance of household duties, including cooking, cleaning, laundering, and childcare for pay outside of the home (Simsovic, 2023). The perception of African American women as “appropriate labor” became deeply ingrained as a societal norm and preference, justifying their continued exclusion from higher-status jobs (Wooten & Branch, 2012, p. 294). Since slavery, the belief that Black women are inherently suited for labor has persisted, contributing to their ongoing marginalization in the workforce (Banks, 2019).

Despite the significant limitations and challenges of the period, a few African American women managed to succeed and emerged as trailblazers in the pursuit of knowledge, advocating for equal access to education and employment, earning degrees, and establishing schools with a clear sense of purpose (Baumgartner, 2019). The legacy of African American women’s struggle for access to education and equitable labor opportunities continues to shape their present-day experiences. As Smith (1985) observed, “the work experience of the present day African American women has been influenced by these past generations of black women” (p. 343). This

intergenerational influence highlights the enduring impact of historical marginalization and resilience, particularly in how African American women have navigated systemic barriers in both educational and professional spaces.

In the post-Reconstruction era and early-to-middle 20th century, several African American women played pivotal roles in shaping the educational landscape for Black girls and women. As Thomas and Jackson (2007) discussed, prominent figures such as Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1961), Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), Anna Julia Cooper (1858 – 1964), and Lucy Diggs Slowe (1885-1937), left enduring marks on the educational and social fabric of African American life. Burroughs, Bethune, Cooper, and Slowe advanced educational opportunities for Black women and girls by advocating for education and higher learning, and by establishing spaces such as the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C and the Bethune-Cookman School (later College) in Daytona Beach, Florida, where Black women could thrive academically, socially, and professionally (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2018) highlighted Lucy Diggs Slowe's pioneering role as the first Dean of Women at Howard University, emphasizing how her leadership created greater autonomy and expanded opportunities for African American women in higher education. Early African American female intellectuals and activists Maria W. Steward (1803-1879) and Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) were notable figures for advocating for both the abolition of slavery and the advancement of education for Black people, including women. Stewart, one of the first African American women to lecture publicly, emphasized the importance of education as a means of empowerment for Black women and argued for their right to learn and grow intellectually (Giddings, 1984). Stewart's lectures laid out the groundwork for future advocacy in higher education.

Oberlin College became the first college to admit both male and female Black students (Baumann, 2010). Among the early Black women to attend Oberlin College was Mary Jane Patterson (1844-1894), who graduated in 1862 and became the first African American woman to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from an American college (Henle & Merrill, 1979). Patterson would later have a successful career, advancing to roles as principal and assistant principal at the first U.S. public high school for African Americans and the first public school in Washington, D.C. (Garner, 2010). During the post-Civil War era and prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African American women were central to the founding and early development of HBCUs – as educators, organizers, and community leaders. HBCUs were established to provide Blacks access to higher education at a time when they were largely excluded from existing institutions due to slavery, segregation, and systematic racism, and to afford Blacks the “opportunity to realize their potential in ways that affirmed their identity and challenged them to use their education to demand justice for both themselves and their community” (Albritton, 2012, p. 314). A central figure is Mary McLeod Bethune, credited as the first Black woman college president, who in 1923 established the Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls in Florida. Bethune’s vision was to create an institution where African American women could receive academic and vocational training at a time when opportunities were severely restricted by both racism and sexism (Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.). Bethune’s school for Negro girls later merged with the Cookman Institute for boys to become Bethune-Cookman College (Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.). Bethune’s work illustrates how African American women were not only participants in higher education but also institutional architects, laying the foundation for educational spaces that nurtured generations of African American leaders.

Early Education and Higher Education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Primarily White Institutions

For much of its history, education in the United States was divisive and segregated by race, gender, and socioeconomic class (Thelin, 2019). In Southern states such as Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and others where slavery was legal, anti-literacy laws were frequently enacted to prohibit the education of enslaved African Americans—particularly reading and writing—as a means of maintaining control and subordination (Sandles, Jr., 2023). These laws, which became increasingly common after events like the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831, were rooted in the fear that literacy would enable enslaved people to forge passes, organize revolts, or challenge the ideological justifications of slavery itself (Terry, 2022). Anti-literacy laws criminalized such acts, often imposing fines or imprisonment to deter those who might attempt to educate or assist enslaved individuals. (Williams, 2009). As Williams (2009) notes:

Their determination to acquire literacy and numeracy generated the energy to build schoolhouses even while they tackled the physical challenges for hunger, disease, and homelessness. During the transition from slavery to freedom many attempted to satisfy material needs along with intellectual longing. As African Americans carved out provisional spaces of freedom during the chaos of war, literacy ranked high among their priorities. (p.30 - 31)

The evolution of higher education in the United States reflects broader historical dynamics of power, exclusion, and access. Initially established to serve White, land-owning males, early American colleges—such as Harvard, founded in 1636—were rooted in European models and primarily intended to train clergy and civic leaders (Thelin, 2019). As the country

expanded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so did educational institutions across the country, with the number of postsecondary institutions more than doubled, though access remained sharply restricted along racial and gender lines (Mullen, 2011). Women were largely excluded from formal higher education until the mid-to-late 19th century, and even then, their participation was often limited to set enrollment numbers and separate institutions with distinct curricula (Parker, 2015). According to Durbin and Kent (1989), in the early 19th century, postsecondary education for White women was to prepare them for homemaking, marriage, motherhood, social roles, and teaching careers specifically because they were an available and inexpensive source of labor (p.2). In response to the exclusion of women from most colleges and universities, a consortium of private liberal arts institutions for women emerged as counterparts to the Ivy League schools known as the Seven Sisters Colleges made up of Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Radcliffe College, Smith College, Vassar College, and Wellesley College. Hamilton (2009) pointed out the Seven Sisters Colleges (SSCs) were significant because they provided White, middle and upper-class women with access to rigorous academic training, professional preparation, and social networks thereby reinforcing social hierarchies even as they promoted gender equality within higher education. While groundbreaking in challenging gender barriers, the SSCs also reflected the racial and class exclusions of their era. These institutions cultivated women's intellectual development and advanced ideals of female leadership, philanthropy, and civic engagement (Perkins, 1997).

The 1896 Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* codified racial segregation by upholding the constitutionality of the "separate but equal" doctrine (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). This ruling entrenched structural barriers to educational access for African Americans, particularly in the South, and legitimized the development of parallel, unequal systems of

schooling well into the 20th century (Anderson, 1988). The Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862, which provided land grants to states to establish public universities, significantly expanded access but often excluded Black students or funneled them into underfunded segregated institutions (Sober, 2018). The second Morrill Land Grant Act, passed in 1890, provided additional funding for expanding education for Black students by requiring states that had segregation to provide all-Black land grant colleges. This second Morrill Land Grant Act gave rise to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Cooper, 2023).

Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs)

HBCUs, the result of actions by religious institutions and federal legislation, specifically the second Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890, emerged as essential institutions because Blacks were historically barred from PWIs, particularly in the South, due to segregationist policies. Bracey (2017) noted, “African Americans had no alternative but to establish their own higher educational institutions... because they were mostly banned at White colleges and universities” (p.675). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022), female students accounted for 64% of students enrolled at HBCUs in 2022. Despite their primary goal of providing educational opportunities to primarily Black student populations, HBCUs also accept students from other ethnic backgrounds including White, Hispanic or Latino, and international students. HBCUs have been instrumental in career development and degree attainment, awarding one in four associate and bachelor’s degrees, as well as one-fourth of all science degrees (NCES, 2024). Despite representing a small percentage of U.S. higher education institutions, HBCUs have historically produced a number of African American professionals and leaders, including 50% of Black doctors and attorneys, 40% of Black engineers and members of Congress, and 80% of Black judges (Strada Education Foundation, 2022).

HBCUs have historically played a pivotal role in shaping the success of African American professionals and leaders and account for billions in economic impact (United Negro College Fund [UNFC], 2017). Many distinguished figures are among their alumni. Notable examples of African American women who have advanced into leadership roles include Kamala Harris, the 49th U.S. Vice President and the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee, who graduated from Howard University (Grant & McNamee, 2026). Stacey Abrams, attorney, political activist, civic strategist, and former member of the Georgia House of Representatives, and 2018 and 2022 Georgia gubernatorial nominee, graduated from Spelman College (Britannica Editors, 2026). Roslyn Artis is the first African American woman to serve as president of both Florida Memorial University and Benedict College (Benedict College, n.d.). Thasunda Brown Duckett, president and CEO of the Fortune 500 company Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA), graduated from Howard University (TIAA, n.d.). Leaders such as Artis, Harris, Abrams, and Duckett are strong examples of impactful leadership of women educated at HBCUs, each bringing unique expertise and vision to their respective professions (Shuler et al., 2022). These institutions not only offer academic training but also foster nurturing environments that have contributed to the emergence of influential leaders on the global stage.

Spelman College, a private all-women's college founded in 1881, and Howard University, a co-ed college founded in 1867, were pivotal in providing education to northern and southern African American women; though they were constrained by the pervasive attitudes of the time regarding race, gender, and class, they were safe havens for Black women (Evans, 2007). The resilience and activism of African American women in early American history contributed to the eventual expansion of educational opportunities (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). These early experiences shaped the trajectories of African American women in education, setting

the stage for later generations to pursue education and achieve careers in higher education. HBCUs have been instrumental in advancing educational attainment among African American women, serving as critical institutions for degree conferral and professional development.

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

PWIs emerged from America's legacy of racially segregated higher education, with their origins dating back to the colonial era, when institutions such as Harvard University, College of William & Mary, and Yale University were established exclusively for White male students (Thelin, 2019). These institutions systematically excluded racial minorities and women through both formal and informal policies until the mid-twentieth century, when landmark legislation such as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (1944), *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954), and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (1964) legally mandated desegregation. Despite these legal interventions, scholars Feagin and Sikes (1994) documented how PWIs maintained cultural homogeneity through institutional practices that preserved White cultural dominance, with many of these institutions only beginning to meaningfully diversify their student bodies in the 1970s and beyond.

The organizational structure of PWIs has historically reflected and reinforced racial stratification through governance systems dominated by white leadership. According to Patton (2016), these institutions typically feature hierarchical administrative structures with predominantly White boards of trustees, presidents, and senior leadership teams that have been slow to diversify. Museus and Jayakumar (2012) note that PWIs typically maintain organizational cultures that privilege whiteness through curriculum design, faculty composition, and campus traditions that center White perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) argued that higher education administration in PWIs have historically been

exclusive with leadership roles being structured to advance White individuals. Karkouti (2016) demonstrates how the distribution of resources within PWIs often disadvantages diversity initiatives and programs supporting underrepresented students, with token efforts toward inclusion frequently failing to address deeper structural inequities embedded within these institutions' organizational frameworks.

Blacks and Higher Education Expectations and Degree Attainment

Going to college has evolved from a rare privilege typically afforded only to the children of White middle and upper classes to a common part of a large segment of the U.S. population (Mullen, 2011). As noted by Spaight and Whitaker (1995), for the Black middle class, the credentials conferred by education are invaluable in securing occupations that align with their skills, talents, and areas of expertise. Reay et al. (2005) found gender and family dynamics played a part in forming expectations and the processes of choice-making as families saw higher education as necessary because of the perception in the labor market, "irrespective of whether or not the parents had been in higher education themselves" (p. 64). For Black families, the importance of education is often seen through multiple lenses. As Blackey et al. (2024) noted, Black parents view their children's academic success as a pathway to financial independence, a form of protection in a racist society, and a means of providing broader life opportunities. These considerations further highlight the diverse motivations driving the pursuit of higher education across different racial and socioeconomic groups.

African American parents set high expectations for their daughters' educational attainment and influence their college and university selection and career choices, often emphasizing financially stable fields such as education, medicine, law, and engineering to secure better career opportunities and achieve personal success (Leath et al., 2021). Based on their

research, Crawford and Smith (2005) found that most African American women administrators reported that their families were their sole source of support in pursuing educational and career goals. Findings from Bradford et al. (2001) quantitative study of 123 Black women indicated that Black mothers were more frequently perceived as engaging in mentoring behaviors, such as sharing career expertise, offering strategies for advancement, and modeling professional development, highlighting their informal yet influential role in supporting career progression.

Despite historical exclusion and ongoing systemic challenges, African American women's college enrollment and degree attainment have shown significant growth over recent decades. As Garibaldi (2014) notes, "Many liberal arts colleges and public colleges and universities across the country have student bodies that are disproportionately female" (p. 373). The expansion of educational access for Black women was significantly shaped by landmark federal actions, beginning with the Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) and further propelled by the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (1965), which collectively dismantled legal barriers and increased opportunities for higher learning (Harvey et al., 2004). The combined effects of these actions, along with the rise of more liberal admissions policies during the late 1960s and early 1970s, spurred African Americans to achieve unprecedented levels of enrollment and degree attainment in higher education throughout the 1970s (Cohen & Nee, 2000). As a result, increasing numbers of African American women unabashedly began to earn bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, setting new precedents for academic achievement across multiple educational levels.

According to NCES (2024), in the 2021-2022 academic year, Black women today earn approximately 11.5% of all bachelor's degrees conferred in the United States, despite representing a smaller proportion, 6.1%, of the overall female population. This achievement

highlights the expanding presence of African American women in higher education.

Furthermore, their representation at the graduate level is equally significant. In 2021, Black women earned 14.0% of all master's degrees and 11.9% of all doctoral degrees awarded in the country, demonstrating their increasing participation in advanced academic pursuits (NCES, 2024). According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW), Black women are more likely than Black men to earn higher education degrees. Specifically, they receive 64.1% of bachelor's degrees, 71.5% of master's degrees, and 65.9% of doctoral, medical, and dental degrees awarded to Black students in the United States (AAUW, n.d.). Statistics published by *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2022) reported that more than 1,591,000 Black women in 2021 had earned a master's degree. Building on this trend is the achievement of Black women in doctoral education. Similarly, data reported from *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2024) show that in 2022, Black women earned 1,697 of the 2,647 doctoral degrees awarded to African Americans, up 18.7% in comparison to the previous year. This pattern of doctoral or terminal degree attainment, often the preferred qualification for executive leadership positions in higher education, merits particular attention when examining career trajectories of African American women in PWIs and their access to leadership roles. These trends are particularly evident in employment patterns and professional fields such as education, health sciences, and social work, where African American women have achieved the most and notable representation (Higginbotham, 1994).

Challenges to Career Progression for Mid-level Black Women Managers at PWIs

Educational administrators are responsible for managing and overseeing educational institutions to ensure they operate efficiently and effectively (CareerExplorer, n.d.). These professionals work across a range of settings, including K–12 schools, colleges, universities, and

education-related government agencies. In higher education, administrators play a crucial role in shaping institutional culture, managing budgets, developing academic programs, and implementing policies that impact both faculty and students. Zippia Team (2023) found that the most common degree held by educational administrators is a bachelor's degree (61%), followed by master's degrees at 19% and 10%, respectively. Despite significant gains in educational attainment among African American women—including at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels—their representation in higher education employment, particularly in senior-level roles at PWIs, remains disproportionately low (NCES, 2023).

Evidence from the Urban Institute (2024) shows that African American women are frequently concentrated in lower-paying, lower-status positions, even when they hold advanced educational credentials. This pattern, often referred to as *occupational crowding*, significantly restricts their career advancement opportunities. Viewed through Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame, occupational crowding reflects how organizational hierarchies, formal job classifications, and policies can perpetuate inequities by limiting access to higher-paying leadership roles. Although doctoral attainment is often considered a preferred qualification for executive positions in higher education, the persistence of structural barriers means that African American women's credentials do not always translate equitably into leadership opportunities at PWIs.

