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The Lack Of Representation In Leadership At Predominantly White Institutions In The United States: A Qualitative Analysis On The Executive Leadership Pathway For African American Males

Eric Pulley

THE LACK OF REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE

INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PATHWAY FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

By

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of Black men in the

United States who have overcome barriers to advance to leadership positions at predominantly

White institutions (PWI). The qualitative phenomenological approach was used to examine three

research questions that addressed the factors that encouraged Black men on their paths to pursue

executive leadership positions, the obstacles they encountered, and how identifying as a Black

male at a PWI affected their career pursuits. Social support theory (SST) guided the theorical

framework and critical race theory (CRT) guided the conceptional framework. Interviews from

six participants were used. During the interviews, five major themes emerged: intersectionality,

financial distress, career advancement, mentorship, and representation. This study found that

Black men working at PWIs have been impacted by the history of race in the United States,

inequities within the systems and laws created by the White majority, and the lack of mentorship

opportunities for Black men. These factors have created the disparity within leadership

advancement for Black men and women in higher education compared to their White

counterparts.

DEDICATIONS

To Mom and Dad:

Look what you have accomplished. Through your wisdom, love, and understanding, you have cultivated a young man who fought against the odds to complete this feat. You both taught me never to be anxious for anything and to always expect the best.

To Alvin, Treasa, Michael, Alex Jr., and Ashley:

Thank you for being the best siblings I could ask for. The laughs, the jokes, and the conversations mean more to me than you ever know. I thank you for allowing me to be the best uncle that I can be and for allowing me to grow into the best little (big) brother I am today.

To My Tribe:

Thank you for the support and push to get me to this point. You know who you are and what you mean to me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s, colleges and universities across the United States (U.S.) have seen a steady influx of students, both traditional and non-traditional (Chen, 2017). In terms of demographics, many predominantly White campuses have morphed from generations-old elitist institutions into melting pots of cultural and ethnic multiplicity with the increasing enrollment of Black and Hispanic students (Akombo, 2013). As such, the need for more faculty, staff, and campus leaders has prompted a hiring binge in many regions across the country. In fall 2017, about three-quarters of postsecondary faculty members in the U.S. were White (76%), compared with 55% of undergraduates, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In contrast, around a quarter of postsecondary faculty were non-White (24%) compared with 45% of students.

In many ways, the current trend continues to mirror the *good-ole-boy* system that commenced during post-Reconstruction America and proliferated throughout the Jim Crow South (Alexander, 2020). During the time of the *good-ole-boy* system, most public and private colleges in the U.S. maintained organizational values and policies that supported the interests of one group of people: male Caucasian Americans (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006). As a result, Whites are overrepresented in academic leadership positions when compared to campus demographic compositions (Jackson, 2004). In the same way, African Americans are underrepresented in academic administrative leadership roles (Ward & Wolf-Wendell, 2009, p. 11). This underrepresentation of people of color highlights the conflict between diverse ethnic groups and traditional academic ideals (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006).

While the racial discrepancy in recruitment has resulted in the hiring of more African Americans in many institutions, there is still an inadequate representation of African Americans in academic administrative leadership roles. Many institutions also lack the promotion of other races, which could be due to the low numbers of African American candidates, or to the other issues mentioned previously. Unfortunately, the ability of an institution to grow culturally and through diversification would require minority applicants' interest in working for that institution. However, the underrepresentation of minorities causes a lack of desire to work for such an organization due to fear of unfavorable treatment, double standards, and misperceived emotions and actions, such as aggression (SAGE, 2015). In recent years, scholarly works of literature about higher education have given increased attention to the state and presence of Black college students and faculty (Allen et al., 2000; Banks, 1984; Blackwell, 1989; Hughes, 2004; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; King & Watts, 2004; Moore, 2001; Morales & Troutman, 2004; Solorzano et al., 2000; Stanley, 2006; Watson, 2001). Researchers have attempted to find causes and solutions to the underrepresentation of Black students and faculty, particularly at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This research developed from a collection of studies that concentrated exclusively on Black males as students and faculty and the inability of this group to graduate college and obtain faculty positions to the same degree as their White and female counterparts (Green, 2000; Harper, 2006, 2009, 2012; Hopson, 2000; Kunjufu, 2005; Marks, 2000; Perma, 2001; Rowley, 2000). While such studies have proven to be informative and valuable, they have only partly examined the experiences of Black males at PWIs.

To date, there has not been a deliberate, comprehensive effort among PWIs to significantly diversify their administrative ranks in ways comparable to student and faculty

diversification efforts. The lack of literature on Black male administrators is directly related to this lack of deliberate attention PWIs have given to increasing the number of Black males in their administrative ranks, particularly in comparison to the consideration given to increasing the number of Black male students and faculty. Statistics show that in the fall of 2011, Black men held 3.6% of all executives, senior, and upper administrative positions in U.S. higher education institutions (Howard, 2014). That number includes historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) where Black males are overrepresented in executive administrative positions (Gassman & Commodore, 2014).

This study focused on the representation of African American males in administrative leadership positions in PWIs. It explored the career pathway of Black males who currently hold executive leadership roles in PWIs and their experiences along the journey to attaining such positions. This study brought awareness of the necessity of having Black and African American males at the helms of these institutions to bring their thoughts, opinions, and life experiences to the ever-changing populations of predominately White institutions.

Definition of Terms

This section consisted of key terms within this study with a brief definition.

African American. An American with Black African ancestry or identifies as Black American.(Merriam-Webster, 2022). For this study, the terms African American and Black American (Black) were interchangeable.

Aggression. Aggression is any act of hostility or violence in attitude or behavior towards another individual. This is often met with a desire or preparation for confrontation or an attack (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Assertiveness. Assertiveness is a skill that utilizes direct communication to validate and instill confidence in a particular idea while respecting and honoring the beliefs and inherent rights of other individuals. Assertiveness leads to greater levels of respect, pride, and self-esteem (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Community transformation. Awareness of the phenomenon could result in heightened understanding within a community or even an increase in the number of minorities that join the community as the organization attempts to increase the number of minorities in faculty and staff within higher education. More minority students would feel comfortable attending a university with more minority instructors. This is because people tend to feel more comfortable with people who are like them. In the case of students being away from home for the first time, balanced racial ratios of the staff and educators can make the students feel more comfortable and confident in their decisions to attend a PWI (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Double standard. A double standard is a rule, policy, or principle unfairly placed on certain people or groups of people in opposition to the societal norm (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Equity. Equity is the concept of fairness and impartiality granted to various members of different groups (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Executive leadership. The ability to manage or direct employees in an organization to influence and guide them. People who lead executive processes typically oversee activities such as fulfilling organizational goals, strategic planning development, and overall decision-making (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Self-awareness. Self-awareness is a person's knowledge of his or her motivations, emotions, desires, personality, and character (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Social justice. Social justice is the fairness and justice in disseminating privilege, prosperity, and opportunities within society (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Transformative leadership. Transformative leadership focuses on enhancing attitude, motives, and overall performance to enact change within the social system or individuals (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

White institution. White institution refers to an institution that is predominantly and disproportionately Caucasian in personnel with minimal persons of color (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Problem Statement

Data on Black male professionals in higher education outside faculty ranks are difficult to obtain. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), just 13% of education administrators are Black or African American. Very little is known specifically about Black male faculty who studied higher education. Literature is virtually non-existent in this area, as previous scholarships related to race and gender have primarily focused on the intersectionality of Black women who studied in this field (Croom, 2017; Croom & Patton, 2012). In a thorough search utilizing Rumbley et al.'s (2014) inventory to identify higher education graduate programs in the United States, over 200 programs and more than 400 full-time higher education faculty were recognized. This study added to the existing research to learn, adapt, and change the demographic makeup at these institutions. The goal is to have universities with diverse populations of students reflect that same diversity in their executive leadership. This case study was a qualitative, descriptive phenomenological study that examined a phenomenon of six Black men who held executive leadership positions at PWIs located in the United States. This study examined their trajectory to

their appointed positions and the challenges they faced while continuing their career path. The stakeholders of this research are African American men who are new in college and who aspire to navigate their career paths into holding executive leadership positions at PWIs.