Variability in Administrative Roles Across Institutional Contexts

A college or university's organizational structure serves as the framework of its academic and administrative operations. They are organized through a hierarchical, divisional structure that separates academic functions from administrative operations (Roy & El Marsafawy, 2020). Colleges and universities do not follow a single organized model; instead they adopt different

organizational structures to suit their mission, academic goals, and operations (Dengerink, 2009). Higher education organizational structures are not uniform across institutions, particularly when comparing public and private institutions (Roy & El Marsafawy, 2020). The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education illustrates the structural diversity of U.S. colleges and universities by categorizing institutions based on degree offerings and research activity, highlighting fundamental difference between doctoral universities, master's institutions, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges (American Council on Education, n.d.).

In higher education, the distinction between academic roles and non-academic roles generally comes down to whether a position is directly involved in teaching, research or scholarship versus supporting the institution's operations in other ways. Non-academic staff perform a wide range of functions. These include services that directly support academic activities like research management, student and academic administration, support for governance and academic leadership, technical functions like financial management and more (Rogers & Schofield, 2013). Given the interconnected nature of institutional operations in higher education, collaboration across functional areas is necessary and expected. Academic Affairs and Student Affairs frequently partner to enhance student retention and engagement, aligning academic advising, counseling, and campus life with student learning. (Polnariiev & Levy, 2016). As campus needs have increasingly evolved, institutions require personnel to oversee aspects in academic, student-related, and administrative divisions.

Historically, African American women with advanced degrees have predominantly pursued professional roles within the divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs (Jackson, 2001). According to Lang (2012, as cited in Maye 2023), Student Affairs emerged as a professional field within higher education to support the university's academic mission of

supporting students by fostering an environment conducive to learning outside the classroom and creating learning experiences that build upon classroom instruction. Bringing together staff from different departments, these teams work collaboratively to accomplish the central goal of the institution.

Women make up approximately half of the higher educational administration workforce in the United States. According to Zippia Team (2023), 56.0% of higher education administrators are women, while 44% are men. In terms of racial and ethnic representation, 65.2% of administrators identify as White, 14.2% as Hispanic or Latino, 11.6% as Black or African American; 4.3% as Asian, 4.0% as unknown, and .07% as American Indian or Alaska Native. Longitudinal data collected by CUPA-HR (2024) from 2017 to 2024 reveal persistent disparities in the representation of African American women across functional areas in higher education administration. The figures as noted in Table 1 highlight a persistent pattern of underrepresentation of African American women, especially in roles with higher visibility and influence.

Table 1*Representation of Black Women, White Women, and White Men by Functional Area*

Functional Area	Black women (%)	White women (%)	White men (%)
Admissions & Financial Aid	8.7	51.5	28.8
Development & Fundraising	3.6	58.9	26.9
Diversity & Equal Opportunity	12.4	50.0	16.5
Fiscal Affairs	8.3	54.9	10.3
Human Resources	12.2	55.8	56.2
Information Technology	2.1	19.3	25.3
Library	3.3	60.4	19.4
Student Affairs	10.3	49.0	---

Note: Data adapted from CUPA-HR, 2024. A dash indicates data were not reported.

Theoretical Frameworks

To critically examine the career advancement barriers faced by mid-level African American women managers at PWIs, this study is guided by two interrelated theoretical frameworks: Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality. These frameworks provide a lens through which to understand how overlapping systems of race, gender, and institutional power shape the lived experiences and professional trajectories of Black women in higher education. Together, they offer a foundation for analyzing how structural inequalities are maintained and navigated within academic institutions.

Black Feminist Thought

Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought provides a critical theoretical lens for examining the complex and often marginalized experiences of African American women in professional and institutional contexts. At its core, Black Feminist Thought centers the voices, knowledge, and lived experiences of African American women as valid and necessary resources of insight in analyzing systems of oppression, power, and resistance (Collins, 2000). Rather than viewing race, gender, and class as separate or additive, BFT insists on understanding them as interconnected and mutually reinforcing dimensions of social inequality (hooks, 2000). The framework is especially relevant in higher education— an environment that claims meritocracy and inclusivity but often reproduces racialized and gendered hierarchies in practice (Liu, 2011).

Black Feminist Thought shed light on how institutional power structures, professional advancement opportunities, and daily workplace interactions are shaped by the intersection of race, gender, and organizational hierarchy (Allen, 2000). Through Collins' theoretical perspective, we can better understand how African American women managers navigate what she terms the 'outsider within' status— positions of relative authority in relation to dominant social, cultural, and institutional structures, yet still subjected to marginalization and exclusion (Collins, 1986). Hein (2017) contend that, despite being visible in mainstream society, African American women are frequently relegated to roles where they are passive observers. Historically and in contemporary times, they have been seen as outsiders in the predominantly White middle-class world (Sandles, 2023). However, African American women continue to play active and critical roles in various, white-dominated institutions.

Black Feminist Thought is valuable in understanding the experiences of mid-level African American women managers at PWIs where professional advancement and workplace

dynamics are shaped by deeply embedded structures. Kanter's (1977a) work on organizational power structures provides critical insights, highlighting how positional power operates along gendered lines. Her concept of homosocial reproduction, where managers tend to promote those who resemble themselves in style and social background, reveals the systematic processes that link African American women's advancement in PWIs. Dressel et al. (1994) further explain, "The dominant group reproduces itself and its ideas, and in so doing systematically marginalizes those unlike it" (pp. 42-43). These dynamics contribute to what Kanter (1977b) terms tokenism, where Black women managers' heightened visibility as organizational minorities face increased performance pressures while simultaneously having their professional contributions overlooked (Bizzell, 2023).

The systemic pattern of tokenism is evident in studies such as Becks-Moody (2004), which found that African American women in administrative roles were often expected to overperform to gain legitimacy while simultaneously facing exclusion from informal leadership networks. Building on this, Lee and Han (2023) highlight how African American women in academia are burdened with additional responsibilities—such as mentoring minority students and conducting research on underrepresented groups—without receiving adequate recognition, further impeding their professional success and productivity. These challenges align with Collins's (1986) concept of the 'outsider within' and Kanter's (1977b) theory of tokenism, as reflected in West's (2019) research. West demonstrates how African American women frequently serve as diversity representatives on committees or initiatives but are excluded from meaningful decision-making, reflecting the persistent marginalization of these women within institutional structures.

To fully understand the complexities of these experiences, it is crucial to explore intersectionality—a framework that examines how multiple social identities intersect to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Intersectionality allows for a deeper understanding of how race, gender, class, and other identity markers combine to influence the lived experiences of Black women, particularly in academic and professional spaces.

Intersectionality

Building on the foundational work of Black Feminist Thought, intersectionality provides another lens of understanding how different forms of discrimination, like race, gender, and class, intersect and affect people in combined ways, rather than as separate issues shape the professional realities of African American women. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality emerged to address the limitations of single-axis frameworks that often fail to capture the compounded effects of multiple forms of marginalization. Crenshaw (1993) distinguished among three ways in which race and gender intersect for women of color: structurally, representationally, and politically. When examining the structural component of intersectionality, Reid and Comas-Díaz (1990) observe that both female gender and African American racial identity are positioned as lower status identities on the social hierarchy. Crenshaw (1993) extends this analysis by noting that African American women's marginalized social status stems from their simultaneous exposure to both racist and sexist institutional structures, creating a dual form of oppression. Crenshaw's legal scholarship illuminated how antidiscrimination laws tended to obscure the experiences of African American women by treating race and gender as mutually exclusive categories. In doing so, she demonstrated that

Black women often exist in a “both/and” space that mainstream analyses fail to adequately account for (Jackson, 1998).

As Coaston (2019) points out, understanding discrimination requires recognizing how a Black woman’s experiences differ fundamentally from those of both White women and Black men. Further illustrating, David French, a writer for the *National Review*, argued that “an African American man is going to experience the world differently than an African American woman “just as “somebody who is LGBT is going to experience the world different, than someone who is straight” (Coaston, 2019, p.5), underscoring how various dimensions of identity shape one’s encounters with the world and discrimination. Research indicates African American women in higher education navigate a unique position at the intersection of both racial and gender discrimination that differs from their White female and male colleagues and male colleagues of color (Showunmi, 2023). While the former group may not encounter racism and the latter may not experience sexism, Black women must contend with both forms of discrimination simultaneously (Museus & Griffin, 2011). This underscores the necessity of frameworks like intersectionality, which recognize that social identities do not operate in isolation but interlock in ways that produce distinct forms of inequality.

Gray (2019) explains that white supremacy culture or the “systemic, institutionalized centering of whiteness” (para.1), in organizational settings reinforces dominant standards of professionalism that marginalize racially and culturally diverse expressions of leadership and competence. Within PWIs, the intersection of race and gender produces unique dynamics of exclusion, stereotyping, and scrutiny that affect African American women in ways not experienced by their White or male and female counterparts (Griffin, 2021). African American women are often expected to navigate conflicting expectations—projecting authority and

leadership while avoiding the stereotypes of being angry or aggressive. This racialized and gendered tightrope places an added burden on African American women leaders, forcing them to self-monitor and code-switch in ways that are emotionally and professionally taxing (Jones & Norwood, 2017). Livingston et al.'s (2012) research study speaks directly to how perceptions of agency and dominance in Black women leaders differ from those of White women and African American men leaders and are shaped by racialized expectations, revealing the influence of white supremacy culture on leadership norms. Intersectionality thus provides a vital framework for understanding how institutional norms and professional expectations, though often framed as neutral, produce distinct forms of disadvantage for African American women.

Barriers to Career Advancement in Mid-Level Black Women Managers and Strategies

A review of existing research reveals several consistent themes regarding barriers that hinder the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership. Prominently, institutional and systematic oppression remains a pervasive challenge. Collins (2000), Crenshaw (1993), Gray (2019), Griffin (2021), and West (2019) point to exclusionary organizational cultures, racialized policies, and biased evaluation or stereotyping practices that disproportionately affect African American women, often rendering them invisible or undervalued within PWIs. The concept of Intersectionality and Black Feminist Thought is central to understanding these experiences, as Black or African American women must navigate both racial and gendered forms of discrimination that are compounded and manifested in academia.

Another critical barrier is the lack of effective mentorship and sponsorship opportunities. Mentorship, although regarded as a vital tool for career advancement, is often limited or exclusionary, leaving African American women without access to influential professional networks or advocates in leadership (Davis, 2009). Without mentorship, African American

women are systematically excluded from informal pathways to promotion and advancement, further reinforcing the challenges they face in ascending to leadership roles (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Bolton (1980) argued that the underrepresentation of women in administrative positions, along with the absence of mentoring relationships could be contributing factors to the challenges women face in advancing beyond mid-management roles.

Mentorship as a Strategic Tool for Career Advancement

Mentorship has long been recognized as a critical factor in career development within higher education. Mentoring is commonly understood as developmental relationship in which a more experienced individual provides guidance, support, and knowledge to foster the personal and professional growth of another. It can take multiple forms, formal or informal, and serve a range of functions, including career advancement, skill-building, and psychosocial support. (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Mentoring has been shown to positively influence career advancement with research indicating that individuals who participate in mentoring relationships experience greater success, including higher compensation, more promotions, and increased job satisfaction compared to those without mentors (Allen et al., 2004). Cullen and Luna (1993) argued that mentoring relationships benefit not only mentors and protégés but also organizations, as they contribute to long-term growth, stability, and leadership development.

For African American women, mentorship becomes even more significant as they attempt to navigate the compounded barriers of racialized and gendered spaces within academia (Henderson et al., 2010). Research by Cobb-Roberts and Esnard (2023) and Jean-Marie et al. (2009) illustrates how mentoring plays a pivotal role in providing the support and advocacy necessary for African American women to overcome institutional biases, secure leadership positions, and thrive in academic leadership roles. However, despite its importance, African

American women often face unique challenges in accessing mentorship. In many cases, mentoring relationships are cross-racial or gendered, which may fail to address the specific needs and experiences of African American women in academia, further hindering their ability to advance in their careers (Manongsong & Ghosh, 2023).

The literature suggests that mentorship programs designed to support minority faculty and administrators must move beyond traditional mentoring models to include culturally responsive, intersectional conscious approaches. As Cobb-Roberts and Esnard (2023) argue, mentoring must be framed as critically engaged praxis, which allows African American women to navigate the systemic barriers they face. This is echoed in Davis et al. (2022), who found that African American and Latinx women faculty most frequently reported negative mentoring experiences and institutional shortcomings in support, highlighting the need for intentional, identity-informed mentorship structures. For example, mentors who understand the racial and gender dynamics at play in academic environments can offer strategic guidance, emotional support, and advocacy in ways that are tailored to the unique challenges African American women face. This involves not only offering professional development but also empowering mentees to challenge institutional systems that are not designed with them in mind.

Barriers to Effective Mentoring for Black Women

Despite the recognized importance of mentoring, several barriers prevent African American women from accessing the mentoring necessary to propel them into leadership roles. One significant challenge is the scarcity of mentors who are both racially and experientially aligned with the needs of African American women. West (2020) and Lloyd-Jones (2014) note that African American women often encounter a lack of representation in senior leadership positions, which means they may struggle to find mentors who can fully understand the

complexities of their experiences in academia. Furthermore, cross-racial mentoring, while valuable, can present challenges related to cultural differences and misunderstanding, as noted by Davis and Maldonado (2015). These structural barriers often leave African American women to navigate academic leadership roles without the benefit of trusted mentors who can offer relevant career advice or open doors to opportunities for advancement.

An equally troubling barrier is the phenomenon of negative mentoring—where mentors engage in behaviors that hinder, rather than help, career advancement. Negative mentoring can take several forms, including micromanagement, exclusion from decision-making processes, inadequate emotional support, or intentional undermining of the mentee’s career aspirations. Davis et al. (2022) discussed Eby et al. (2000) taxonomy of five types of negative mentoring: (a) general dysfunctionality, where the mentor has a personal problem or negative attitude; (b) mismatch within the dyad, where the mentor and mentee differ in their values, work styles, or personalities; (c) lack of mentor expertise, where the mentor lacks the job-related knowledge or interpersonal skills to successfully advise their mentees; (d) manipulative behavior, where the mentor misuses their position of power to take advantage of the mentee; and (e) distancing behavior, where the mentor neglects or does not adequately fulfill the mentoring role (p. 1065). Employing a quantitative approach, Clayton’s (2009) study highlights the experience that Black women administrators, particularly in PWIs, often experience negative mentoring relationships that are shaped by intersectional barriers related to both race and gender. The difficulty in finding same-race mentors or mentors who understand the specific challenges African American women face in leadership positions can lead to feelings of marginalization and exclusion, which contributes to a dysfunctional mentor-mentee relationship.

Additionally, existing mentorship programs often fail to adequately address the specific needs of African American women in academic leadership. As Smith and Crawford (2007) and Teasdell et al. (2021) emphasize, mentoring programs for minority women frequently lack the intentional design required to foster authentic relationships that transcend surface-level support. The lack of institutional support for mentoring programs that are tailored to racial and gender dynamics often results in isolated mentoring experiences, leaving African American women to grapple with both the academic and emotional tolls of leadership positions without sufficient support.

Strategies for Effective Mentoring

In response to these barriers, scholars argue that mentoring for African American women should be reimagined as an act of resistance against the racial and gendered norms that dominate academic environments. Cobb-Roberts and Esnard (2023) and West et al. (2018) suggest that mentoring must not only focus on professional development but also empower mentees to actively challenge and transform the systems that marginalize them. By reframing mentorship as strategic resistance, African American women can be mentored in ways that not only support their career goals but also help them dismantle oppressive academic structures.