Purpose of the Study

There is significant under-development of existing research surrounding the lack of leadership roles for African American men working at PWIs. The works of literature reviewed showed gaps in understanding the factors that may be responsible for this lack. These studies also suggested corrections in the form of further research on African American men who overcame barriers to become executive leaders in PWIs. Therefore, this study explored the factors that encouraged or inhibited African American men on their career pathway to executive leadership roles in PWIs. This study furthered enrich the research previously conducted on the subject with a focus on African American men in PWIs in the northeast United States.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered:

RQ1: What factors encouraged African American men on their career pathway to executive leadership roles at PWIs?

RQ2: What obstacles or inhibitions did African American men encounter while pursuing executive leadership roles at PWIs?

RQ3: How does identifying as an African American male at a PWI affect the leadership pathway in his career pursuits?

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

After a review of the empirical literature, a theoretical portion of the discussion highlights two theories—social support theory (SST) and critical race theory (CRT)—as appropriate explanations for both (a) the historical underrepresentation of Black males in higher education, and (b) incremental improvements in the representation of Black males in higher education as observed over the past three to four decades.

Social support is considered a middle range theory that focuses on relationships and the interactions within those relationships. The importance of social relationships in contributing to health and well-being has been the focus of research by scientists and practitioners across a large number of social, behavioral, medical, and nursing disciplines. Social support is often used in a broad sense, usually referring to any process through which social relationships might enhance health and well-being. However, there is a lack of consensus on the conceptualization and definition of social support (Leahy-Warren, 2014).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged as an identity-conscious intervention within critical legal studies and has subsequently developed an interdisciplinary presence. We draw upon CRT perspectives to articulate five core ideas for a *Critical Race Psychology* (CRP). CRT perspectives (1) approach racism as a systemic force embedded in everyday society (rather than a problem of individual bias); (2) illuminate how ideologies of neoliberal individualism (e.g., merit, choice) often reflect and reproduce racial domination; (3) identify interest convergence as the typical source of broad-based support for reparative action; (4) emphasize *possessive investment* in privileged identities and identity-infused realities that reproduce racial domination; and (5) propose practices of counter-storytelling to reveal and contest identity-infused bases of

everyday society. In summary, we propose a CRP that consider race not as one domain (among many) for psychological investigation but instead as a conceptual lens through which to analyze all of psychological science (Salter & Adams, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

This study was conducted based on the following assumptions about the research participants and process. The first assumption was that faculty objectively and to the best of their ability, share the experiences of their career journeys to executive leadership positions in PWIs. The second assumption was that faculty explicitly described obstacles encountered, and support received, during their pursuit of executive leadership roles PWIs. The third assumption was that the results from this study will encourage African American men to pursue executive leadership roles in PWIs.

The likelihood of the researcher's bias being a member of the university community in the data collection process may be a potential limitation. Guarded, inadequate, or non-response from the participants to questions asked due to the sensitive nature of their positions may also be a potential limitation. Another potential limitation to this study was that these leaders' experiences (obstacles or support received) may not adequately answer the research questions.

The scope of this research was be limited to African American men in executive leadership positions at PWIs in the United States. I focused on Black men who work at PWIs in the United States. This allowed the researcher to observe any changes or ideologies these men worked in various institutions across the country.

Rationale and Significance

This study is incredibly relevant to society and significant in its applicability to various

facets of society (Hofstede, 2011). The expansion of the research on African American men as executive leaders in PWIs is relevant to the entire population, but more so to minority populations as a means of advancement into higher roles within an organization and more roles in higher education. This study could influence the following issues: transformative leadership, social justice, and equity.

Social Justice

The recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has made it impossible for anyone to ignore the existence of White privilege when the situation is thoroughly examined (Joubert & Lensmire, 2021). This study illuminated the inherent privilege and inequality in the opportunities for certain individuals based solely on race. Through this illumination, a change plan can be created to address the need for minority inclusion in staff and educators within the realm of higher education and the creation of minority role models for future educators (Bhopal, 2017).

Transformative Leadership

This type of leadership involves the understanding and enhancement of attitudes, motives, and performance to enact change (Arday, 2018). In terms of this study, leadership within the institution can strive to create a more balanced ratio of instructors and staff based on racial factors (Arday, 2018). In other words, the proportion of Caucasian to African American employees should be more balanced through leaderships' commitment to bridging the racial recruitment gap. Many of the administrative positions, including provost/chief academic officers and college and university presidents, were held by Whites (Bichsel et al., 2019). Only 7.9% of college and university presidents were Black (Espinosa et al., 2019, p. 266), 83% of the male college and university presidents were White, while 7.6% of them were Black. This study

interviewed African American men who currently held executive positions in PWIs to gain insight into their experiences in attaining these positions and how their achievements can inspire other African American men who desire such roles.

Equity

Equity focuses on the impartialness and fairness given to members of society within various groups (Sleeter, 2017). In other words, equity focuses on the fairness and justice of policies and laws within a society to neither grant privilege nor hindrance to a person or group of people in a shared sector within that society. This is not to be confused with equality, as representation is not equal but proportional to the population ratios (Sleeter, 2017). For example, a wealthy, mostly White neighborhood in Washington, DC, (DC) has three bus stops, one Metro station, and plenty of safe sidewalks for walking. In comparison, a few miles away in a DC neighborhood with mostly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE) community members, there are zero bus stops, unsafe sidewalks that are cracked and too curvy, and the closest Metro station is over a mile away. The local DC transportation department allocates funds in their budget to go toward repairing sidewalks in the BIPOC neighborhood, installs a bus stop in the neighborhood, and discusses plans to implement a Metro station less than half a mile away from the neighborhood or to build a station within the neighborhood itself. Because the predominantly White neighborhood already has access to safe, reliable transportation methods, this year's funds do not get allocated there because it does not need transportation repairs or new transportation routes. All citizens in Washington, DC, regardless of economic status or race, should receive the necessities to ensure that they are treated fairly to achieve equity for generations to come.

Summary

There is a crucial need for additional research on the effects and perceptions of the phenomenon of African American males in executive leadership positions at PWIs of higher education. This disparity or racial disproportion can only be corrected through awareness of the disproportion within society and the PWI. While there may not be an immediate correction, further studies can help to illuminate the situation and add to its validation to incite a reaction and transformation within the organization and society. This results in the creation of both challenges and opportunities for African American male leaders in an institution of higher education.

This chapter gave a broad introduction to the phenomenon to be studied. It defined keywords used in the study and explained the purpose and problem statement of the study. The study answered the research questions through the lenses of the social support theory (SST) and the critical race theory (CRT). Assumptions, anticipated limitations, and the scope of this research were also discussed. Lastly, Chapter 1 expounded on the rationale and significance of the study, highlighting three issues (social justice, transformational leadership, equity) that the study's results can positively influence.