For example, strategic mindfulness in mentoring, as discussed by Cobb-Roberts and Esnard (2023), involves conscious decision-making about how to navigate institutional dynamics, including when to advocate for oneself and when to leave toxic environments. This type of mentoring is intentional and strategic, encouraging African American women to approach their careers with a plan that accounts for both the structural limitations they face and their professional aspirations. Additionally, embodied responsibility in mentoring, as described by

West (2020), encourages African American women to not only mentor others but also take responsibility for creating spaces where African American women can thrive.

Despite the rich body of literature on mentorship for African American women in academia, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on mentoring mid-level African American women administrators. While much has been written about mentorship in the broader context of higher education and Student Affairs, Academic Affairs—which includes critical leadership roles in Academic Affairs such as department chairs, associate deans, and provosts—remains underexplored. This gap is particularly evident in PWIs, where the intersectional challenges of race and gender are compounded by institutional structures that often lack diverse representation in leadership. There is a clear need for research that examines how mentorship practices can be tailored to support African American women in Academic Affairs, with an emphasis on intersectional, culturally relevant, and institution-specific approaches.

Existing research does not fully address the impact of mentorship on African American women's career trajectories in higher education, particularly regarding the strategic role of mentoring networks and the development of leadership pipelines for mid-level African American women administrators. This is a significant gap that could be addressed by exploring how mentoring programs can be redesigned to create inclusive academic leadership pathways for African American women considering the dismantling of DEI initiatives in higher education.

Chapter Summary

Ultimately, mentoring is a critical factor in the career advancement of African American women in academia, particularly in senior academic leadership roles. While existing literature provides valuable insights into the challenges and barriers African American women face, it also highlights the importance of effective, culturally responsive mentoring programs as a

means of overcoming these barriers. However, there remains a significant gap in research specifically focused on mentorship for African American women in Academic Affairs. Future research should explore how mentoring practices can be strategically designed to support African American women's leadership development, fostering networks that not only provide professional support but also empower African American women to challenge and transform the racialized and gendered spaces they navigate.

The literature review in this chapter provides a comprehensive foundation for examining the career advancement of mid-level African American women managers in higher education. Beginning with a historical overview of African American women's early experiences in society, pre- and post-Civil War, employment and education, and civil rights, the scholarship highlights the societal perceptions, cultural narratives, and systemic barriers of African American women that have shaped their professional trajectories. Research on parental influence, early education and higher education, and the role of HBCUs underscore how educational access and institutional contexts contributed to the development of African American women as scholars, professionals, and leaders. In contrast, the literature on PWIs highlight enduring inequities that continue to affect African American women's professional experiences. Studies on higher education expectations and degree attainment reveal that African American women achieve advanced degrees at significant rates, yet their representation in senior leadership positions remains disproportionately low.

Theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality are central to understanding these dynamics, as they illuminate how the overlapping forces of race, gender, and organizational culture shape African American women's experiences in higher education leadership. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that barriers to career advancement are not

solely individual challenges but are deeply embedded within institutional structures and cultural norms. Despite the richness of the scholarship, a gap remains in quantitative research that specifically examines the differences between years of professional experience, advanced degree attainment, mentorship, and career advancement among mid-level Black women administrators. Addressing this gap is critical for expanding the literature and informing strategies to promote equity and representation in higher education executive leadership. Chapter III outlines the methodology, the research design, population and sample, variables and instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter III

Method

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to examine differences in years of professional experience among mid-level African American women administrators based on academic degree attainment, as well as differences in perceived career advancement opportunities based on institutional type, and the extent to which mentoring influenced career advancement in higher education in the southeastern region of the United States. This chapter provides a detailed account of the research design, research questions and hypotheses, population and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

According to Ary et al. (2014), quantitative research is a methodological process for collecting and analyzing numerical data “used to answer questions or test predetermined hypotheses” (p. 10). Within quantitative methodologies, comparative research is used to examine differences among two or more groups on a phenomenon of interest. This study employed a non-experimental comparative design to analyze differences in years of professional experience among mid-level African American women administrators based on academic degree attainment, as well as differences in perceived career advancement opportunities based on institutional type. Additionally, the study examined the extent to which mentoring influenced career advancement using regression analysis. Unlike experimental designs, which establish causation through

manipulation and control, this study did not involve the manipulation of variables and therefore does not infer causal relationships.

Qualitative and mixed-method research methodologies offer valuable insights on acquiring different types of knowledge on the topic, but for the purpose of this study, a quantitative design was the most appropriate due to its ability to examine measurable differences among groups within a defined population. Qualitative research involves the use of words and meanings, uses small sample sizes, and uses interviews with open-ended questions. It is used to seek a deeper understanding of concepts, thoughts, and experiences on phenomena from the perspective of the human participant. Qualitative methods, while useful for exploring lived experiences and generating in-depth narratives, are limited in their capacity to generalize findings or statistically assess relationships between variables (Ary et al., 2014). Mixed methods design provides a more comprehensive understanding by integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, but they require extensive time, resources, and methodological complexity that exceed the scope of this study. Given the focus on examining differences in years of professional experience and perceived career advancement opportunities, as well as assessing the influence of mentoring on career advancement, a quantitative, non-experimental approach allowed for efficient data collection and analysis among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Guided by the purpose of this study, the following research questions and corresponding hypotheses were developed to examine the differences in years of professional experience and perceived career advancement opportunities, as well as the impact of mentoring on career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

RQ1: What is the difference, if any, in the years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on their academic degree attainment?

Hypothesis 01: There is a significant difference between academic degree attainment and years of professional experience among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Null Hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant difference between academic degree attainment and professional years of experience among mid-level African American women administrators.

RQ2: What is the difference, if any, in perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on institution type Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)?

Hypothesis 01: There is a significant difference between working at a PWI and the frequency of career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Hypothesis 02: There is a significant difference between working at an HBCU and the frequency of career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Hypothesis 03: There is a significant difference between working at an HSI and the frequency of career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₁): There is no significant difference in the frequency of career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators working at PWIs.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₂): There is no significant difference in the frequency of career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators working at HBCUs.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₃): There is no significant difference in the frequency of career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators working at HSIs.

RQ3: To what extent do institutional support systems, specifically mentoring programs, impact the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators?

Hypothesis: Institutional support systems, such as mentoring programs have a significant impact on the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators.

Null Hypothesis: Mentoring programs have no significant impact on the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators.

Site and Participant Selection

The study included 85 mid-level African American women administrators at colleges and universities in the southeastern region of the United States, specifically Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The sample reflected individuals who hold administrative positions that typically report to senior leadership and supervise professional staff, thereby representing the mid-level management tier. Given the limited accessibility to a comprehensive national, regional, or state database of mid-level African

American women administrators at colleges and universities, a purposive and snowball sampling strategy method was employed to recruit participants who met the criteria for the study.

Purposive sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling, was the more appropriate and practical approach, as the population is targeted, small, and specific; access to databases and professional lists may be limited, and it provided the benefits of convenience and economy (Ary et al., 2014). Snowball sampling, a variation of purposive sampling, was employed to help expand the participant pool. Given the specific and underrepresented nature of the target population, traditional recruitment methods may limit reach. Snowball sampling would allow participants to recommend other eligible individuals who met the study's criteria and could contribute valuable insights (Ary et al., 2014). The combination of the two sampling techniques enhanced outreach. While convenience sampling may have offered ease of access, it was not selected because it is considered “the weakest of all sampling procedures” and does not support the generalizability of findings (Ary et al., 2014, 177).

A power analysis, G*Power was conducted to determine sample size. G*Power is commonly used in behavioral sciences and correlational research to ensure sufficient power and to avoid Type II errors (Ary et al., 2014). Literature-based studies on advanced degrees and career advancement in African American women and mentoring career outcomes in women of color were consulted to gain insight on calculating sample size. According to preliminary power analysis and prior literature, a minimum sample size of 85 participants was required to detect statistically significant differences and predictive effects among the variables. Given the specific and potentially small population group—mid-level African American women in administrative roles at colleges and universities across seven states—a sample size of 100–150 participants were targeted to ensure adequate power and to account for potential non-responses.

Variables and Instrumentation

The study included five primary variables: advanced degree attainment, institutional type, and mentoring experiences as independent variables and years of professional experience and career advancement as dependent variables. Academic degree attainment was examined in relation to differences in years of professional experience, while institutional type was examined in relation to differences in perceived career advancement opportunities. Mentoring experiences were analyzed to assess their influence on career advancement. The variables and their operational definitions are described below.

Independent Variables

- Academic Degree Attainment
 - An advanced degree is defined as the highest earned academic degree by the participant. This variable is treated as ordinal, as degree levels (e.g., bachelor's, master's, doctoral) have a meaningful order but do not have equal intervals between categories. Participants selected from predefined options indicating their highest degree earned.
- Institutional Type
 - Institutional type is defined as the classification of the higher education institution in which the participant is currently employed. This variable is treated as nominal, as the categories (e.g., Predominantly White Institutions [PWIs], Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs], and Hispanic Serving Institutions [HSIs]) represent distinct groups without a meaningful order. Participants selected from predefined options identifying their institutional type.

- Mentorship Experience
 - Mentorship experience is defined as the type of mentoring relationships the participant has engaged in throughout their professional career. Mentorship experience is measured using multiple Likert-scale items assessing perceptions of mentoring quality and impact. Each item is treated as ordinal data, with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree to Prefer Not to Answer.

Dependent Variables

- Years of Professional Experience.
 - Years of Professional Experience is defined as the number of years the participant has been working in a college or university setting. This variable is continuous, with participants selecting their years of experience by selecting from a predefined range of years (e.g., 0-3, 4-7, 8-12, etc.).
- Career Advancement
 - Career advancement is defined as the participant's current administrative position level relative to their career trajectory, reflecting progress or promotion. This variable is treated as ordinal, with participants selecting their current role from a list of mid-level positions (e.g., assistant director, associate director, director, executive director, assistant dean, associate dean, etc.).

The study used two previously developed and validated survey instruments to measure perceptions of mentorship and career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators. The first instrument developed by Dr. Jane Coleman (2002), *African American Female Student Affairs Administrators Survey* was designed to investigate the perceptions of African American women administrators in Student Affairs regarding barriers to career

advancement. The second instrument developed by Dr. Claude Toland (2006), *Toland Mentoring Survey*, was developed to assess career advancements in African American women in higher education institutions who applied for advancement within a five-year period.

Both instruments are Likert-scales used to measure attitudes toward a topic. The original survey instruments were validated by Dr. Coleman and Dr. Toland, ensuring content validity and reliability in their earlier administration. Written permission was obtained from Dr. Jane Coleman and Dr. Claude Toland to use and adapt their instruments in the study (see Appendix A and Appendix B for documentation of permissions). Dr. Coleman (2002) indicated content validity of the survey was “substantiated through the use of items discussed in the literature and items that were related to the research questions” (p. 38). Toland’s (2006) survey was pilot tested by 15 women professionals for reliability and validation.

Both instruments were adapted for the study to reflect the specific context of mid-level African American administrators in higher education and to enhance inclusivity in response options. The modifications are described below.

- Instrument: *African American Female Student Affairs Administrators Survey*
 - Seven additional demographic questions were added to capture relevant background information.
 - On the type of institution question, Hispanic-Serving Institution was added as an item.
 - On the years of experience question, additional time frames were added.
 - Added “prefer not to answer” as item choice #5.
- Instrument: *Toland Mentoring Survey*
 - Change the question choice “not applicable” to “prefer not to answer.”

The “slightly disagree” and “slightly agree” options were removed for consistency with the Coleman *African American Female Student Affairs Administrators Survey* instrument. The modifications were made with careful attention to the integrity of the original instruments. These adaptations were reviewed and approved by the faculty research advisor to ensure content validity and reliability of the instruments. The full adapted survey instrument developed and used was the, *African American Women Administrators Advanced Degrees, Mentorship, and Career Advancement Survey* (see Appendix C for the survey instrument). To ensure ethical integrity, the research protocol was submitted to and approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Valdosta State University prior to data collection (see Appendix D for the IRB Approval Letter).

Participants responded to the career advancement items using a Likert-type response scale. The career advancement scale consisted of 31 items, while the mentoring scale consisted of 18 items. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, and 5 = Prefer not to answer. To compute composite scores for each scale, item responses were averaged across all items within each scale. Responses coded as “Prefer not answer” were treated as missing data and excluded from analysis to ensure only valid scale responses were included.

Data Collection

Participants were recruited via email and through referrals from individuals who identified potential participants appropriate for the study sample. Additional recruitment occurred through higher education organizations, professional associations/organizations for African American women in higher education, and academia-related social media groups on LinkedIn, where African American women administrators engage in professional networking and

community-building. The online approach was both accessible and appropriate given the geographic dispersion of the target population across the southeastern United States and the nature of the professional roles held by the participants.

Qualtrics (n.d.), a cloud-based platform, was selected as the data collection tool due to its ability to export data directly to Excel, its strong data privacy and security standards, customizable survey features, and password protection. A participant recruitment flyer was developed and disseminated through email and LinkedIn to invite eligible individuals to participate in the study. The flyer included information about the purpose of the research, eligibility criteria, a link and QR code directing interested participants to the online survey, the primary investigator's contact information, and the Valdosta State University IRB statement with approval number and contact information (see Appendix E for the participant recruitment flyer).

Upon accessing the survey, participants were presented with an informed consent statement outlining the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality protections, estimated time required to complete the survey, contact information for the researcher, and the Valdosta State University IRB statement and approval number. Participants were required to provide informed consent before proceeding with the survey. The survey was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete. To protect participant anonymity, no identifying information was collected. Participants were not permitted to skip required questions, however, a "prefer not to answer" option was provided for all applicable items to respect participant autonomy when responding to sensitive questions. No compensation or incentives were offered to participants to take part in the study.

All survey responses were stored securely in Qualtrics and were accessible only to the primary researcher through a password-protected account. Data collection remained open for

approximately eight weeks to allow participants sufficient time to complete the survey. Periodic reminders were sent by email to encourage participation. Following data screening, it was determined that the target sample size of 85, as established using G*Power, had not been achieved. Consequently, the survey was re-opened to collect additional data, and the participant recruitment flyer was re-circulated to the same population to obtain additional responses. This process yielded seven additional responses of which three met the established criteria and were retained in the final sample. All procedures were conducted in accordance with Valdosta State University IRB guidelines to ensure ethical compliance.

Upon closure of the survey, the data was exported from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel for data screening and cleaning. Data screening procedures included reviewing responses for completeness, verifying that all survey items contained valid responses and identifying any missing data, recoding variables where applicable, and removing administrative metadata. Participants who selected “Other” and specified degrees or functional areas that were not listed in the options list but fell under Academic Affairs were reclassified into the appropriate category prior to analysis to ensure accurate representation. Three participants identified their functional areas as Advancement and one identified Business and Finance. Given the variability in how higher education institutions organize administrative functions, these roles were evaluated in relation to their alignment with the general academic mission of colleges and universities. At some institutions, non-academic staff perform a wide range of functions that directly support academic activities (Rogers & Schofield, 2013). Based on this contextual consideration, and with approval from the researcher’s dissertation chair and faculty research advisor, these four cases were recoded as Academic Affairs to reflect their potential alignment with academic operations. Responses that were incomplete or did not meet the study criteria were removed from the

dataset. After data screening and cleaning procedures were completed, the final sample consisted of 85 participant responses to include demographics variables, 31 mentoring items, and 18 career advancement items. The cleaned data were stored in a password-protected file to ensure security and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The finalized dataset was imported into the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for statistical analysis. Reliability analyses were conducted using Cronbach's alpha to determine the internal consistency among the survey items mentoring experiences and career advancement. Cronbach alpha values ranged from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater reliability. The career advancement scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .936$), while the mentoring scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .732$). These values indicated that the survey items within each scale consistently measured mentoring experiences and career advancement.

Prior to conducting inferential analysis, the assumptions underlying parametric statistical tests were evaluated. These procedures included examining descriptive statistics and scatterplots to assess normality, linearity, and the presence of outliers. Descriptive statistics—frequencies, means, and standard deviations—were calculated to summarize participant responses and provide an overview of the data. The data met the assumptions required for the use of parametric analyses.

Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to examine the differences in the study variables and to assess the influence of mentoring on career advancement. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine whether differences existed in years of professional experience based on academic degree attainment among mid-level African

American women administrators in higher education. Cronk (2012) defined analysis of variance as a procedure for assessing the proportion of total variability attributed to multiple components. A second one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine whether differences existed in the frequency of career advancement opportunities based on institution type among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether mentoring experiences predicted career advancement among mid-level African American women working in higher education. Cronk (2012) defined simple linear regression as a procedure for modeling the relationship between one independent variable and one dependent variable. Statistical significance for all analyses was evaluated using an alpha level of .05.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Prior to data collection and IRB approval, the researcher completed training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), which provides instruction on ethical principles, human subjects protections, informed consent, data confidentiality, and responsible research practices. Upon successful completion of the CITI training and obtainment of course completion certificates, the exempt application for use of human participants in research was submitted to the Valdosta State University IRB and approval granted with the IRB protocol number, IRB-04676-2025, assigned.

The study posed minimal risk, as it involved voluntary participation in an online survey related to professional experiences. Participants were not exposed to physical, psychological, or social harm beyond what is encountered in everyday professional work-related activities. To further ensure ethical compliance, all research activities were conducted in accordance with the

three principles outlined in the Belmont Report—respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These principles guided the protection of participants’ rights and the responsible handling of data throughout the study.

This study acknowledges the potential for researcher bias and conflicts of interest. The researcher has a personal and professional interest in the topic, which may influence the interpretation of data. To minimize potential bias, the researcher ensured the data were analyzed using approved, consistent, and transparent procedures to ensure the findings were grounded in the data and not personal expectations. Furthermore, the researcher made efforts to remain objective and avoid selective reporting. The research design, methodology, and analysis process were documented in detail to enhance transparency and allow for replication.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology used to examine the differences in years of professional experience based on academic degree attainment, as well as differences in perceived career advancement based on institutional type in higher education. The chapter also outlines the approach used to assess the influence of mentoring on career advancement. A quantitative, non-experimental research design was selected to explore these differences using adapted, validated survey instruments administered via Qualtrics. Participants were recruited through professional higher education organizations, professional associations/organizations, and academic-focused social media groups. Data collection procedures, instrumentation, and analytical strategies were described. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and linear regression were used to analyze the data. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV

Findings

This chapter presents the statistical results of the quantitative analysis conducted to examine the differences in years of professional experience based on academic degree attainment, as well as differences in perceived career advancement based on institutional type in higher education, and the influence of mentoring on career advancement in mid-level African American women administrators in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this study was to explore whether advanced degrees and mentoring experiences are associated with perceptions of career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education, specifically within the division of Academic Affairs. The study examined whether academic degree attainment and institutional type were related to differences in career advancement, and assessed the influence of institutional support systems, such as mentoring programs, on career advancement.

Additionally, this chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted using IBM SPSS to address three research questions. Data was collected through an online survey consisting of Likert-type items designed to measure mentoring experiences and the perception of career advancement. This chapter details the data preparation and coding, sample, descriptive statistics, followed by the data analysis process and results of inferential statistical analyses conducted to test the study's hypotheses.

For Research Question One (RQ1), what is the difference, if any, in the years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher

education based on their academic degree attainment, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine differences in years of professional experience by academic degree attainment. For Research Question Two (RQ2), what is the difference, if any, in the perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on institutional type, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), a second one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether differences existed in the frequency of career advancement opportunities based on institution type among mid-level African American women administrators. In Research Question Three (RQ3), to what extent do institutional support systems, specifically mentoring programs, impact the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators, a simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which mentoring experiences predicted career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Data Preparation and Variable Recoding

Upon closure of the survey, the data was exported from Qualtrics and into Microsoft Excel for data screening and cleaning. The dataset consisted of 136 records collected through the survey. Data screening procedures included reviewing responses for completeness, verifying that all survey items contained valid responses, identifying any missing values, recoding variables where applicable, reclassifying select participant responses based on functional area, and removing administrative metadata. The following section outlines the specific steps taken with Excel to prepare the dataset for analysis. These steps ensured the data were organized and ready for subsequent procedures in SPSS.

In Excel, the data preparation process began with reviewing each record for completeness. Records containing missing cell values were flagged as incomplete and subsequently removed. Responses with the cell value “Other” were flagged for further review. Open-ended responses with “Other” noted within the academic degree column were examined to determine alignment with predefined academic degree classifications (bachelor’s, master’s, specialist, and doctorate). Responses with “Other” that corresponded to a predefined academic degree classification, were reassigned/recoded to the appropriate classification to improve category representation and support statistical analysis. The “Other” responses were reassigned/recoded according to the established coding scheme (1 = bachelor’s, 2 = master’s, 3 = specialist, and 4 = doctorate). As a result of the reassignment, the “Other” category was eliminated in academic degree, and the corresponding open-ended response text column was deleted from the final dataset.

Open-ended responses with “Other” noted within the functional areas that were not listed in the selection, were examined to determine alignment with predefined functional areas within the pre-defined Academic Affairs classifications. When responses corresponded to a predefined category, the responses were reassigned/recoded to the appropriate category to improve category representation and support statistical analysis. All “Other” responses which corresponded to an pre-defined category were reassigned/recoded according to the established coding scheme (1 = Office of Academic Affairs, 2 = Schools and Colleges, 3 = Enrollment Management, 4 = Library, 5 = Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 6 = Research and Sponsored Programs, 7 = Institutional Effectiveness/Research, 8 = International, 9 = Specialty Centers and Institutes, 10 = Administrative Services). As a result, the “Other” category was eliminated in the functional

area, and the corresponding open-ended response text column was deleted from the final dataset to ensure proper formatting for SPSS.

Three participants identified their functional areas as Advancement and one identified Business and Finance. Given the variability in how higher education institutions organize administrative functions, these roles were evaluated in relation to their alignment with the general academic mission of colleges and universities. At some higher education institutions, non-academic staff perform a wide range of functions that directly support academic activities (Rogers & Schofield, 2013). Based on this contextual consideration, and with the approval from the researcher's dissertation chair and faculty research advisor, these four cases were recoded as Academic Affairs to reflect their alignment with academic operations.

After data screening and cleaning procedures were completed, the final sample consisted of 85 participant responses to include demographics variables, 31 mentoring items, and 18 career advancement items. Fifty-one responses were excluded from the dataset, including 32 responses due to incomplete data in the career advancement and/or mentoring scale and 19 responses from individuals employed in divisions deemed outside of the Academic Affairs division. Prior to importing the dataset into SPSS, one row containing survey question text was removed in Excel to ensure proper formatting for SPSS.

Participant Demographics

A total of 85 mid-level African American women administrators in higher education located at colleges and universities in the southeastern United States participated in the study. Demographic data collected included institutional type, state of employment, academic degree attainment, years of professional experience, functional job area, and position classification. Institution type was treated as a categorical variable with categories including Historically Black

Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), and other. No recoding of institution type was necessary. The survey instrument did not include an open-ended response option for participants who selected “Other”, and therefore responses in this category could not be classified. The absence of an open-ended response option for the “Other” category represents a limitation of the survey design, as it restricted the ability to classify the responses.

Table 2

Participant Demographics by Institution Type

Institution Type	Frequency	Percentage
Predominantly White Institution (PWI)	40	47.1
Historically Black College or University (HBCU)	32	37.6
Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)	0	0
Other	13	15.3
Total	85	100

Participants represented the institutional types, HBCUs and PWIs. Some participants selected “Other” when identifying their institutional type. Nearly half of the respondents worked at PWIs ($n = 40, 47.1\%$), followed by HBCUs ($n = 32, 37.6\%$). Thirteen participants (15.3%) selected “Other” when identifying their institution type, while no participants reported working at HSIs or selected the “Prefer not to answer” option. These responses were retained for descriptive reporting but were excluded from inferential statistical analyses due to insufficient group sizes and lack of a clearly defined institutional category. Inferential analyses comparing

institutional type included only participants from HBCUs and PWIs. Table 2 presents the distribution of participants by institutional type.

Participants also represented multiple states across the southeastern United States. The majority of the participants worked in higher education institutions in Georgia, ($N = 50$, 58.8%), followed by North Carolina ($N = 11$, 12.9%). Additional state representation included Alabama ($N = 7$, 8.2%) and Mississippi ($N = 7$, 8.2%), as well as South Carolina ($N = 5$, 5.9%), Florida, ($N = 3$, 3.5%) and Tennessee ($N = 2$, 2.4%). These findings indicate that while the sample was heavily concentrated in Georgia, participants from several other southeastern states contributed to the dataset, providing broader regional representation. Table 3 presents the distribution of participants by state of employment.

Table 3

Participant Distribution by State of Employment

State	Frequency	Percentage
Alabama	7.0	8.2
Georgia	50.0	58.8
Florida	3.0	3.5
Mississippi	7.0	8.2
North Carolina	11.0	12.9
South Carolina	5.0	5.9
Tennessee	2.0	2.4
Total	85.0	100.0

Participants reported a range of highest academic degrees earned. Nearly half of the participants held master's degree ($N = 42, 49.4\%$), while over one-third held a doctoral degree ($N = 31, 36.5\%$). A smaller number of participants reported holding a bachelor's degree ($N = 11, 12.9\%$) and educational specialist degree ($N = 1, 1.2\%$). This distribution indicates that the sample was largely composed of highly educated professionals, with the majority possessing advanced degrees beyond the bachelor's level. Table 4 presents the distribution of participants by highest degree obtained.

Table 4

Participant Distribution by Highest Degree Earned

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelors	11.0	12.9
Masters	42.0	49.4
Specialist	1.0	1.2
PhD / EdD	31.0	36.5
Total	85.0	100.0

Participants represented a variety of functional areas within higher education administration. The largest proportion of participants reported working in enrollment management ($N = 29, 34.1\%$), followed by colleges and schools ($N = 20, 23.5\%$), and the Office of Academic Affairs ($N = 18, 21.2\%$). Additional functional areas included specialty centers and institutes ($N = 8, 9.4\%$), administrative services ($N = 4, 4.7\%$), library ($N = 3, 3.5\%$), research and sponsored programs ($N = 2, 2.4\%$), and diversity, equity, and inclusion ($N = 1, 1.2\%$). This distribution is consistent with the educational expectations of mid-level administrative roles in

higher education. Table 5 presents the distribution of participants by functional area of employment.

Table 5

Participant Distribution by Functional Area

Functional Area	Frequency	Percentage
Office of Academic Affairs	18.0	21.2
Colleges and Schools	20.0	23.5
Enrollment Management	29.0	34.1
Library	3.0	3.5
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	1.0	1.2
Research and Sponsored Programs	2.0	2.4
Specialty Centers and Institutes	8.0	9.4
Administrative Services	4.0	4.7
Total	85.0	100.0

Participants also reported their current position classification within their respective institutions. The largest proportion of participants held director-level roles ($N = 35$, 41.2%), followed by other administrative roles ($N = 18$, 21.2%) and coordinator positions ($N = 11$, 12.9%). Additional classifications included assistant director ($N = 7$, 8.2%), executive director ($N = 5$, 5.9%), associate director ($N = 4$, 4.7%), associate dean ($N = 1$, 1.2%), manager ($N = 1$, 1.2%), and operations manager ($N = 1$, 1.2%). This distribution indicates that the sample was largely composed of mid-level administrative professionals, with many participants occupying roles that involve both supervisory responsibilities and operational leadership with a notable

concentration in director-level positions, suggesting a sample with substantial leadership responsibility at their institutions. Table 6 presents the distribution of participants by current position classification.

Table 6

Participant Distribution by Current Position Classification

Position Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Executive Director	5.0	5.9
Director	35.0	41.2
Associate Director	4.0	4.7
Assistant Director	7.0	8.2
Manager	1.0	1.2
Coordinator	11.0	12.9
Administrative Manager	2.0	2.4
Associate Dean	1.0	1.2
Operations Manager	1.0	1.2
Other	18.0	21.2
Total	85.0	100.0

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the key characteristics of the study variables. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participants' responses to the

continuous variables mentoring and career advancement. The mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values were calculated to provide an overall description of the data.

The mentoring scale had a mean score of $M = 2.80$ ($SD = 0.46$), with scores ranging from 1.74 to 3.77, while the career advancement scale had a mean score of $M = 2.71$ ($SD = 0.28$), with scores ranging from 2.00 to 3.33. Mentoring scores were slightly higher than career advancement scores, indicating a small difference between the two variables, suggesting that participants reported somewhat more favorable perceptions of mentoring experiences relative to their perceptions of career advancement.

In addition, total mentoring scale scores were calculated following reverse coding procedures, yielding a mean score of $M = 52.23$ ($SD = 6.52$) out of a possible 72. This suggests that participants generally reported positive perceptions of mentoring, with most respondents indicating moderate to high levels of perceived mentoring support.

Variability was greater for mentoring than for career advancement. The greater standard deviation observed for mentoring indicates more variability in participants' responses, suggesting that experiences with mentoring differed more widely across the sample. In contrast, the smaller variability in career advancement scores indicates more consistency in participants' perception of their career advancement. Overall, these findings reflect moderate levels of perceived mentoring experiences and career advancement among participants. Detailed descriptive statistics are presented in Table 7.

Table 7*Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Mentoring	85	2.80	0.46	1.74	3.77
Career Advancement	85	2.71	0.28	2.00	3.33

Note. Descriptive statistics for mentoring and career advancement scales. *N* = 85. *M* = mean. *SD* = standard deviation.

Inferential Statistics by Research Question

Inferential statistical analyses were conducted to address each research question and examine the differences in outcomes across groups and assess the influence of mentoring on career advancement. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to evaluate Research Question One (RQ1) and Research Question Two (RQ2). This method of analysis is used to determine how much of the total variability can be attributed to different components. These analyses were conducted to determine whether statistically significant differences existed in years of professional experience across levels of academic degree attainment (RQ1) and in career advancement across institutional types (RQ2).

In addition, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine Research Question Three (RQ3) which investigated the extent to which mentoring predicts career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. Simple linear regression evaluates how changes in one variable are associated with changes in another variable. The results of these analyses for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 are presented below.

Research Question One (RQ1)

What is the difference, if any, in the years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on their academic degree attainment?

Research Question One (RQ1) examined whether differences existed in years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on academic degree attainment. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether years of professional experience differed significantly across academic degree levels. The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference in years of professional experience among the degree groups, $F(3, 81) = 2.283, p = .085$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

ANOVA Results for Years of Professional Experience by Academic Degree Level

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	14.406	3	4.802	2.283	.085
Within Groups	170.347	81	2.103		
Total	184.753	84			

Note. $N = 85$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Research Question Two (RQ 2)

What is the difference, if any, in perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on institution type, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)?

Research Question Two (RQ2) examined whether differences existed in perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on institution type. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether career advancement opportunities differed significantly between institution types. Due to no participant responses from Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), the analysis compared participants from Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) only. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in career advancement opportunities between institution types, $F(1, 70) = 9.601, p = .003$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

ANOVA Results for Career Advancement Opportunities by Institution Type

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1.766	1	1.766	9.601	.003
Within Groups	12.873	70	.184		
Total	14.639	71			

Note. $N = 85$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Research Question Three (RQ3)

To what extent do institutional support systems, specifically mentoring programs, impact the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators?