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature and provides details of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks on which this study is based. The methodology, sampling technique, data collection, and analysis are explained in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presented this study's data. Chapter 5 concluded this study.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education has long been held as a key to success in American society by Black leaders, families, and civic organizations, but the years between the 1940s and the 1970s were little short of revolutionary in fostering attainment among African Americans (Ervin & Sheer, 2016). Growth is equally slow for Black representation in academic leadership. Henry Martin Freeman became the first Black college president in 1856 (at Avery College). In 1874, Patrick Francis Healy became the first Black academic named president of a predominantly White school, Georgetown University. It took nearly a century for Clifton R. Wharton Jr. to become the second Black president of a mostly White university, Michigan State University, in 1969 (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2022). As colleges and universities began to revamp recruiting practices to attract more minority students, the notion that educational obtainment leads to economic stability holds more weight now than ever before. Today the focus is shifting toward the demographic composition of the faculty. As college students become more diverse, the staff and administration remain largely White. For example, a Pew Research Study found that 20% of college students were Latino/Hispanic, compared with just 5% of faculty. Forty-five percent of undergraduate students were members of minority groups, compared with only 24% of faculty (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2021).

The reviewed literature, both classical and contemporary, provides evidence that disparities exist within the leadership ranks of American higher education. This literature review provides a comprehensive appraisal of previous works and lends credibility to the necessity of this present study (Berg & Lune, 2012; Creswell, 2005). The first section of the literature review

includes historical information on the emergence of African Americans in higher education. Topics include the creation of African American colleges and universities, desegregation of PWIs, and hiring of Black faculty and staff at White institutions.

The second section of this literature review connects the present study to contemporary leadership theories. These theories are used today in understanding how leadership is carried out in higher education. The section comprises topics on traditional leadership structure, leadership theories, leadership approaches, gender differences, racial perceptions, and transformational leadership. The third section reviews findings related to current trends in higher education. Topics involve demographic changes, emerging technologies, and educational programs. Poverty and economic disparity, racial diversity among higher education administration, and barriers to the career advancement of African Americans are the topics discussed in the fourth section. Lastly, the fifth section presents models and findings of earlier studies that examine African American leadership in higher education settings. Studies presented in this section include the Glenn study, the Martin study, and the Wardell study.

Conceptual Framework

The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). And as we begin to navigate through this theory, five major components are noted: (1) the notion that racism is ordinary and not aberrational; (2) the idea of an interest convergence; (3) the social construction of race; (4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling; (5) the notion that Whites have been recipients of civil rights legislation. This was be used a catalyst throughout my research to define and understand the purpose and significance

of the research. The following will discuss each component further.

Racism Is Ordinary and Not Aberrational

Racism's ordinariness is attributed to the level of difficulty that addressing and acknowledging racism holds. This is only worsening as color-blind conceptions of equality that are the forefront of our history's policies insist on treatment that is the same across the board for all actors (Delgado et al., 2017). We must understand that race must be learned through the social constructs of men and women throughout history. Throughout the history of the United States, people of color have always been at a disadvantage when it comes to educational and employment opportunities, hence historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were created to ensure that higher education was and could be achieved by Blacks.

Interest Convergence

David Bell stated that interest convergence is when the rights of Black people only advance when they converge with the interests of White people (Hoag, 2020). The segments of the population this is concerned or focused with are the self-interest of the elite and working-class Whites. The signature example is *Brown v. Board of Education*, which happened because it advanced White interests. Schools and universities are natural sites to observe interest convergence because inequitable access to quality education ensures White social advantage. However, recent dispatches from around the country might lead some to believe that Black interests are not only ascendant on college campuses but are oppressive (Shih, 2017).

Social Construction of Race

When we say race is a social construct, simply put, it is a human-invented classification system. It was invented to define physical differences between people but has more often been

used as a tool for oppression and violence (Center for Health, 2017). The social construction of race is fundamentally a story of power, in which those in positions of political, economic, and social authority create and recreate categories of difference and assign meaning and value based on those categories to maintain and naturalize their own dominance.

Storytelling and Counter Storytelling

As it relates to CRT, this method *reexamines America's historical record* to replace narratives that only reflect the majority perspective with those that include the perspectives and lived experiences of minority populations (Castelli, 2022). Counter storytelling is used to magnify the stories, experiences, narratives, and truths of underprivileged communities. As we begin to understand and cultivate future leaders, their stories, and their experiences will only help and assist in the changes needed in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Social support is considered a middle range theory that focuses on relationships and the interactions within those relationships (Leahy-Warren, 2014). The necessity for the people of color to be surround by their peers for support allows them to be their true authentic self. Many people of color lose themselves, or what many are calling the imposter syndrome, to fit in with their White counterparts. Through this research, we will understand how many relationships with the Black community either helped or hindered men of color to be at the level of success in higher education.

Relationship Focused

Relationships can positively or negatively affect your satisfaction with the job, and your ability to advance and gain recognition for your achievement (Garfinkle, 2022). Cultivating

relationships is key in ensuring the success of any business, and it reflects the workplace. People of color generally receive microaggressions (intentional or non-intentionally) when starting a new job. Many organizations offer BIPOC groups as a means of support for faculty and staff of color. These groups help facilitate conversations and create action plans to ensure equality in the workplace.

Relationship Interactions

Despite the popularity of mobile communication and social networks, people are more socially isolated than ever before (Cacioppo et al., 2015). Creating spaces at PWIs for BIPOC people combats the loneliness one may feel when entering a space, they have never walked. BIPOC people are great at empathy, which is defined as the ability and propensity to share in and understand others' experiences vicariously (Decety & Cowell, 2014). Empathy can also be described as an emotional reaction that stems from another's emotional state and is congruent with that state (Batson, 2009).

History of African American Higher Education

African American collegiate education began in the 19th century in Pennsylvania with the founding of Cheyney College in 1837 (Preer, 2012). Following the end of the American Civil War, the abolition of slavery brought a new focus on African Americans in the South. Below the Mason-Dixon Line, institutions such as Morehouse College, Spelman College, Fisk University, Hampton University, Talladega College, Howard University, and Tuskegee Institute developed into the leading academic study centers for African American men and women (Adams, 2001).

Creation of African American Colleges and Universities

In 1890, the U.S. government intervened in the education of African Americans

(Marszalek 2006, p. 26). In contrast to the early church-based institutions, the passage of the second Morrill Act established public colleges for African Americans (Historical Origins of HBCUs, 2010). These academies produced many of the classical African American community leaders and propelled the first wave of Blacks into higher education administration.

HBCUs were founded out of racial prejudice and segregation, as most mainstream institutions refused admission to African American students (Stefon, 2022). Due to the need for more post-secondary education centers for African Americans, the number of predominately Black institutions had risen to 130 by the 1960s (Ester & Strayhorn, 2013). According to Ester and Strayhorn (2013), many of these academies were designated as land-grant institutions, and thus focused primarily on agricultural study and industrial work. Social activists such as W. E. B Du Bois and educational pioneers such as Booker T. Washington voiced differing opinions on whether African Americans should obtain liberal arts educations or skills in industrial professions. Despite their differing views on education, these two men led the movement for the education of Blacks across the United States (Historical Origins of HBCUs, 2010).

Desegregation of Predominately White Institutions

In the mid-20th century, the national focus shifted to equal rights for people of color (Archbold & Walker, 2018). Beginning with the 1954 fight to end segregation in public schools, African Americans began to call for fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of American culture. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, became the first White institution to desegregate (Padgett, 2003). From 1954 to 1964, Spring Hill was the only fully desegregated institution in the South (Padgett, 2003). Media attention did not accompany the voluntary integration of Spring Hill

College (AAAED, 2022) Unlike larger public schools, Spring Hill was a small private Catholic institution. For this reason, the integration did not have an impact on regional or national policies (Padgett, 2003).