Research Question Three (RQ3) examined the extent to which institutional support systems, specifically mentoring programs, predicted career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. A simple linear regression analysis

was conducted to determine whether mentoring significantly predicted career advancement. The regression model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 83) = 0.227, p = .635$. The model explained a very small proportion of the variance in career advancement ($R^2 = .003$). Mentoring was not a statistically significant predictor of career advancement ($\beta = .052, p = .635$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Results are presented in Tables 10, 11, and 12.

Table 10

Regression Analysis Predicting Career Advancement from Mentoring - Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std Error of the Estimate
1	.052 ^a	.003	-.009	9.601

Note: $N = 85$. a: Predictors: (Constant), mentoring_mean.

Table 11

Regression Analysis Predicting Career Advancement from Mentoring – ANOVA

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
1	Regression	.049	1	.049	.227	.635 ^b
	Residual	18.054	83	.218		
	Total	18.103	84			

Note: $N = 85$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. b: Predictors: (Constant), mentoring_mean

Table 12*Regression Analysis Predicting Career Advancement from Mentoring**Coefficients*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	β		
1 (Constant)	2.570	.489		5.252	<.001
mentoring_mean	.086	.180	.052	.476	.635

Note: $N = 85$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data preparation and variable coding, sample, descriptive statistics, and results of the statistical analyses conducted to address the three research questions guiding this study. The sample consisted of 85 mid-level African American women administrators employed in higher education across the southeastern region of the United States, including, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Most of the participants were employed in Georgia and North Carolina, with most respondents working at PWIs and HBCUs. Prior to statistical analysis, the raw data was cleaned and prepared through appropriate data cleaning procedures and variables were coded to align with the study's framework. The finalized dataset was then imported into SPSS for data analysis.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participant demographics and key study variables, providing a foundational understanding of the sample. Inferential analyses were conducted to examine differences in outcomes across groups and to assess the influence of mentoring on career advancement. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to address Research Question One (RQ1), which examined the difference between professional years of experience and academic degree attainment, and Research Question Two (RQ2), which explored whether perceived career advancement opportunities differed by institution type, while a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to address Research Question Three (RQ3), which investigated the extent to which mentoring predicated career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators. The results of the one-way ANOVA for Research Question One (RQ1) indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between years of professional experience and academic degree attainment. In contrast, results for the one-way ANOVA results for Research Question Two (RQ2) revealed a statistically significant difference

in perceived career advancement opportunities based on institution type. Finally, the results of the simple liner regression analysis for Research Question Three (RQ3) indicated that mentoring was not a statistically significant predictor of career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators.

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter provide a foundation for understanding the differences in years of professional experience and perceived career advancement across groups, as well as the influence of mentoring on career advancement in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. Chapter V will further discuss these findings in relation to the existing literature and theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality guiding the study.

Chapter V

Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings from this quantitative, non-experimental study examining differences in years of professional experience and perceived career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education in the southeastern United States, as well as the influence of mentoring on career advancement. Using inferential statistical analysis, including one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and simple linear regression, the study analyzed differences in professional experience by academic degree attainment, differences in perceived career advancement by institutional type, and the extent to which mentoring predicts career advancement.

This chapter builds upon those findings by interpreting the results within the context of existing literature and the study's theoretical frameworks grounded in Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality. The chapter is organized into several sections, including a summary of key findings, discussions of the results for each research question, limitations of the study, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Summary of Findings

The study examined differences in years of professional experience and perceived career advancement across groups, as well as the influence of mentoring on career advancement in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. Specifically, this study sought to determine whether differences existed in years of professional experience based on academic degree attainment and institutional type, and to assess the extent to which mentoring predicted

career advancement. Using statistical techniques, several key findings were identified for each research question.

Findings from the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of Research Question One (RQ1), what is the difference, if any, in the years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on academic degree attainment, indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in years of professional experience across academic degree levels. This suggests that, within this sample, the level of academic degree attained did not meaningfully differentiate participants' years of experience in the field.

The results from the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of Research Question Two (RQ2), what is the difference, if any, in perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators based on institutional type, Primarily White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), revealed there was a statistically significant differences in career advancement opportunities at PWIs and HBCUs. It is important to note that no participants in this study identified as working at HSIs; therefore, this institutional category was not represented in the analysis. These findings indicated that institutional type, among the represented groups, influence career trajectories for mid-level African American women administrators.

In addressing Research Question Three (RQ3), a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether mentoring experiences predicted career advancement. The results indicated that mentoring was not a statistically significant predictor of career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in this sample. Although mentoring is widely recognized in the literature as a crucial support pillar of professional growth, the findings

from this study suggest that its direct impact on career advancement may be more complex or influenced by additional factors not captured in this analysis.

Overall, the findings of this study indicated no statistically significant differences based on academic degree attainment; however, institutional type was statistically significant in relation to perceived career advancement, and mentoring experiences did not significantly predict career advancement. While these results may appear to contrast with existing literature that positions these factors as critical to career progression, they suggest that traditional indicators of career advancement may not fully capture the lived realities and career trajectories of mid-level African American women administrators. When considered within the context of race and gender, these findings underscore that the experiences and advancement outcomes for African American women are often shaped by intersecting systems of inequality that extend beyond conventional measures of success. These results suggest the need for a deeper exploration of structural, cultural, and intersectional factors that may play a more substantial role in shaping the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Discussion for Research Question One (RQ1)

Research Question One (RQ1) examined whether differences existed in years of professional experience in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on academic degree attainment. The findings from the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in years of professional experience across academic levels. This suggests that within this sample, the attainment of academic degrees did not correspond to increased years of professional experience in a meaningful way. These findings are noteworthy given the prevailing assumption in higher

education that advanced degrees serve as a primary mechanism for career progression and professional mobility.

When considered alongside national trends in educational attainment among African American women, existing data indicate that African American women continue to earn advanced degrees at disproportionately high rates, including master's and doctorate degrees, and consistently outpace their male counterparts in degree completion (AAUW, n.d.; *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2022, 2024; NCES, 2024). Given that advanced degrees are widely regarded as a key credential for leadership roles in higher education, one might expect a corresponding increase in career advancement outcomes. However, the findings of this study suggest that even with high levels of educational attainment, African American women may not experience equitable returns on their credentials.

These findings also align with broader research indicating that increased educational attainment among African American women does not necessarily translate into equitable career advancement outcomes. Prior studies have shown that despite earning academic degrees at increasing rates, African American women remain underrepresented in senior-level positions and are often concentrated in lower-status roles within higher education institutions (NCES, 2023; Urban Institution, 2024). This pattern, described in the literature as occupational crowding, reflects structural constraints that limit access to leadership opportunities, even among highly qualified individuals. From a structural perspective, these inequities are reinforced through organized hierarchies, role classifications, and institutional practices that systematically restrict advancement (Bolman & Deal, 2013). With that in mind, the lack of a statistically significant outcome between academic degree attainment and years of professional experience in this study

may be understood as a reflection of the broader structural barriers, rather than an indication that educational credentials lack value.

This finding further underscores the relevance of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality as guiding frameworks for this study. Black Feminist Thought sets forth that Black women's experiences are shaped by the interlocking systems of oppression related to race, gender, and class, which influences their access to power and opportunity with institutional spaces (Allen, 2000; Collins, 2000). Similarly, an intersectional lens highlights how these overlapping identities produce unique forms of disadvantage that are not fully captured by traditional measures of merit, such as educational attainment. Within this context, the absence of a significant relationship between academic degrees and years of professional experience may reflect not a deficit in qualifications, but rather the persistent impact of systematic inequities that impact African American women's career trajectories in higher education (Crenshaw, 1993).

Discussion for Research Question Two (RQ2)

Research Question Two (RQ2) examined differences in perceived career advancement opportunities among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education based on institutional type, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a statistically significant difference in career advancement between institution type, specifically Primarily White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), $F(1, 70) = 9.601, p = .003$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that institutional context plays a meaningful role in shaping career advancement opportunities for mid-level African American women administrators in the southeastern United States.

This result is consistent with existing literature suggesting that institutional environments vary significantly in terms of support, inclusion, and access to advancement opportunities for African American women. HBCUs have been widely recognized as spaces that provide more affirming and supportive environments for African American professionals, often fostering a greater sense of belonging, mentorship, and leadership development (Albritton, 2012). In contrast, PWIs have been associated with more complex and at times, exclusionary climates, where African American women may encounter racialized and gendered stereotypes and barriers that hinder career progression (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). African American women's persistent exclusion from higher-status positions has historically been justified through deeply embedded social norm that position them as appropriate labor, reinforcing their concentration in roles that are undervalued and limited in upward mobility and constrains access to senior leadership opportunities. African American women continue to be marginalized in the workforce due to the persistent perception that they are naturally suited for labor. Additionally, from an intersectional lens, African American women may face compounded forms of marginalization at PWIs that are different from those experienced at HBCUs, where racial identity is more centrally affirmed within the institutional culture.

The statistically significant difference observed in this study also suggest that mid-level African American women administrators may experience varying levels of access to greater advancement depending on the type of institution in which they are employed. These differences may be influenced by factors such as institutional culture, availability of mentorship and sponsorship, representation in leadership, and the presence of supportive professional networks. As Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest, organizational structures and role classifications often reproduce existing power dynamics which contribute to inequities in the workplace that hinder

access to advancement and leadership opportunities. As a result, disparities in career advancement chances are reflected not just in institutional type but also in ways that gender and racial systems function in various institutional contexts. Black female employees at PWIs will have different experiences than those at HBCUs.

These findings underscore the importance of institutional accountability in addressing inequities in career advancement in mid-level African American women administrators. While HBCUs provide more supportive environments for Black women administrators, the responsibility for fostering equity must be shared, and not be that of HBCUs alone. PWIs must all examine their institutional structure, culture, and practices to ensure that Black women have equitable access to leadership opportunities and professional advancement.

Discussion for Research Question Three (RQ3)

The purpose of Research Question Three (RQ3) was to examine the extent to which institutional support systems, such as mentoring, predict career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. The results of the simple linear regression analysis indicated that mentoring was not a statistically significant predictor of career advancement. The model was not significant, $F(1, 83) = .227$, $p = .635$, and accounted for a small proportion of variance in career advancement ($R^2 = .003$). Additionally, mentoring demonstrated a very weak, non-significant relationship with career advancement ($\beta = .052$, $p = .635$), so there was no discernible correlation between the two variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Although mentoring has been widely recognized and documented in literature and practice as a critical mechanism for career acceleration, the findings of this study suggest that mentoring alone may not be sufficient to significantly influence career advancement for mid-level African American women administrators.

This finding does both, support and contradict previous literature in the context of African American women. Research by Mullen & Klimaitis (2021) and Cullen and Luna (1993) emphasize the importance of mentoring in the workplace as a strategic tool to access supportive roles for career advancement, however, these benefits are often contingent upon the availability of mentors who are both culturally aware and positioned to provide meaningful guidance. A persistent challenge noted in the literature is the limited representation of African American women in senior leadership roles, which reduces opportunities for racially and experientially aligned mentorship (Lloyd-Jones, 2014; West, 2020). As a result, many African American women must rely on cross-racial mentoring relationships, which while beneficial in some respects, may be constrained by cultural disconnects or limited understanding of the unique challenges Black women may face in higher education environments (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). These organizational limitations suggest that mentoring in the absence of shared live experience or institutional influence, may not provide the level of advocacy, insight, or access necessary to significantly impact career advancement outcomes. Clayton's (2009) study highlights the experience that Black women administrators, particularly in PWIs, often experience negative mentoring relationships that are shaped by intersectional barriers related to both race and gender. Taking together, these findings suggest that the limitations of mentoring are not merely individual or relational but are deeply embedded within broader systems of power and inequality, a reality that is more fully understood when examined through the lenses of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality.

From the perspective of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality, this finding is particularly significant. These frameworks highlight how overlapping systems of oppression such as race, gender, and organizational structure, shape the professional experiences of African

American women. While institutions of higher education often position themselves as meritocratic and inclusive, research suggests that they frequently reproduce racialized and gendered hierarchies in practice (Liu, 2011). Black Feminist Thought highlights how institutional power structures, professional advancement opportunities, and everyday workplace interactions are shaped by intersecting identities of race and gender (Allen, 2000). Within this context, African American women administrators occupy a unique and often marginalized position of both racial and gender discrimination (Showunmi, 2023). Therefore, mentoring relationships that are not attuned to these intersecting identities may fail to address the structural barriers that impede advancement. In other words, mentoring that is unofficial or informal, inconsistent, inaccessible, or unrelated to institutional authority may not result in real career advancement.

Intersectionality further highlights how these overlapping systems of oppression are structurally embedded, positioning Black women as lower-status actors within organizational hierarchies (Crenshaw, 1993). As a result, even when mentoring relationships are present, they may operate within systems that limit access to power, visibility, and advancement opportunities. This helps explain why mentoring, as examined in this study, did not emerge as a significant predictor of career advancement. Without addressing the broader institutional dynamics that shape who is valued, sponsored, and promoted, mentoring alone may be insufficient to disrupt entrenched patterns of exclusion.

Finally, it is important to consider that the measurement of mentoring in this study may not have fully captured the complexity of mentoring experiences. Variations in mentoring formal vs. informal, frequency of interaction, mentor positional power, and cultural alignment may all influence outcomes. These factors were not differentiated in the analysis. As a result, the non-

significant finding does not necessarily indicate that mentoring lacks value, but rather that its impact may be dependent on certain conditions and be influenced by other factors.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study offer several important implications for practice within higher education, particularly for institutions seeking to support the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators. Grounded in Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991), these implications underscore the need for institutions to move beyond race and gender-neutral approaches and instead adopt intentional, equity-focused strategies that acknowledge the unique challenges faced by African American women in mid-level administrative roles who cannot launch higher into senior or executive-level roles. The results of this study suggest that while structural and institutional factors shape advancement opportunities, targeted interventions in mentoring, sponsorship, leadership development, and organizational cultures, are critical to fostering more inclusive and supportive pathways for career progression.

First, institutions should prioritize the development of intentional and culturally responsive mentoring programs that move beyond informal or ad hoc approaches. Although the findings did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between mentoring and career advancement, this does not negate the importance of mentoring, it is still meaningful. Rather, it suggests that existing mentoring practices may be non-existent or lacking in depth regarding cultural responsiveness or consistency necessary to effectively support mid-level African American women administrators. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive mentoring and counterspaces in supporting Black women's professional advancement (Cobb-Roberts & Esnard, 2023; West et al., 2018). Mentoring initiatives should be

designed to account for the intersectional experiences of race and gender, incorporating elements such as sponsorship, advocacy, and access to leadership programming and networks.

Another key consideration arising from the study is institutions of higher education must critically examine organizational cultures and structural practices that may hinder the advancement of mid-level African American women to senior or executive-level roles. The findings indicate that career advancement opportunities differ across institutional types, suggesting that the workplace environment and institutional norms play a significant role in shaping professional trajectories. Additionally, these findings are consistent with research indicating that organizational structures in higher education often reproduce racialized and gendered hierarchies (Allen, 2000). Institutions should engage in or re-instate on-going equity audits, leadership accountability measures, and biased-informed training to address systematic barriers, including racialized and gendered stereotypes that influence promotion and leadership selection processes.

Additionally, institutions should invest in targeted leadership development initiatives that intentionally prepare mid-level African American women administrators for senior or executive-level roles. This includes creating structured leadership pipelines, offering professional development opportunities, and ensuring equitable access to high-visibility assignments that are often precursors to advancement (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Without intentional investment, African American women may remain concentrated in mid-level roles despite their qualifications and experience.

Finally, institutions should utilize data-informed approaches to assess and improve career advancement outcomes for African American women administrators. This includes disaggregating data by race and gender to identify disparities, tracking promotion patterns, and

evaluating effectiveness of mentoring and professional development programs. Data transparency and accountability are essential to ensuring that diversity and inclusion efforts translate into measurable change. Collectively, these implications highlight the need for higher education institutions to adopt intention, equity-driven practices that not only support the advancement of African American women administrators but also challenge and transform the structural conditions that have historically limited their progression.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is needed to build upon the findings of this study and further explore the factors that influence the career advancement of mid-level African American women administrators in higher education. While this study provided valuable insights into the differences among years of professional experience, academic degree attainment, institution type, and mentoring, additional research can deepen understanding and address the limitations identified.

Future studies should include larger and more geographically diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Given the limited representation from certain states in this study, expanding participation across regions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how geographic and institutional contexts shape career advancement experiences in mid-level African American women administrators in higher education.

Additionally, future research should explore the experiences of mid-level African American women administrators across a broader range of higher institutional contexts, including Hispanic Serving Institutions, technical colleges, university system offices, public, private, and for-profit institutions. The absence of these type of institutional representation

highlights the need for more inclusive sampling to better understand how institutional environments influence advancement opportunities.

Given that mentoring was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of career advancement in this study, future research should further investigate the availability, quality, structure, and impact of mentoring resources. Qualitative or mixed-methods approaches could provide deeper insight into how mentoring is experienced by mid-level African American women administrators and identify what makes mentoring effective within this population.

Future research should explore the experiences of mid-level African American women administrators beyond Academic Affairs, including those in Finance and Administration, Student Affairs (or Student Life), Enrollment Management, Institutional Advancement (or University Development), Information Technology, and other functional areas in higher education. This would provide a more holistic understanding of career advancement pathways across higher education. Additionally, while this study provided important quantitative insights, the findings also suggest the need for deeper contextual understanding. Future research would benefit from a mixed methods approach that integrates qualitative inquiry to complement quantitative finds. Although the statistical results offer valuable information about patterns and relationships, they do not fully capture the lived experiences and nuances that shape career advancement in African American women in higher education. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the structural and interpersonal dynamics influencing career progression and further illuminate the complexities identified in this study.

Collectively, these recommendations highlight the need for continued research that not only expands the scope of the inquiry but also deepens the understanding of the structural,

systematic, and institutional factors that influence the career advancement of mid-level African American women in higher education.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This study examined differences in years of professional experience and perceived career advancement based on academic degree attainment and institutional type, as well as the influence of mentoring on career advancement among mid-level African American women administrators in higher education in the southeastern region of the United States, with a focus on those working within the Academic Affairs division. Grounded in Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality, the study sought to better understand how structural and interpersonal factors shape the professional trajectories of this population. The findings revealed that while institutional context plays a significant role in career advancement, mentoring, in how it's experienced, was not a statistically significant predictor. These results suggest that the pathways to advancement for mid-level African American women administrators are influenced by complex and intersecting factors that extend beyond traditional measures of professional development.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that challenges the assumption that higher education functions as a purely meritocratic space. Instead, the findings reinforce that organizational structures, cultural norms, and institutional practices continue to shape and constrain advancement opportunities for African American women. Through the lens of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality, this study highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the unique experiences that emerge at the intersection of race and gender in the context of African American women administrators in higher education.

The implications of this study underscore the need for higher education institutions to adopt intentional, equity-driven practices that support the advancement of African American women administrators. This includes implementing or revamping mentoring approaches, addressing structural barriers, and investing in leadership development initiatives that are responsive to the lived experiences of African American women. As institutions navigate changing social and legal contexts regarding diversity and inclusion (DEI) in the United States, the responsibility to foster inclusive and equitable workplaces remains critical.

The advancement of mid-level African American women administrators in higher education is not solely the responsibility of the employee, but a collective institutional responsibility. Institutions of higher education are traditionally understood as spaces that provide specialized knowledge, cultivate critical thinking, and prepare individuals to make meaningful contributions to both society and the workforce. In addition to fostering personal and career development, these institutions contribute to the broader cultural and intellectual fabric of society. However, within the context of this study, these responsibilities must extend beyond students to include the professional development and advancement of the African American women they employ. As institutions of higher learning shape knowledge production and career pathways, colleges and universities have an obligation to create equitable environments where mid-level African American women administrators are not only supported, but intentionally developed, mentored, and positioned for leadership. Failure to do so reflects misalignment between the espoused mission of higher education and its internal practices.

While this study provides valuable insights, it also points to the need for continued research that further explores the complexities of career advancement among African American women in higher education. Expanding the scope of future research to include diverse

institutional contexts, methodological approaches, and broader populations will be essential in advancing both scholarship and practice.

References

- Albritton, T. J. (2012). Educating our own: This historical legacy of HBCUs and their relevance for educating a new generation of leaders. *The Urban Review*, 44(3), 311–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-012-0202-9>
- Al-Faham, H., Davis, A. M., & Ernst, R. (2019). Intersectionality: From theory to practice. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 15(1), 247–265.
- Allen, B. J. (2000). “Learning the ropes”: A Black feminist standpoint analysis. In P.M. Buzzanell (Ed.), *Rethinking organizational & managerial communication from feminist perspectives* (pp. 177–208). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., Poteet, M. L., Lentz, E., & Lima, L. (2004). Career benefits associated with mentoring protégés: A meta-analysis: *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65(1), 127–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.03.011>
- American Association of University Women. (n.d.). *Fast facts: Women of color in higher education*. American Association of University Women.
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/article/fast-facts-woc-higher-ed/>
- American Association of University Women. (2021). *The simple truth about the gender pay gap 4.0* [Report]. AAUW. https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2021/07/SimpleTruth_4.0-1.pdf
- American Council on Education. (n.d.). *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education*. Carnegie Classifications. <http://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/>
- Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the south, 1860-1935*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorenson Irvine, C. K., & Waker, D. A. (2014). *Introduction to research*

- in education*. (10th ed.). Cengage.
- Austin, J. (2018, August 9). Urban Agenda: Most educated, least paid – Black women demand equal pay. *New York Amsterdam News*.
<https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2018/08/09/urban-agenda-most-educated-least-paid-black-women/>
- Bailey, M., & Trudy. (2018). On misogynoir: citation, erasure, and plagiarism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 184(4), 762–768.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447395>
- Banks, N. (2019, February 19). *Black women's labor market history reveals deep-seated race and gender discrimination*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination/>
- Battle, A., & Wigfield, A. (2003). College women's value orientations toward family, career, and graduate school. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 62(1), 56–75.
- Baumann, R. M. (2010). *Constructing Black education at Oberlin College: A documentary history*. Ohio University Press.
- Baumgartner, K. (2019). In pursuit of knowledge: Black women and educational activism in antebellum America. In *In pursuit of knowledge*. New York University Press.
- Beauboeuf-Lafontant, T. (2018). The new Howard woman: Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe and the education of a modern Black femininity. *Meridians*, 17(1), 25–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-6955065>
- Becks-Moody, G. M. (2004). *African American women administrators in higher education: Exploring the challenges and experiences at Louisiana public colleges and universities* (Doctoral dissertation). Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical

- College. https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/2074/
- Benedict College. (n.d.). *Office of the president*. <https://benedict.edu/about-benedict/office-of-the-president/>
- Bethune-Cookman University. (n.d.). *History*. <https://www.cookman.edu/history/>
- Bizzell, C. V. (2023). How does it feel to be a problem: Tokenization of black women student affairs professionals in white academic spaces. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 37(5), 1410-1424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181459>
- Black Enrollment in Post-Pandemic Higher Education. (2023, January 2). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. <https://jbhe.com/2023/01/black-enrollments-in-post-pandemic-higher-education>
- Blackey, J. M., Buraik, L. M., Lowery, C., & Coleman, J. M. (2024). Choosing schools: The trade-offs parents of Black students must navigate. In M. Richaud, J. Rubilar, V. Lemos, & K. Meltzoff (Eds.), *Parenting Styles and Practices*. IntechOpen. <http://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1007500>
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2013). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. (5th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Bolton, E. B. (1980). A conceptual analysis of the mentor relationship in the career development of women. *Adult Education*, 30(2), 195–202.
- Bourke, B. (2016). Meaning and implications of being labelled a predominantly white institution. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(1), 1–17.
- Bracey, E. N. (2017). The significance of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the 21st century: Will such institutions of higher learning survive? *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 76(3), 670–696.

- Bradford, L., Jessica, L. B., & Meyers, R. A. (2001). Cultural and parental communicative influences on the career success of white and black women. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 24(2), 194–217.
- Britannica Editors. (2026, April 21). Stacey Abrams. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stacey-Abrams>
- Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Butchart, R. E. (2010). *Schooling the freed people: Teaching, learning, and the struggle for Black freedom, 1861-1876*. University of North Carolina.
- Carastathis, A. (2016). *Intersectionality: Origins, contestations, horizons*. University of Nebraska Press.
- CareerExplorer. (n.d.). *What does an educational administrator do?* CareerExplorer.
<https://www.careerexplorer.com/careers/educational-administrator/>
- Carnes, M., Morrissey, C., & Geller, S. E. (2008). Women's health and women's leadership in academic medicine: Hitting the same glass ceiling? *Journal of Women's Health*, 17(9), 1453–1462.
- Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241. (1964).
- Clayton, T. B. (2009). *The role of race and gender in the mentoring experiences and career success of African American female senior executive administrators in higher education*. (Doctoral dissertation). East Carolina University.
<https://thescholarship.ecu.edu/items/81629e00-f6aa-4d3c-871e-0a188c04c75f>
- Coaston, J. (2019). The intersectionality wars. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>

- Cobb-Roberts, D., & Esnard, T. (2023). *Mentoring to subvert racialized-gendered spaces: Critical perspectives of black women academic administrators*. *New Directions for Students Services*, 2023(182), 121–131.
- Cohen, C. J., & Nee, C. E. (2000). Educational attainment and sex differentials in African American communities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(7), 1159–1206.
- Coleman, J. L. (2002). *Perceptions of African American female student affairs administrators regarding barriers to career advancement at four-year Alabama colleges* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304799723/3AEFE20E6BE24577PQ/1?accountid=11078&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>
- College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. (2024). *Composition of administrators by gender and race/ethnicity*.
- Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black Feminist Thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), S14-32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800672>
- Collins, P. H. (2000). “Black feminist thought in the early 21st century”. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 25(4), 1043–1049.
- Collins, P. H. (2008). *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.
- Conrad, C. A. (2005). Changes in the labor market status of black women, 1960-2000. *African Americans in the US economy*, 57 – 162.
- Cooper, J. N. (2023). Battle of the lands: The creation of land grant institutions and HBCUs-fostering a still separate and still unequal higher education system. *Washington & Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice*, 30, 247–306.

- Crawford, K., & Smith, D. (2005). The we and the us: Mentoring African American women. *Journal of Black Studies*, 36(1), 52–67.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40027321>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1993). Beyond racism and misogyny: Black feminism and 2 Live Crew. In M. J. Matsuda, C. R. Lawrence III, R. Delgado, & K. W. (Eds.), *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the First Amendment* (pp. 111–132). Westview Press.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (2013). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.
- Cronk, B. C. (2012). *How to use SPSS®: A step-by-step guide to analysis and interpretation* (7th ed.). Pyrczak Publishing.
- Cullen, D. L., & Luna, G. (1993). Women mentoring in academe: Addressing the gender gap in higher education. *Gender and Education*, 5(2), 125–137.
- Davis, A. T. (2009). Empowering African American women in higher education through mentoring. *Journal of the National Society of Allied Health*, 6(7), 53–58.
- Davis, D. R., & Maldonado, C. (2015). Shattering the glass ceiling: The leadership development of African American women in higher education. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 35, 48–64.
- Davis, T. M., Jones, M. K., Settles, I. H., & Russell, P. G. (2022). Barriers to successful

- mentoring of faculty of color. *Journal of Career Development*, 49(5), 1063–1081.
- Dengerink, H. A. (2009). Successful organization of complex universities. *Leading America's branch campuses*, 15–28.
- Dhamoon, R. K. (2011). Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(1), 230–243. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41058336?seq=1>
- Dressel, P., Hartfield, B., Weston, B., & Gooley, R. L. (1994). The dynamics of homosocial reproduction in academic institutions. *American University Journal of Gender and Law*, 2, 37–62.
- Durbin, N. E., & Kent, L. (1989). Postsecondary education of white women 1900. *Sociology of Education*, 62(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2112820>
- Eby, L. T., McManus, S. E., Simon, S. A., & Russell, J. E. A., (2000). The protege's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57(1), 1–21.
- Evans, S. Y. (2007). *Black women in the ivory tower, 1850–1954: An intellectual history*. University Press of Florida.
- Farrow, L. (2008). The Experiences of Minority Women Leaders as Mentees in U.S. Organizations. *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 1(2), 25–42.
- Feagin, J. R., & Sikes, M. P. (1994). *Living with racism: The Black middle-class experience*. Beacon Press.
- Gardner, L., Jr., Barrett, T. G., & Pearson, L. C. (2014). African American administrators of PWIs: Enablers of and barriers to career success. *Journal Diversity in Higher Education*, 7(4), 235–251.
- Garibaldi, A. M. (2014). The expanding gender and racial gap in American higher education.

- The Journal of Negro Education*, 83(3), 371–384.
- Garner, C. (2010, December 3). *Mary Jane Patterson (1840 – 1894)*. BlackPast.org.
<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/patterson-mary-jane-1840-1894/>
- Garrett, S. D. (2023). Is history repeating itself? A black woman faculty member’s journey in a higher education and student affairs graduate preparation program. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2023(182), 93-103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20470>
- Gary, F. A., Yarandi, H., & Hassan, M. (2015). Stress and coping among Black women employed in non-professional service and professional occupations in Florida and Georgia. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 36(8), 621-631.
- Gatta, M. (2024, Spring). Career progression among career services and university recruiting professionals. *NACE Journal*, 17–22.
- Giddings, P. (1984). When and where we enter: The impact of black women on race and sex in America. *New York: Morrow*.
- Grant, T., & McNamee, G. L. (2026, April 25). Kamala Harris. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kamala-Harris>
- Gray, A. (2019, June 4). *The bias of “professionalism” standards*. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.48558/TDWC-4756>
- Greguletz, E., Diehl, M. R., & Kreutzer, K. (2019). Why women build less effective networks than men: The role of structural exclusion and person hesitation. *Human Relations*, 72(7). 1234-1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718804303>
- Gretzinger, E., Hicks, M., & Dutton, C. (2024, February 29). Tracking higher ed’s dismantling of DEI. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
<https://www.chronicle.com/article/tracking-higher-eds-dismantling-of->

dei?resetPassword=true&email=parris.story%40gcsu.edu&success=true&bc_nonce
=qa8ltv2v9x1a30svp7tith

Griffin, J. C. (2021). *We All Rise: Creating space for Black women to emerge from internal and external systems of oppression* [Thesis, Drexel University]. Drexel University Research Repository.

https://researchdiscovery.drexel.edu/esploro/outputs/graduate/We-All-Rise-Creating-Space-for/991020220771304721?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hamilton, A. (2009). Review of the book *Southern women at the seven sister colleges: Feminist values and social activism, 1875-1915*, J. M. Johnson. *The Journal of American History*, 96(1), 235-236. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/southern-women-at-seven-sister-colleges-feminist/docview/224913844/se-2>

Harvard Gazette. (2023, December 12). *When Black women work in whiter teams, they may have worse job outcomes*.
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/12/when-black-women-work-in-whiter-teams-they-may-have-worse-job-outcomes/>

Harvey, W. B., Harvey, A. M., & King, M. (2004). The impact of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on postsecondary participation of African Americans. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 73(3), 328–340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4129615>

Hays, S. W., & Kearney, R. C. (1995). *Public personnel: problems and prospects*. Prentice-Hall.