The most highly publicized integration of a PWI of higher education occurred at the University of Alabama (Muir & McGlamery, 1984). Following an executive order from President John F. Kennedy to desegregate all public schools, Alabama Governor George C. Wallace made his infamous act of defiance by blocking two African American students from enrolling at the all-White southern campus. According to Mokrzycki (2012), Wallace's stand at the schoolhouse door became the definitive representation of White resistance to equality for African Americans. Higher education leaders across the country slowly began the arduous process of not only integrating African Americans into mainstream institutions but preserving the existing social order of those PWIs (Mokrzycki, 2012).

Hiring of Black Faculty and Staff at White Institutions

Affirmative action laws were enacted to bring about a balanced distribution of opportunity among people of various races and ethnic backgrounds (AAAED, 2022). The premise of affirmative action was to increase active participation by minorities who had traditionally been systematically discriminated against. With the influx of minority students, institutions were prompted to increase minority faculty representation (Murju & Solomos, 2015). According to Heggins (2004), many PWIs were actively recruiting African American faculty to account for the rise in Black student populations and the introduction of African American studies programs.

Unfortunately, these efforts have not led to an equitable ratio of African American

administrators and faculty in correlation to the minority composition of campus populations (Smedley et al., 2013). Chang (2005) mentioned that from 1997 to 2002, the bulk of mainstream American institutions increased the admission of minority students without increasing the number of Black administrative leaders. Also, a 2009 study by the National Center of Education Statistics reported that African Americans only comprised 7% of the faculty at American institutions, with 79% represented by White professionals (Snyder & Dillow, 2012, p. 378).

According to Long (2003), the subject of affirmative action in higher education is of great importance due to the changing demographics of the United States. Many social advocates have expressed support for affirmative action legislation because of the provisions granted to minority students wishing to enter mainstream institutions and the professionals desiring to gain employment (Roach, 2003).

Administrative Governance, Structure, and Personnel

In American colleges and universities, the various executive-level administrative leadership roles include but are not limited to the chancellor, president, vice-president, and provost. Additional executive leadership roles are dean, associate dean, program chair, and department director. Executive roles are also spread across multiple functional areas: finance, operations, legal services, student affairs, academic affairs, human resources, recruitment, advancement, communications, and athletics. An executive or team of executives leads each functional area. "Academic leaders constitute the positions that traditionally oversee the academic mission of the institution, usually selected from or concurrently holding faculty rank. Student affairs practitioners traditionally oversee academic support services for learning out of the classroom" (Ward & Wolf-Wendell, 2009, p. 11).

Traditional Leadership Structure

Most American institutions of higher education operate on a trustee governance model. Trakman (2008) stated that "Trustee governance is not directly concerned with stakeholder representation in governance. It refers to the manner of governance, specifically, governance through a 'trust' relationship between a trustee board that acts in trust for, and on behalf of, trust beneficiaries" (p. 71). In non-profit institutions, both public and private, a board of trustees is responsible for setting policies and protecting core values. The board of trustees often comprises notable alumni of each institution and is chaired by the state governor in many publicly funded institutions. Due to the corporate nature of for-profit institutions, a board of directors is responsible for setting organizational policy and promoting the institutional mission. In both settings, the board of trustees/directors recruits, interviews, and appoints the president of the college. Similarly, a compensation committee made up of board members determines an appropriate compensation package for the newly appointed leader.

As the primary leader of the institution, the president acts as the chief executive officer and has authority over the operational, fiscal, and academic success of the academy. In some institutions, mostly larger ones, the title of chancellor may be used interchangeably for the role of president. However, in many institutions, the chancellor may be an individual who has the leadership of a college or university system. In this instance, the chancellor may oversee multiple campuses (some autonomous) and campus presidents. Most college presidents are promoted through the faculty ranks to achieve the chief executive officer role (Wardell, 2010). Classic requirements for the president's office comprise conferral of a terminal degree, a minimum of five to 10 years as a senior-level administrator in a college or professional setting, teaching

experience at the college level, experience in academic research, and experience in charitable giving (Teach.com, 2022). Of these requirements, previous experience in senior-level administration and charitable giving are widely regarded as the most important qualifications vetted during the selection process.

In most institutions of higher education, the title of vice-president is reserved for senior-level administrators who lead various functional units of the college and are members of the president's cabinet. Typical administrators who hold this title include the vice president of academic affairs, vice president of student affairs, vice president of organizational operations, and vice president of advancement. The vice president of academic affairs is usually a title held concurrently by the provost of the institution. The provost/vice president of academic affairs heads the functional unit that oversees all academic programs of the college. Accreditation, research initiatives, admissions, enrollment, student financial services, scholarships, and faculty development all fall under the umbrella of academic affairs. Most organizations list the provost/vice president of academic affairs as the person directly responsible for leading the institution during the absence or period of incapacitation of the president.

The vice president of organizational operations heads the functional unit that oversees the day-to-day management of the college and its fiscal affairs. Departments such as finance, public safety, human resources, and facilities are usually supervised by the chief of organizational operations.The vice president of student affairs heads the functional unit that consists of career services, housing, student media, recreation, student government, Greek-letter organizations, health services, community services, internships, and campus social activities. Lastly, the vice president of advancement heads the functional unit that consists of donor relations and charitable

giving, alumni affairs, marketing and public relations, governmental relations and lobbying, and event management.

Leadership Theories

The study of leadership, leadership theories, and leadership traits has evolved since the early 20th century. Defined as a process, leadership involves the influence of an individual on a group to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2013). As early as 1927, leadership had begun to evolve from an intangible idea into a concrete theory. Northouse (2013) explained that traits became the focus of leadership theory in the 1930s, followed by the group approach in the 1940s.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), the five practices of exemplary leaders are (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. The main theories of leadership are (a) trait theory, (b) situational leadership, (c) transactional leadership, and (d) transformational leadership. Cragg and Spurgeon (2007) explained that the trait theory holds that leaders are born rather than molded through life experiences. Mental capacity and personality are identified as characteristics that are instinctively intrinsic to natural-born leaders. The situational leadership approach is based upon the premise that each situation is different and thus requires varying styles and manners of leadership (Northouse, 2013).

According to Cragg and Spurgeon (2007), the transactional leadership approach requires mutual exchange between the leader and the follower for modified performance. Transactional leadership is often cited as the most all-encompassing approach of the major leadership theories. Northouse (2013) noted transformational leadership as one of the most popular leadership approaches. Bass (1985) declared that empowerment is the key element a leader utilizes to

inspire a shared vision, trust, and common values. "Transformational leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (Northouse, 2013, p. 186).

Leadership Approaches

Gender preferences regarding leadership may impact the overall efficiency of the leader (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Opinions, style preferences, and methods of implementation vary greatly depending upon gender. Female leaders reportedly prefer transformational leadership (Barry & Shapiro, 1992), while male leaders are more prone to utilize masculine leadership styles (Cann & Siegfried, 1990). Eagly and Johnson (1990) suggest that there exists only slight difference between the feminine and masculine leadership style. The organizational setting compels the feminine leaders to be more democratic and participative in approach while masculine leaders are often demonstrating autocratic behavior. Rosener (1990) and Eagly et al., (2003) argued that masculine leaders are often using „transactional" leadership style whereas feminine leaders are demonstrating „transformational" style of leadership. Peters et al. (2004) explain that there is a disproportionate representation of men and women in leadership roles, with men drastically out-matching women. This disparity may cause women to assume that the likelihood of obtaining a leadership position is relatively minute (Peters et al., 2004).

Perceptions of leadership based upon race have a major impact on the effectiveness of leaders. Many of these perceptions contribute to creating barriers for African Americans striving to obtain leadership positions. According to Cook and Glass (2013), these barriers comprise discrimination, bias, racial tokenism, lack of quality mentoring, exclusion from social and informational networks, and downgrading. These barriers contribute to the methodical

underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership and administration positions (Cook & Glass, 2013).

Changes and Current Trends in Higher Education

The American higher education industry and the institutions that provide such services have seen dramatic shifts in demographics, demand for programs of study, and methods of course instruction (Baum et al., 2013). Technology is constantly changing, and with it, the way educational instruction is offered. Long (2013) explained that digital online courses have become the preferred alternative to traditional classroom instruction. The internet has opened the door to students of all races, ethnicities, financial backgrounds, and social pedigrees. Massive online open courses have allowed millions of students from around the globe to interact, interface, and share intellectual information (Long, 2013). Due to virtual platforms, the walls of the traditional college campus are slowly disappearing.

Demographic Changes

In terms of demographics, between 2000 and 2010, total Black undergraduate enrollment increased by 73% (from 1.5 million students to 2.7 million: PNPI, 2022). However, between 2009 and 2019, the number of Black undergraduates who enrolled right after high school decreased from 2.5 million students to 2.1 million students. Of the 16.6 million total undergraduate students enrolled in the fall of 2019, Black students made up 2.1 million students of the undergraduate population (12.7%) but they were not equally represented at different institution types. Black students made up 12% of the student population at four-year public institutions, 13% of the student population at four-year private nonprofit institutions, and 29% of the student population at four-year private for-profit institutions. Only 15% of Black students

attended a highly selective institution, and only 8% of Black students attended an elite research university (PNPI, 2021).

The change in campus demographics, coupled with an increase in the elderly population of the United States, has subsequently caused a shift in the demand for specific campus degree programs (Fry, 2021). Technical fields have increased enrollment numbers, while many traditional liberal arts programs have reduced faculty and staff. Health care programs have seen the largest increase in student demand. Due to an international shortage of nurses, many students have chosen to enter the health care field (Hickey et al., 2012). The increase in demand directly correlates with the increased interest of minority students. However, despite the current trend, over 80% of all licensed registered nurses are White (Mareno & Hart, 2014, p. 83). Simple classroom practices that help faculty bond with students in a "personable and empathic manner" (Cuseo, 2018, p. 93) include the following: learning students' names and using them, timely and constructive assignment feedback (Kim & Sax, 2014), and appropriate faculty disclosures about their own experiences (Cuseo, 2018). These suggestions, and authentic faculty engagement and support of students, are critical to students' academic success in all disciplines (Ingraham et al., 2018). Success markers for students that can be influenced by positive interactions with faculty include greater academic life satisfaction, lower dropout rates, improved group communication skills, and greater intellectual and personal development.

Socio-Economic Factors in Higher Education

Socio-economic factors are central to the rate of college admission, retention, and completion among people of color, primarily African Americans (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). African Americans have historically suffered from institutional segregation and laws crafted to

hinder people of color from pursuing education at the post-secondary level. Since the landmark ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas, African Americans have made strides to gain *equal footing* in terms of educational attainment and social status.

Although racial segregation has been legally abolished in the United States, there remains a society overwhelmingly separated by race and class systems (Rist, 1996). This racial separation is heavily prevalent within the public-school systems that were judicially integrated more than half a century ago. Likewise, American neighborhoods show a stark contrast today to the Civil Rights Movement of yesteryears. Rist (1996) stated, "Schools reflect the neighborhoods and communities in which they are situated. Racial isolation, reinforced by socio-economic isolation, defines the political geography of the contemporary United States" (p. 32).

Poverty and Economic Disparity

Academic success at the earliest levels of education tends to forecast future success at both the secondary and post-secondary levels (Mishook et al., 2012). High levels of poverty and fewer resources are factors that continue to erode the quality of education for African American school-aged children. Rist (1996) mentioned that in 1993, nearly 40% of all welfare recipients were Black. That same year, Hispanics accounted for almost 20% of all welfare receipts, which totaled a near 60% majority for people of color (p. 33). Rist further stated that the effects of poverty and unemployment directly correlate to the subpar academic achievement of Black school-aged children. "There is no inherent reason that Black children's performances in school would not equal White children's – were Black children's life circumstances such that they had no higher rates of poverty, no higher rates of violence facing themselves" (p. 34).

Many Black students who succeed at the primary and secondary levels proceed to apply

and enroll in colleges and universities across the country (Anderson et al., 2021). For some young Black students, primarily from middle-class families, the pursuit of college is often promoted within the home and usually by one or both parents who have earned a college degree. However, for most young Blacks, primarily from low-income families, their ascent to college is a pioneering journey, as many are often first-generation students. These first- and second-generation Black students often enter college as economically or educationally challenged students, which is a factor that significantly diminishes persistence, graduation, post-graduate study, and career earning potential (Walpole, 2007).

Economic disadvantages, a staple within the urban Black community, significantly impact educational attainment (Rothstein, 2014). Students from lower-income families are less likely to complete college within a six-year time frame and attend graduate school within nine years of enrolling in an undergraduate study, compared to students from middle- to high-income families (Walpole, 2007). The cost of tuition and living expenses associated with attending college is a factor that decreases the rate of persistence for economically challenged students; this is due to the reliance on and sometimes inadequacy of financial aid packages (Walpole, 2007). In addition, compared to second-generation college students, first-generation students are 50% less likely to obtain a Baccalaureate degree in four years, opting to receive a certificate or Associate degree instead (p. 51).

According to Walpole (2007), students with lower socio-economic status are more likely to study vocational trades while in college. In contrast, students with higher socio-economic status are more likely to pursue liberal arts degrees. As a result of this stark difference in fields of study, students who choose vocational majors are less likely to attend graduate school as

opposed to their liberal arts degree-holding counterparts. For this reason, students with higher socio-economic status continuously earn more than students who come from lower-income families. "The disproportionate graduate school attendance by liberal arts majors, who tended to have higher socio-economic status, positioned those students in the long-term for higher-status, higher-paying positions than students majoring in vocational fields" (Walpole, 2007, p. 54).

Racial Diversity among Higher Education Administrators

According to Chun and Evans (2009), the word *diversity* refers to demographical characteristics that differentiate groups of individuals. These characteristics include race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation. As melting pots of diversity, colleges and universities serve as incubators of social change, tolerance, and cultural exchange. Enrollment of minorities continues to increase among the nation's largest institutions, which directly correlates to the cultural shift happening across the country. This shift in minority enrollment is the immediate result of the expansion of higher education and the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. During this period, federal and state laws were implemented to enhance the participation and representation of racial and ethnic minorities (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006).

Although enrollment of minority students, particularly African Americans, has increased over the past half-century, the representation of Blacks in higher education administration has remained relatively unchanged and grossly disproportionate (NCES, 2021). In 2016, White students represented just over half of all undergraduate students in 2016. While the student body has increasingly become more diverse, the college and university faculty body remain largely White. Among the over 700,000 full-time faculty employed by higher education institutions in

fall 2016, 73.2% were White, 21.1% were faculty of color, 3.1% were international, and 2.6% were of unknown racial and ethnic backgrounds (ACE, 2016). As noted previously, the traditional pathway to advancement into administrative roles begins at the faculty level. Presidents, provosts, deans, and department chairs are regularly promoted from within the faculty ranks. However, the disparate ratio of Blacks to Whites in the academy perpetuates the lagging promotion of African Americans to administrative duties (Hanks et al., 2018). According to Chun and Evans (2009), in both two-year and four-year colleges combined, Blacks only account for 5.2% of all full-time faculty positions and only 3.6% of ranked positions in research universities (p. 2). In addition, the role of the chief academic officer or provost is overwhelmingly held by Whites and comprises more than 90% of all positions (p. 2). "Fewer than 10% of chief academic officers are minorities" (p. 2). As the traditional passageway to the office of president, the paltry number of minorities who hold the title of chief academic officer indicates that the disparity between the number of Whites and Blacks promoted to lead institutions may remain relatively unchanged. This observation may be suggestive of a glass ceiling effect on the promotion of African Americans into administrative leadership positions in PWIs.