Hein, L. (2017). *Black feminist thought and why it matters today*. *Spectra*, 6(1).

https://www.academia.edu/73332091/Black_Feminist_Thought_and_why_it_Matters_To

day

- Henderson, T. L., Hunter, A. G., & Hildreth, G. J. (2010). Outsiders with the Academy: Strategies for resistance and mentoring African American women. *Michigan Family Review, 14*, 28–41.
- Henle, E., & Merrill, M. (1979). Antebellum black coeds at Oberlin College. *Women's Studies Newsletter, 7*(2), 8–11.
- Higginbotham, E. (1994). Black professional women: Job ceilings and employment sectors. *Women of color in US society*, 113–131.
- Higher Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-329, 79 Stat. 1219.
- Hill, R. A. (1991). *A century of progress: The land-grant colleges and the Second Morrill Act*. Oxford University Press.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities. (2010). *Encyclopedia of African American Education*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412971966.n121>
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities Connect. (2013). *Oldest HBCUs*. HBCU Connect. <https://hbcuconnect.com/content/11523/oldesthbcus>
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Pluto press.
- Jackson, J. F. L. (2001). A new test for diversity: Retaining African American administrators at predominantly White institutions. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*(5), 479–485.
- Jackson, L. R. (1998). “We’re fighting two different battles here”: An exploration of African American women’s definitions of self at Predominantly White schools. *Journal of Adult Development, 5*(3), 171–182. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021391220310>
- Jean-Marie, G., & Tickles, V. C. (2017). Black women at the helm in HBCUs: Paradox of

- gender and leadership. In M.C. Brown II & T. Elon Dancy II (Eds.), *Black colleges across the diaspora: Global perspectives on race and stratification in postsecondary education* (pp. 101 – 124). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-358X20160000014006>
- Jean-Marie, G., Williams, V.A., & Sherman, S. L., (2009). Black women’s leadership experiences: Examining the intersectionality of race and gender. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11(5), 562–581.
- Johnson, D., & Delmas, P. (2022). Promoting diverse leadership: An examination of professional experiences and career advancement perceptions of Black women in higher education. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 41(1), 1–13.
- Jones, T., & Norwood, K. J. (2017). Aggressive encounters and white fragility: Deconstructing the trope of the angry Black woman. *Iowa Law Review*, 102, 2017–2069.
- Jones, T. B., Dawkins, L. S., Glover, M. H., & McClinton, M. M. (Eds.). (2012). *Pathways to higher education administration for African American women*. Routledge.
<http://doi.org/10.4324/9781003446293>
- Kanter, R. M. (1977a). *Men and women of the corporation*. Basic Book.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977b). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 965–990.
- Katz, N. (2024, September 21). Black women are the most educated demographic in America. *ThoughtCo*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/black-women-most-educated-group-us-4048763>
- Karkouti, I. M. (2016). Professional leadership practices and diversity issues in the U.S. higher education system: A research synthesis. *Education*, 136(4). 405–412.

- Knowledge at Wharton. (2007, May 16). Workplace loyalties change but the value of mentoring doesn't [Audio podcast episode]. *Knowledge at Wharton Podcast*.
<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/podcast/knowledge-at-wharton-podcast/workplace-loyalties-change-but-the-value-of-mentoring-doesnt/>
- LeanIn.Org & McKinsey & Company. (2020). *The state of Black women in corporate America* [Report]. LeanIn.Org. <https://leanin.org/research/state-of-black-women-in-corporate-america/introduction>
- Leath, S., Ball, P., Seward, M. D., Billingsley, J., & Pfister, T. (2021). "My parents did not play about school": Examining the college preparation process between black women and their parents during high school." *The High School Journal*, 105(1), 17–41.
- Lee, I., & Han, E. (2023). Black women in the ivory tower: Institutional oppression and intersectionality. *Journal of African American Studies*, 24(4), 416–432.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-024-09645-w>
- Leech, M. (2023, April 28). You are more likely to have a CEO named David than you are to have a woman at the helm, new report finds. *The Business Journals*.
<https://www.bizjournals.com/bizwomen/news/latest-news/2023/04/you-are-more-likely-to-have-a-ceo-named-david-than.html>
- Lerner, G. (Ed.). (1972). *Black women in white America: A documentary history*. Vintage.
- Linos, E., Mobasserri, S., & Roussille, N. (2024). Intersectional peer effects at work: The effect of white coworkers on black women's careers. *Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, RWP23-031.
<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/intersectional-peer-effects-work-effect-white->

- Liu, A. (2011). Unraveling the myth of meritocracy within the context of US higher education. Higher education. *Higher Education*, 62(4), 383–397. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9394-7>
- Liu, T. (2019). Ethnic studies as anti-subordination education: A critical race theory approach to employment discrimination remedies. *Washington University Jurisprudence Review*, 11(1), 165–190.
- Livingston, R. W., Rosette, A. S., & Washington, E. F. (2012). Can an agentic Black woman get ahead? The impact of race and interpersonal dominance on perceptions of female leaders. *Psychological Science*, 23(4), 354–358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611428079>
- Lloyd-Jones, B. (2014). African-American women in the professoriate: Addressing social exclusion and scholarly marginalization through mentoring. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 22(4), 269–283.
- Maye, M. A. (2023). *Black Women Matter: A qualitative examination of the professional and personal experiences of Black women as mid-level student affairs professionals in one public four-year university* (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles).
- Manongsong, A. M., & Ghosh, R. (2023). Living at the intersections of race and gender in diversified mentoring: Experiences of minoritized women leaders in higher education. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 25(4), 247–278.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondence through work in women's studies*. Wellesley College, Center for Research on Women.
https://www.wcwonline.org/images/pdf/White_Privilege_and_Male_Privilege_Perso

nal_Account-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf

- Mullen, A. L. (2011). *Degrees of inequality: Culture, class, and gender in American higher education*. John Hopkins University Press.
- Mullen, C. A., & Klimaitis, C. C. (2021). Defining mentoring: A literature review of issues, types, and applications. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 19–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14176>
- Museus, S. D., & Griffin, K. A. (2011). Mapping the margins in higher education: On the promise of intersectionality frameworks in research and discourse. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2011(151), 5–13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.395>
- Museus, S. D., & Jayakumar, U. M. (2012). *Creating campus cultures. Fostering success among racially diverse student populations*. Routledge.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Employees in degree-granting institutions by race/ethnicity, sex, employment status, control and level of institution, and primary occupation: Fall 2020*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_314.40
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *Fast facts: Historically Black colleges and universities (667)*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). *Fast Facts: Degrees conferred by race/ethnicity and sex (2021-22)*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/FastFacts/display.asp?id=72>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Fast facts: Degrees conferred by race/ethnicity and sex (2021-22)*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://nces.ed.gov/FastFacts/display.asp?id=72https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/t>

ables/dt23_313.30.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). *Historically Black colleges and universities*.

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>

National Employment Law Project. (2024). *Occupational segregation of Black women workers in the U.S.* <https://www.nelp.org/insights-research/occupational-segregation-of-black-women-workers-in-the-u-s/>

National Partnership for Women & Families. (2023). *Black women and the wage gap*.

<https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>

Nuamah, S. (2021). *Public Perceptions of Black girls and their punitive consequences* (Working Paper No. WP-20-49. Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research.

<https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/documents/working-papers/2020/wp-20-49-2.1rev.pdf>

Ogunsola, O. Y., Adebayo, Y. A., Dienagha, I. N., Ninduwezuor-Ehiobu, N., &

Nwokediegwu, Z. S. (2023). *Mentorship and knowledge transfer: Developing conceptual models for enhancing employee performance in financial and energy sectors*. IRE Journals, 7(1), 669–681.

Parker, P. (2015). The historical role of women in higher education. *Administrative Issues Journal*, 5(1), 3.

Patitu, C. L., & Hinton, K. G. (2003). The experiences of African American women faculty and administrators in higher education: Has anything changed? *New Directions for Student Services*, 2003(104), 79-93.

Patton, L. D. (2009). My sister's keeper: A qualitative examination of mentoring experiences

- among African American women in graduate and professional schools. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(5), 510–537.
- Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education*, 51(3), 315–342.
- Perkins, L. M. (1997). *The African American female elite: The early history of African American women in the Seven Sister colleges, 1880-1960*. Harvard Educational Review, 67(4), 718–757.
- Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).
- <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/163/537>
- Polnariev, B. A., & Levy, M. A. (2016). *Academic and student affairs in collaboration: Creating a culture of student success*. Routledge.
- Purdie-Vaughns, V., & Eibach, R. P. (2008). Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities. *Sex Roles*, 59(5-6), 377–391.
- Qualtrics. (n.d.). *Qualtrics: Experience management*. <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/research/how-to-make-a-survey/>
- Reay, D., David, M. E., & Ball, S. J. (2005). *Degrees of choice: class, race, gender and higher education*. Trentham Books.
- Reid, P. T., & Comas-Díaz, L. (1990). *Gender and ethnicity: Perspectives on dual status*. Sex Roles, 22(7–8), 397–408.
- Rogers, J., & Schofield, E. (2013). Cooperation and leadership in academia: The roles of non-academics. In J. Välimaa & O.-H. Ylijoki (Eds.), *Leadership and cooperation in academia: Reflecting on the roles and responsibilities of university faculty and*

- management* (pp. 147–164). Springer.
- Roy, R., & El Marsafawy, H. (2020). *Organizational structure for 21st century higher education institutions: Meeting expectations and crossing challenges*. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education and New Developments* (Budapest, Hungary).
- Sandles, D. L., Jr. (2023). Ain't no achievement gap: anti-literacy laws and the literacy divide. *Journal of African American Studies*, 27(2), 172–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-023-09623-8>
- Schein, E. H., & Schein, P. A. (2016). *Organizational culture and leadership* (5th ed.). Wiley.
- Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, Pub. L. No. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284 (1944).
- Showunmi, V. (2023). Visible, invisible: Black women in higher education. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 8. Article 974617. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.974617>
- Shuler, H. D., Spencer, E. C., Davis, J. S., Damo, S., Shakespeare, T. I., Murray, S. A., Lee, D. L., & Hinton, A. (2022). Learning from HBCUs: How to produce Black professionals in STEM. *Cell*, 185(16), 2841–2845.
- Simsovic, T. (2023). Following the line of least resistance”: African American women in domestic work, 1899-1940. *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History*, 13(2), Article 6. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/aujh/vol13/iss2/6/>
- Smith, E. (1985). Black American women and work: A historical review – 1619 – 1920. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 8(4), 343-349. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(85\)90015-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(85)90015-9).
- Smith, D. T., & Crawford, K. (2007). Climbing the Ivory Tower: Recommendations for mentoring African American women in higher education. *Race, Gender & Class*,

14(1/2), 253–265.

Sober, N. M. (2018). *Land-grant colleges and popular revolt: The origins of the Morrill Act and the reform of higher education*. Cornell University Press.

Spaights, E., & Whitaker, A. (1995). Black women in the workforce: A new look at an old problem. *Journal of Black Studies*, 25(3), 283–296.

Springer, K. (2005). *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968 – 1980*. Duke University Press.

St. Jean, Y., & Feagin, J. R. (1998). *Double burden: Black women and everyday racism*. (1st ed.). Routledge.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315705095/double-burden-yanick-st-jean-joe-feagin>

Strada Education Foundation. (2022, February 16). *The significant value of historically Black colleges and universities*. <https://www.strada.org/reports/the-significant-value-of-historically-black-colleges-and-universities>

Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College, 600 U.S. 181 (2023). https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199_hgdj.pdf

Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina, 600 U.S. 181 (2023). https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199_hgdj.pdf

Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association. (n.d.). *Thasunda Brown Duckett: President & CEO*. <https://www.tiaa.org/public/about-tiaa/leadership-team/thasunda-brown-duckett>

Teasdell, A., Lee, S. J., Calloway, A. M., & Adams, T. R. (2021). Commitment, community and consciousness: A collaborative autoethnography of a doctoral sister circle. *Journal of African American Women and Girls in Education*, 1(1), 1–18. <https://jaawge-ojs->

tamu.tdl.org/jaawge/article/view/30

Terry, C. (2022). *A rebellious education: Enslaved African Americans and the fight for literacy*

(Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). *ProQuest*

Dissertations & Theses Global. [https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-](https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/rebellious-education-enslaved-african-americans/docview/2910374667/se-2)

[theses/rebellious-education-enslaved-african-americans/docview/2910374667/se-2](https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/rebellious-education-enslaved-african-americans/docview/2910374667/se-2)

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. (2022, March). *The racial gap in educational*

attainment in the United States. [https://jbhe.com/2022/03/the-racial-gap-in-educational-](https://jbhe.com/2022/03/the-racial-gap-in-educational-attainment-in-the-united-states-5/)

[attainment-in-the-united-states-5/](https://jbhe.com/2022/03/the-racial-gap-in-educational-attainment-in-the-united-states-5/)

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. (2024, February). *The number of African American*

doctorates reaches an all-time high. [https://jbhe.com/2024/02/the-number-of-african-](https://jbhe.com/2024/02/the-number-of-african-american-doctorates-reaches-an-all-time-high/)

[american-doctorates-reaches-an-all-time-high/](https://jbhe.com/2024/02/the-number-of-african-american-doctorates-reaches-an-all-time-high/)

Thelin, J. R. (2019). *A history of american higher education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Thomas, V. G., & Jackson, J. A. (2007). The education of African American girls and women:

Past to present. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 76(3), 351–372.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/400345788>

Thompson, M. D. (2000). Gender, leadership, orientation, and effectiveness. Testing the

theoretical models of Bolman & Deal and Quinn. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*,

42(1112), 969–992.

Toland, C. W. (2006). *Slow career progress: The lack of mentors for women managers*.

[Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix]. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*.

(304914391). [https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/slow-career-progress-lack-](https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/slow-career-progress-lack-mentors-women-managers/docview/304914391/se-2)

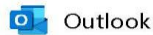
[mentors-women-managers/docview/304914391/se-2](https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/slow-career-progress-lack-mentors-women-managers/docview/304914391/se-2)

Turner, C. S. V. (2002). Women of color in academe: Living with multiple marginality. *The*

- Journal of Higher Education*, 73(1), 74–93.
- United Negro College Fund. (2017). *HBCUs make America strong: The positive economic impact of historically Black colleges and universities*. Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute.
<https://uncf.org/hbcuimpactreport/2017#:~:text=In%20total%2C%20the%20nation's%20HBCUs,list%20of%20America's%20largest%20corporations>
- Urban Institute. (2024, September 12). *Unstable work is all too common, especially for Black women*. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/data-tools/black-women-precarious-gig-work>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). *Highlights of women's earnings in 2019* (Report No. 1089).
<https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2019/home.htm>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *School enrollment in the United States: October 2021- Detailed tables* (Current Population Survey, October supplement). U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/school-enrollment/2021-cps.html>
- Valverde, L. A. (2003). *Leaders of color in higher education. Unrecognized triumphs in harsh institutions*. AltaMira Press.
- West, K. D. (2019). The outsider within: Black women administrators in higher education. *Journal of Black Studies*, 50(3), 243–262. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0021934719834260>
- West, N. M. (2019). By us, for us: The impact of a professional counterspace on African American women in student affairs. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 88(2), 159–180.
- West, N. M. (2020). A contemporary portrait of Black women student affairs administrators in the United States. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, 13(1), 72–92.

- West, N. M., Bertrand Jones, T., & Thomas, U. (2018). Architects of change in the ivory tower: The role of professional counterspaces for Black women in higher education. *Navigating micro-aggressions toward women in higher education*, 23–52.
- Williams, B. M. (2023). It's just my face: Workplace policing of Black professional women in higher education, *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, 16(2), 67–89. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/26379112.2023.2172730>
- Williams, H. A. (2009). *Self-taught: African American education in slavery and freedom*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Wolfe, B. L., & Dilworth, P. P. (2015). Transitioning normalcy: Organizational culture, African America administrators, and diversity leadership in higher education. *Review of Educational Research* (85)4, 667–697.
- Wooten, M. E., & Branch, E. H. (2012). Defining appropriate labor: Race, gender, and idealization of Black women in domestic service. *Race, Gender & Class*, 19(1), 292–308.
- Xu, C., & Castle, B. (2021, June 9). 4 Obstacles holding black women back at work. How to support one of the least supported demographics in our workforce. *Inhersight*. <https://www.inhersight.com/blog/employer-resources/obstacles-holding-black-women-back-at-work>
- Zippia Team. (2023, January 8). *Educational administrator education*. <https://zippia.com/educational-administrator-jobs/education>

Appendix A:
Email Permissions to Use Survey Instrument



Re: Request for Permission to Use Dissertation Survey Instrument

From Jane L. Coleman <coleman-owens@msn.com>
Date Fri 5/23/2025 3:33 PM
To Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>
Cc Jamie L Workman <jworkman@valdosta.edu>; Matthew Smith <matthewsmith@valdosta.edu>

Delivered From External Sender

You, too!

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2025 10:48:40 AM
To: Jane L. Coleman <coleman-owens@msn.com>
Cc: Jamie L Workman <jworkman@valdosta.edu>; Matthew Smith <matthewsmith@valdosta.edu>
Subject: Re: Request for Permission to Use Dissertation Survey Instrument

Hello Dr. Coleman,

This is great news! Thank you very much for granting me permission to use your instrument and the well wishes.

Have a wonderful weekend.

Best,
Parris

From: Jane L. Coleman <coleman-owens@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2025 5:46 PM
To: Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>
Cc: Jamie L Workman <jworkman@valdosta.edu>; Matthew Smith <matthewsmith@valdosta.edu>
Subject: Re: Request for Permission to Use Dissertation Survey Instrument

Delivered From External Sender

Yes, I would be honored for you to use my survey instrument. Good luck with your research.
Jane

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>

Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2025 3:38:53 PM

To: coleman-owens@msn.com <coleman-owens@msn.com>

Cc: Jamie L Workman <jworkman@valdosta.edu>; Matthew Smith <matthewsmith@valdosta.edu>

Subject: Request for Permission to Use Dissertation Survey Instrument

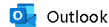
Dear Dr. Coleman-Owens,

I hope this message finds you are well. My name is Parris Story, and I am a doctoral student at Valdosta State University, and I am currently writing my dissertation. I recently came across your dissertation, *Perceptions of African American female Student Affairs administrators regarding barriers to career advancement at four-year Alabama colleges* and found your work both insightful and highly relevant to my own research. My topic is, *Do mentorship and advanced degrees matter? Investigating the relationship between mentorship, advanced degrees, and career advancement among mid-level Black women administrators at PWIs within the southeastern region of the United States*. My dissertation chair is Dr. Jamie Workman, with Dr. Matthew Smith and Dr. Marsha Simon serving as committee members.

I'm writing to kindly request your permission to use the instrument you developed in your study. I believe it would be a valuable tool for my research. With your permission, I would like to replicate and adapt your instrument for use in my dissertation to collect data. I will ensure that full credit is given to you in my work, including proper citation of your dissertation and acknowledgement of your contribution.

I would be grateful for your support in this meaningful and highly relevant work, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Parris Story
Valdosta State University
Higher Education Leadership
478-955-0716 (mobile)
478-445-8576 (work)



Re: [External] Request for Permission to Use Survey Instrument for Research/Dissertation

From Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>
Date Thu 6/26/2025 8:55 AM
To Claude Toland <ctoland@uti.edu>
Cc Matthew Smith <matthewsmith@valdosta.edu>; Jamie L Workman <jworkman@valdosta.edu>

Hello Dr. Toland,

Thank you very much! I'm appreciate of your support and the opportunity to utilize your survey instrument in my research.

Best,
Parris Story

From: Claude Toland <ctoland@uti.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2025 7:38 PM
To: Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>
Subject: RE: [External] Request for Permission to Use Survey Instrument for Research/Dissertation

Delivered From External Sender

Hi Parris, I apologize for the late reply – absolutely, no worries, anything I can do to help.

Claude Toland, D.M. | Director of Education
Universal Technical Institute
721 Lockhaven Drive | Houston, TX 77073
Office: (281) 214-7134 or Ext 12134
Main: (281)-443-6262
Cell Phone (281) 851-1088
E: ctoland@uti.edu
W: uti.edu

From: Parris Story <pstory@valdosta.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 18, 2025 11:09 AM
To: Claude Toland <ctoland@uti.edu>
Cc: Jamie L Workman <jworkman@valdosta.edu>; Matthew Smith <matthewsmith@valdosta.edu>
Subject: [External] Request for Permission to Use Survey Instrument for Research/Dissertation

You don't often get email from pstory@valdosta.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

CYBERSECURITY WARNING: This email is sent from outside of Universal Technical Institute. DO NOT click on links, open attachments, or share confidential information unless you know the sender and the email was expected.

Please report any suspicious emails using the "Report Phishing" button.

Hello Dr. Toland,

I hope this message finds you are well. My name is Parris Story, and I am a doctoral student at Valdosta State University, and I am currently writing my dissertation. I recently came across your survey instrument and found it to be relevant to my own research. My topic is, *Do mentorship and advanced degrees matter? Investigating the relationship between mentorship, advanced degrees, and career advancement among mid-level Black women administrators at PWIs within the southeastern region of the United States*. My dissertation chair is Dr. Jamie Workman, with Dr. Matthew Smith and Dr. Marsha Simon serving as committee members.

I'm writing to respectfully ask for your permission to use and modify your instrument for gathering data on mentoring as part of my dissertation research. I believe it would be a valuable tool in my research. I will ensure that full credit is given to you in my work.

I would be grateful for your support in this meaningful and relevant work, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Parris Story

Confidential This e-mail and any files transmitted with it are the property of the Universal Technical Institute, Inc. and/or its affiliates, are confidential, and are intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom this e-mail is addressed. If you are not one of the named recipients or otherwise have reason to believe that you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender and delete this message immediately from your computer. Any other use, retention, dissemination, forwarding, printing or copying of this e-mail is strictly prohibited.

Appendix B:
Adapted Survey Instrument

Story Career Advancement in Mid-level Black Women Administrators Survey

Survey: Career Advancement in Mid-level African American Women Administrators at PWIs Survey

Greetings,

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Do mentorship and advanced degrees matter? Investigating the Relationship Between Mentorship, Advanced Degrees, and Career Advancement Among Mid-Level African American Women Administrators at Primarily White Institutions within the Southeastern Region of the United States," which is being conducted by Parris S. Story, a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to seek to better understand how advanced degrees and mentorship relate to career advancement for mid-level Black women administrators in academic affairs at primarily White institutions (PWIs).

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about career advancement in degreed, mentored, and non-mentored mid-level Black women administrators in higher education. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Participation should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. This survey is confidential and anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose

not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Parris S. Story at pstory@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

By clicking "Next" below, you are affirming that you are at least 18 years old, understand the purpose of the study, and voluntarily agree to participate.

DEMOGRAPHICS—Please check the appropriate response to each item below.

The type of institution in which I work is, (of worked at, if retired):

- ☐ HBCU
- ☐ Hispanic-Serving Institution
- ☐ Predominantly White Institution
- ☐ Other

☐ Prefer not to answer.

In which state do you (or did you, if retired) work?

- ☐ Alabama
- ☐ Georgia
- ☐ Florida
- ☐ Mississippi
- ☐ North Carolina
- ☐ South Carolina
- ☐ Tennessee
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

The highest degree that I hold is:

- ☐ BA/BS
- ☐ MA/MS
- ☐ Ed.S.
- ☐ Ph.D. /Ed.D.
- ☐ Other graduate degree.
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

How many years ago did you earn your highest degree (e.g., Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate) relative to when you entered your current role?

- ☐ Less than 1 year ago
- ☐ 1 - 2 years ago
- ☐ 3 -5 years ago
- ☐ 6 - 10 years ago
- ☐ 11-15 years ago

- ☐ 16-20 years ago
- ☐ More than 20 years ago
- ☐ I did not earn a degree prior to my current role.

The number of years of experience that I have working in a college/university setting is:

- ☐ 0 - 3
- ☐ 4 - 7
- ☐ 8 - 12
- ☐ 13 - 15
- ☐ 15+

What functional area in Academic Affairs do you primarily work in within your institution? (Please select the area that best describes your current role.)

- ☐ Office of Academic Affairs/Provost Office/Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs
- ☐ Schools and colleges (Arts & Sciences, Business, Continuing & Professional Studies, Education, Health Sciences, Graduate Studies, and Honors)
- ☐ Enrollment Management (Registrar, Financial Aid, Academic Advising, etc.)
- ☐ Library
- ☐ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- ☐ Research and Sponsored Programs
- ☐ Institutional Effectiveness/Research
- ☐ International
- ☐ Specialty centers and institutes (Learning Center, Teaching and Learning, Writing, etc.)
- ☐ Administrative Services (Accounting/Human Resources/Legal Services)
- ☐ Other

What is your current job title or classification?

- ☐ Associate Dean
- ☐ Assistant Dean
- ☐ Executive Director
- ☐ Director
- ☐ Associate Director
- ☐ Assistant Director
- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Assistant Manager
- ☐ Operations Manager
- ☐ Administrative Manager
- ☐ Coordinator
- ☐ Other

How long have you been in your current role?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 15 years
- ☐ 16 - 20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

Block 2

Each of the following questions is followed by 5 responses. The responses are as follows:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Prefer not to answer.

A doctoral degree is necessary for career advancement in a college/university for African American women administrators.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman administrator in college/university Academic Affairs, I often feel isolated.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman administrator in college/university Academic Affairs, I often feel underutilized.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman administrator in college/university Academic Affairs, I often feel unappreciated.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

Overall, there is a lack of opportunities for African American women Academic Affairs administrators to network with one another.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

There is a lack of mentoring for African American women Academic Affairs administrators.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that my supervisor's instructions are sometimes unclear.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree

- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often subjected to unfair criticisms by co-workers and other administrators.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often used as a buffer between African American students and the administration of my institution.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that as a whole, I have an unclear understanding of the organizational culture in which I work.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree

- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

A Master's degree is necessary for career advancement for African American women Academic Affairs administrators.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

Experience in higher education is the key for career advancement for African American women college/university Academic Affairs administrators.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that often, African American women administrators are placed in positions which hold no real power.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often forced to choose between my job and my family responsibilities in order to advance my career.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I have been the victim of gender discrimination.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

Often, African American women college/university Academic Affairs administrators are given the title of assistant, associate, interim, or acting instead of the top administrative title.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the White male administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the White female administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the African American male administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the Asian male administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the Asian female administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the Hispanic male administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often held to a higher performance standard than the Hispanic female administrator.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that Afro-centric dress/hairstyle in the workplace would be a barrier to my career advancement.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often not taken seriously by my co-workers and the administration.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often shut out of the decision-making process.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I have to work twice as hard as non-Black employees to be seen as competent.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator are often hired because of their race to satisfy quota.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often seen by other non-Black employees as being aggressive.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think my accomplishments are often ignored at my institution.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

As an African American woman college/university Academic Affairs administrator, I think that I am often subjected to the same negative attitudes that exist in larger society regarding Black women.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ 5 - Prefer not to answer.

Block 3

Toland Mentoring Survey

I would not have advanced to the level I am without a mentor.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

It is beneficial for a college-degreed woman to have a mentor for career advancement.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

A mentor will help college-degreed women develop higher levels of job satisfaction.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

A mentor is recommended for women to develop professional career networks.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

I have gained a higher level of compensation due to being mentored.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

A mentor in the first four years of a college-degreed woman's career will allow faster promotions.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a female mentor in the first four years of a college-degreed woman's career will allow for faster career growth than

having a male mentor.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a female mentor, instead of a male mentor, will allow for higher levels of job satisfaction.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a female mentor, instead of a male mentor, will allow for faster compensation growth in the first four years of a woman's career.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

A woman having a female mentor will obtain higher levels of compensation during her career.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree

- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a mentor is not helpful for women to have career success.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a mentor is not beneficial for women to build professional career networks.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a male mentor for a woman will be as good as a female mentor in helping with a college-degreed woman's career growth.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

There is no difference in the rate of growth of a college-degreed woman's career with a mentor or without a mentor.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

There is no difference in the rate of growth of a college-degreed woman's compensation level with a female mentor or a male mentor.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a female mentor helps college-degreed women build successful careers.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a female mentor helps college-degreed women develop clear career goals.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Having a mentor helps college-degreed women increase job satisfaction.

- ☐ 1 - Strongly Disagree
- ☐ 2 - Disagree
- ☐ 3 - Agree
- ☐ 4 - Strongly Agree
- ☐ Prefer not to answer.

Powered by Qualtrics

Appendix C:
IRB Approval Letter



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

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04676-2025

Responsible Researcher(s): Parris Story

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Jamie Workman

Dissertation Research Member: Dr. Matthew Smith

Project Title: *Investigating the Relationship Between Mentorship, Advanced Degrees, and Career Advancement Among Mid-Level Black Women Administrators in Higher Education within the Southeastern Region of the United States.*

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.

Comments:

- *IRB protocol number (IRB-04676-2025) must be included at the end of consent statements, correspondence, recruitment documents, etc.*
- *Qualtrics settings must allow participants to skip or decline to answer questions. Additionally, the settings must be configured to prevent the collection of IP addresses.*
- *To comply with consent guidelines, recordings must capture the researcher reading the consent statement aloud and confirming the participant's understanding and willingness to participate. Each transcript must document the consent process and the participant's voiced consent. A copy of the interview consent statement must be provided to each participant.*
- *Upon completion of the research study all data must be securely maintained (e.g. locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

☒ *Proposed modifications must be submitted to the IRB Administrator at tmwright@valdosta.edu for review and approval. Implementing any modifications without written approval from the IRB is strictly prohibited.*

Elizabeth W. Olphie

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator

11.18.2025

Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.

Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Appendix D:
Participant Recruitment Flyer

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS WANTED



Your Experience Matters! Help Us Explore How Advanced Degrees and Mentorship Shape the Career Paths of Black Women Leaders in Higher Education.

Study

Investigating the Relationship Between Mentorship, Advanced Degrees, and Career Advancement Among Mid-Level Black Women Administrators in Higher Education within the Southeastern Region of the United States.

Study Purpose

This study aims to examine whether advanced degrees and mentorship influence career progression among mid-level Black women working in higher education.

Who Can Participate

We are seeking mid-level Black women administrators currently employed in higher education located in:

- Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee
- Participants must be 18 years or older

Participation Involves

- Complete an online, confidential survey
- Estimated time: 10-15 minutes

Voluntary & Confidential

Participation is voluntary. No identifying information will be published. You may withdraw at any time.

Benefits of Participation

- Contribute to research supporting Black and/or African American women's career advancement in higher education
- Help strengthen scholarship on mentorship and leadership pathways

How to Participate

Scan the QR Code or visit the survey link below.



Survey link:

https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5yU45hkkaZ23lye

Researcher/Principal Investigator:

Parris Story, Doctoral Candidate
Ed.D. Curriculum & Instruction
Valdosta State University
Email: pstory@valdosta.edu



Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Parris Story at pstory@valdosta.edu. This study (IRB-04676-2025) has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.