Ward and Wolf-Wendell (2009) suggested that the overall growth of diversity in higher education administration, both racial and ethnic, will be significantly challenged over the next three decades. The minimal presence of Blacks as full-time faculty and tenured administrators suggests that more research needs to be done to understand the reasons why (Espinosa et al., 2019). Although White undergraduates represented only 52% of the student body in 2016, almost 75% of full-time faculty were White. In public four-year institutions, only 5.1% of

345,000 full-time faculty were Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As colleges have succeeded in diversifying their student populations, they have failed at diversifying their administrative office suites. The considerable increase in African American student populations, coupled with the stagnant recruitment and appointment of African American administrators, has led to the present institutional inequality.

Barriers to Career Advancement for African Americans

Ramey (1995) conducted a study on the barriers affecting the advancement of African American women in positions of higher education administration. After compiling responses from 80 Black female senior-level administrators from 129 California institutions, the researcher found the following barriers impeding advancement: racism, sexism, family issues, and the perception of incompetence. As a result of these barriers, Black female administrators utilized mentors, role models, and leadership training programs to better position themselves for advancement (Jackson, 2004).

In a later study by Lindsay (1999), four respondents—three presidents and one provost—listed racism, sexism, and socio-economic disparity as barriers to career advancement. The research of Rolle et al. (2000) similarly studied the professional career experiences of Black administrators at PWIs located in the southeast United States. This study researched the experiences of eight Black administrators—six college presidents and two associate chancellors. The researchers concluded that the administrative experience is structured by race and that those wishing to ascend the ivory tower must understand the politics of higher education administration (Jackson, 2004).

Studies of African American Leadership in Higher Education Settings

Research on African American leadership in higher education was limited in breadth and scope (Jackson, 2004). To diminish this lack of exploration on the subject, a small number of scholars have completed research on the topic. These studies have attempted to ascertain the reasons for the limited appointment of African Americans to leadership positions at higher education institutions. The studies reviewed here are Glenn (2010), Martin (2013), and Wardell (2010).

Study of African American Leadership in Higher Education

Glenn's (2010) study, "A Qualitative Ethnographic Study of African American Leadership in Higher Education," focused on identifying the cause of the lack of African American leaders in higher education institutions. The researcher asserted that there was an unequivocal lack of Black administrators employed in higher education. Due to the lack of research on the subject, Glenn (2010) chose a qualitative approach, which permitted a natural discovery of the true meaning of a specific human experience. The author chose to utilize the ethnographic approach to this study to save time without sacrificing the quality of the research.

Glenn (2010) selected five African American men and five African American women from the mid-Atlantic states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Criteria for selection were the following: (a) be a person of African descent, (b) hold an executive-level position as a higher education administrator, and (c) hold an administrative position at a PWI located in the mid-Atlantic states. The study utilized an ethnographic researcher-designed interview guide to capture the data needed to answer the research questions. The first part of each interview requested demographic data such as age, ethnicity, gender, academic credentials, and work

history. The interviews included five sections of inquiries. The questions centered on professional, academic, and educational leadership experiences. The fourth section was about their experiences with minorities in educational administration, while the fifth focused on hindrances to promotion in educational administration (Glenn, 2010).

Following analysis of the data, the author found the following recurring themes related to obstacles to African American administrators: lack of Black representation, lack of Black mentors, lack of emphasis on diversity, inadequate hiring pools, and racial barriers (Glenn, 2010). Of the 10 participants, nine alluded to a lack of Black administrators as a *widening gap* in the industry. Participants expressed feelings that African Americans were not proportionately represented on college campuses. Participants reported that hiring managers overlooked African Americans when filling administrative positions. The author found that many of the participants believed that there were prevalent racial barriers hindering African Americans from moving into leadership positions. In addition, a majority expressed feelings that their institutions neither valued nor adequately supported diversity.

African American Leadership in Urban Institutions of Higher Education

Martin's (2013) study, "African American Leadership in Urban Institutions of Higher Education: A Case Narrative of the Social, Cultural, and Institutional Impact of an Individual Leader at a Historically White Institution," utilized a qualitative approach to examine African American leadership in higher education through the theory of the African philosophy of Ubuntu. The researcher examined the complex nature of Black leadership in academia and the deficiency of mainstream leadership theories in relation to African Americans in higher education.

Eleven participants were selected from a broad array of candidates comprised of family members, direct subordinates, employee supervisors, university officials, and community leaders. The pool of participants consisted of two family members, one former supervisor, three direct subordinates, two colleagues, one community leader, and two former students. Participants ranged from age 30 to 70 and were required to have a minimum of five years of experience with the research subject. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and their respective college to ensure confidentiality.

Martin (2013) compiled a list of 15 open-ended, semi-structured questions which provided discussions on topics related to African American leadership in higher education and within the community. Participants were instructed to complete a corresponding questionnaire to gather demographic information used to identify each participant. Participants also contributed personal artifacts that the author examined.

Following analysis of the data, Martin (2013) found classical leadership approaches limited in the understanding of African American culture. The author explained that classical leadership approaches are centered upon leader-centric models. The author suggested that the African philosophy of Ubuntu is more focused on Afro-centric styles of leadership. Idoniboye-Obu and Whetho (2013) identified the core principles of Ubuntu as communalism, interdependence, compassion, empathy, respect, dignity, equity, fairness, reciprocity, inclusivity, and a sense of shared destiny among peoples, as well as hospitality, four responsiveness, and harmony (Idoniboye-Obu & Whetho, 2013). In contrast to a Western perspective dominated by individualism, collectivism is viewed more favorably in African societies (Eaton & Louw, 2000). Implicationsfor further study of Ubuntu and African American

leadership in higher education were presented at the conclusion of the study.

Leadership Behaviors and Practices among Executive Women of Color in Higher Education

Wardell's (2010) study, "Leadership Behaviors and Practices among Executive Women of Color in Higher Education," utilized a quantitative approach to examine the behaviors and practices of minority women in positions of leadership at institutions of higher education. The study assessed and analyzed leadership practices based on Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). The study also investigated whether differences existed based upon years of service, education level, and exposure to leadership training programs.

Wardell (2010) selected 34 women of color who held positions in administrative leadership at four-year colleges and universities. The participants were women who had attended a national seminar either in the fall of 2006 or spring of 2007. These two national seminars were (a) The Third National Summit for Women of Color and (b) the National Association of Student Personnel Administrator (NASPA) regional and national conferences.

Wardell (2010) employed a quantitative research method to collect data to answer the study's research questions. The author obtained demographic information via a questionnaire and utilized Kouzes and Posner's LPI to study the various leadership approaches. The LPI gathered data concerning leadership practices based on the following factors: (a) modeling the way, (b) inspiring a shared vision, (c) challenging the process, (d) enabling others to act, and (e) encouraging the heart.

Following the completion of the study, Wardell (2010) found that women of color perceived those opportunities for the advancement of minority women in higher education were

limited. The author discovered that women of color in higher education perceived that they worked harder to achieve promotion to leadership positions than their White colleagues. Minority women in higher education expressed feelings that their White counterparts were uncomfortable with powerful and assertive women of color. The research showed that a lack of mentorship existed for women of color on college campuses. The author noted that advancement opportunities for women of color in higher education warrant further research (Wardell, 2010).

Summary

The literature review illustrated the perspectives of various scholars on the need for radical and expeditious reform of higher education leadership to include a more proportionate minority representation. Many colleges and universities do not possess an adequate number of minority administrators to lead the institution in recruitment, mentoring, and governance (Reyes & Rios, 2005). The literature review also included an examination of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that guided this study. The review discussed the evolution of African American higher education, leadership theories and approaches, and diversity in higher education administration.

There is evidence of a scarcity of African American leaders within the leadership ranks of higher education institutions. Although Blacks have traditionally led historical institutions of color, the gap between Whites and African Americans in mainstream institutions continues to widen. After a meticulous analysis of the literature, the need for future study and research regarding African American advancement into higher education leadership positions is apparent. Evidence presented in the literature shows that barriers exist and continue to hinder African Americans from ascending the *ivory tower*. Although many African Americans have risen to the

ranks of higher education administrative leadership, the upper echelon poorly mirrors the influx of racially and ethnically diverse students. Despite the few examples of career advancement, there is an unmistakable lack of research on African American advancement in higher education leadership and the obstacles that impede that advancement.

According to Glenn (2010), the continued lack of research contributes to the scarcity of diverse personnel and affects higher education in terms of recruiting and retaining quality minority educators and administrators. The present study has examined the relationship between African Americans in positions of higher education leadership and the obstacles that prevent many Blacks from obtaining those positions. The present study has also reviewed leadership theories and approaches related to African American culture and the African American perspective.

With the vast landscape of college campuses becoming more untraditional and more diverse, there is a dichotomy between the demographics and the representation of minority leadership. Research suggests that a glass ceiling effect exists in terms of advancement for African American educators (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). Although many colleges have taken steps to hire more minority employees, the gaping chasm between White and Black administrators continues to grow larger.

The three bodies of research examined in the literature review suggested that the barrier of systematic racism continues to be an issue at institutions across the country. The studies discovered that little effort had been made to implement mentoring programs for minorities in higher education leadership. Many of the participants in the various studies felt isolated from their White colleagues and had little hope for the advancement of diversity programs.

The literature and various bodies of work explored in this study point to a lack of research about African Americans in higher education administrative leadership. The current statistics show that African Americans are not adequately represented in executive leadership ranks. With the growing number of minority students on college campuses nationwide, the same representation is warranted in the upper echelon of command. Further research on this subject could help create and implement mentoring programs, professional development seminars, and other resources that could assist Blacks in their pursuit of leadership positions.

Over half a century removed from the Civil Rights Movement, minorities continue to be disparaged in terms of vocal and political representation in the most revered institutions in the country: our colleges and universities. The Afro-centric perspective is a unique mixture of heritage, oppression, and resiliency. This unique cultural perspective makes up the very fabric of our country's moral conscience and broadens the brushstroke of our country's racial canvas. Without reasonable representation in leadership positions in the ivory tower, the Black perspective will continue to remain unheard, undervalued, and misrepresented. Further study on this subject may aid the resolve of diversity and advancement for people of color. Chapter 3 describes the methodology utilized in this study.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

Recent literature suggests that the underrepresentation of African American administrators at PWIs of higher learning is not a new phenomenon (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). Most studies on Black men have examined the population's negative experiences at PWIs, concentrating on the impact of racial battleground fatigue (Smith et al., 2007). The problem is why so few African American men are in executive and administrative leadership roles at PWIs. This study explores the factors that encourage or inhibit African American men in their pursuit of executive leadership roles in PWIs.

The research questions are designed to understand the experiences of African American men currently holding executive leadership roles at PWIs and what they endured to reach this phase in their academic careers. The research questions were:

RQ1: What factors encouraged African American men on their career pathway to executive leadership roles at PWIs?

RQ2: What obstacles or inhibitions did African American men encounter while pursuing executive leadership roles at PWIs?

RQ3: How does identifying as an African American male at a PWI affect the leadership pathway in his career pursuits?

This qualitative study was an ethnographic research. Ethnographers seek to gain an emic perspective or the *native point of view* of a specific culture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The use of participant observation enables ethnographers to *immerse* themselves in a setting, thereby generating a rich understanding of social action and its subtleties in different contexts (Reeves et

al., 2008).

Site Information and Demographics/Settings

As of July 1, 2021, the population of the United States was approximately 331,893,745 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Regarding demographics, Whites comprise a majority (60.1%) of the nation's population, compared to the 13.4% representative of Blacks (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). In keeping with current changes in the U.S. landscape, Hispanic and Latino populations have outpaced that of African Americans by 23% between 2010 and 2020.

The population of this study composed of men who identify as Black or are of African American descent throughout the United States. The U.S. higher education system is broken down into regional accrediting organizations. The accrediting organizations identified in this directory are recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Recognition by CHEA affirms that the standards and processes of the accrediting organization are consistent with the academic quality, improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established, including the eligibility standard that the majority of institutions or programs each accredits are degree-granting (CHEA, 2022). Those agencies are Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC). While the schools and universities are in categories based on location, the representation of Black and African American men in executive leadership positions is low.

Participants/Sampling Method

This study employed a purposive sampling approach in the selection of participants. In purposive sampling, items are selected according to some logic or strategy, carefully but not randomly (Patton, 2014). Guidelines for purposive sampling are often provided in the context of choosing sites or data sources for predominately qualitative, interpretive research (e.g., Miles et al., 2014). Abebe et al. (2021) successfully utilized purposive sampling in their study to examine research data management practices in higher education institutions in Ethiopia. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select the actual sample unit of respondents. Eight first-generation universities and one science and technology university were established based on the purposive sampling technique. Three hundred ninety faculty members and 119 stakeholder respondents were selected based on simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The findings revealed that most faculty members used and produced spreadsheets and structured scientific and statistical research data formats.

Using purposive sampling, I selected six men who identify as Black or African American, who currently identify as director, associate vice president, president, chancellor, or executive director. Participants were limited to the dean, program chair, or department chair. Also, the selected participants are required to have at least a Master's degree or higher and a minimum of five years' experience in higher education leadership roles. According to the U.S. Census Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), those characteristics are needed for an authentic sampling population. This study collected demographic data and to find willing participants to interview to answer questions.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Interviews and ethnography provide the most fluid and in-depth ways of data collection. For this research, I employed semi-structured interviews and words from the culture where the participants are living their experiences. Conducting interviews were the instrument of choice as interviews allow a researcher to gain information from an informant, the interviewee. Interviews may be informal and non-standardized. Standardized interviews are highly structured and rigid, while non-standardized interviews are less structured and less stringent. Interviews are usually conducted in comfortable, neutral, and confidential settings to provide the informant with a relaxed yet reassuring atmosphere. Confidentiality is critical to the success and validity of the interviews; therefore, the interviewer must take the necessary precautions to secure the information. Pseudonyms were given to participants and their universities. Interviews were conducted via telephone or virtual technology in a secure location where no one can hear the discussions. Participants had the right to keep their cameras off if interviewing via the internet, while I kept mine on so that the participants could see that I was alone and in a secured location. Data collected via interviews were stored, transcribed, coded, and analyzed later on a password-protected laptop that only I could access. All data for this study will destroyed three years after this study has been concluded.

Data Collection

Face-to-face interviews produce detailed descriptions that can aid future researchers in evaluating the transferability of a study; also, interviews allow for triangulation through multiple sources of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Before the interview began, I explained the participant information sheet and asked participants if they have any questions about it and asked

for their verbal consent. Then participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. No personally identifiable information was used during the interview nor in the transcripts. Data Zoom® recordings were stored on a password-protected personal computer and deleted once the transcription process was completed. Otter.ai® and Zoom® transcription services were utilized. The master list of participant identities was maintained in a password-protected file on my computer until transcriptions were verified and later destroyed. Transcriptions were stored on my password protected personal computer. Contact information that was collected for the recruitment purposes, and any video/audio recordings were destroyed at the earliest opportunity during this study (e.g., after the member checking process was completed). All other study data were retained for a period of three years following the completion of the project.

During the Zoom® interviews, I was in my home, isolated and in a secured room where no one could hear the interview. Participants were in an isolated location of their choice. My camera and audio remained on. Participants made the decision to turn off their camera if they preferred but the audio remained throughout the interview for transcription.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of qualitative research, coding was done to assign shorthand terms and phrases to collected data to make that data readily available and accessible for retrieval (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study followed the six steps outlined by Creswell (2005) during the data analysis process. Creswell described an interactive approach to qualitative data analysis that utilizes several steps.

First, the data was organized and prepared for analysis by reviewing the audio recordings and handwritten field notes and transcribing them via a word processor (Creswell, 2005, p. 185).

Then I read through the transcripts several times to gain a general sense of the information and reflected on the overall meaning of the participants' ideas, personal feelings, and experiences (p. 185). Next, the data was coded by taking similar segments from the transcripts and grouping them into categories. The various categories were labeled with corresponding terms based on a combination of the actual words of the participants and research-based interpretation (p. 186).

After codes were assigned, themes and theme connections were identified, and then the emerging themes were analyzed and gathered for this study (Creswell, 2005, p. 189). Next, the analyzed data were represented in the research report by interlacing narrative passages to develop the findings from the participants' responses. Finally, I interpreted the more significant meaning of the data (p. 189). My personal experience as a college instructor was aided in understanding the participants' responses and experiences. The emerging themes were developed from the consciousness of personal biases and the participants' presentations of their own experiences and reflections.

To ensure that the information is accessible and understandable, I used a coding system to transform the qualitative data collected during the interview. Various displays include charts, graphs, and summaries of themes and phrases. These data displays enable assessment and analysis of the recurring patterns found in the data. After researching code-and-retrieve products, the NVivo® 11 software (QSR International, 2015) was selected as the analytic tool. The NVivo® 11 software provided a platform for data coding, data analysis, and the determination of any relevant themes among the outcomes. Data was imported, analyzed, categorized, and exported with NVivo® 11.

Limitation, Delimitations, Ethical Issues

The limitations of this study were the scheduling of the interviews and building a rapport with the participants that I interviewed. Given that I was talking with participants in leadership positions, the time to schedule the interviews and conduct them could be a conflict; however, I avoided that. Secondly, building rapport may be another potential challenge. As someone embarking on the higher education executive leadership landscape, not many men of color in the U.S. may want to participate or be interviewed.

Delimitations of this study focused on one race and gender. I assumed that each participant was truthful in their responses and stories concerning their pathways in higher education administration. Black men in higher education administration are not a homogenous group, and therefore, I hoped that the answers given in the study were varied and diverse. Black men think that other Black men experience similar struggles. However, I hope that this study highlights various pathways as well as efforts expended. Ultimately, shared lived experiences were documented in the emergent themes from the data analysis.

As with all research, ethical considerations were present throughout this study's duration. These ethical considerations were included integrity of the study, protection of the participants, justification of the selection process, and respect for the participants. To ensure the integrity of the research, the relationship fostered with each participant were one of mutual respect and a shared interest in the study. In addition, I went to great lengths to ensure the protection of the participants. That included following the aims and guidelines of the University of New England's (UNE) Institutional Review Board (IRB) not to place the participants at risk of harm to life, employment, or reputation.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness, or truth value of qualitative research, and transparency in the study's conduct are critical to the usefulness and integrity of the findings (Cope, 2014). This study outlined the need to research and study the lived experiences of Black or African American men who are currently working at PWI and how their race, ethnicity, and other factors have inhibited them from being promoted or seeking out executive leadership positions at PWIs.

Credibility

Credibility of the study, or the confidence in the truth of the study and therefore the findings, was the most important criterion (Polit & Beck, 2014). This concept was analogous to internal validity in quantitative research. Maxwell (2013) stated that this is the most impartial way to rule out any misinterpretation of how the participants responded to the questions. Also, member checks lend themselves to checking the researcher's bias and ensuring they do not influence the participants' responses. The participants of this study received a participant information sheet. In addition, they were asked before the interview began if they had any questions regarding the participant information sheet. Lastly, each participant received a transcribed copy of their interview to review for accuracy. Each participant had six days to review and contact the interviewer if answers needed to be changed. If the participants did not respond, then the participant accepted the interview as accurate.

Transferability

The nature of transferability, the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings, is different from other aspects of research in that readers determine how applicable the findings are to their situations (Polit & Beck, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described this

form of explanation as "enough description to contextualize the study such that readers can determine the extent to which their citations match the research context, and, hence, whether funds can be transferred" (p. 259). This study can be transferred to a variety of contexts and communities, such as person that identifies as African, Latino, Asian or Indigenous (ALANA) men and women who desire to be at the executive leadership level at PWI More research needs to be done on the lack of representation at executive leadership positions at PWIs by Latino and Asian men and women. For example, Latina/o executives in higher education were also described as scarce in college and university leadership, which was problematic since this resulted in Latina/o students having few role models on campus (Saenz et al., 2015). An unfortunate outcome of this lack of representation within these levels is the failure of higher-level administrators in recognizing the urgency to improve student success for Latina/o populations (Saenz et al., 2015). Bringing this research to underrepresented groups allowed a true diverse leadership at PWIs to actively engage the diaspora of cultures habiting PWI campuses.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). This study used semi-structured interviews (Appendix A), which followed an interview protocol for each interview to be done in the same method for each participant. The interview protocol allowed for future replication of the study. Also, for validity and reliability purposes, interviews were recorded, transcribed, and member checked by each participant.

Validity

The credibility of the study or confidence in the truth of the research (and consequently the results) is the essential criterion (Polit & Beck, 2014). As a quality assurance measure and to increase the trustworthiness of the present study's findings, the research utilized strategies recommended by several experts in qualitative research: triangulation, member checking, peer examination, external audit, clarifying researcher bias, and rich descriptive text. According to Bauer and Gaskell(2010), the strategy of triangulation is an institutionalization method of theoretical perspectives and practices, aiming to reduce the inconsistencies and contradictions of research. Convergence contributes to validity and reliability by providing a more trustworthy picture of the phenomenon (Patton, 2014). There are three fundamental reasons for employing mixed methods research: (i) illustration, (ii) convergent validation, and (iii) analytic density (or *richness*). Illustration reflects how to demonstrate the reality of research. For example, cold statistical data may be better interpreted or understood by interviews, giving more life to numbers. Convergent validation occurs when different data methods point to similar results, giving greater strength to the data collection and analysis. Lastly, analytic density materializes by the greater breadth and depth given the object of study, using mixed methods research (Fielding et al., 2012). The mixed-method research is appropriate, especially for investigating complex phenomena either because of the complexity of the field of study or the problem to be solved, or because of the need for multiple levels of perception (Flick et al., 2012).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also recommended an audit trail as a fourth validation method. Introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985), an audit trail provides a detailed description of the methods used to collect and analyze data. Dey (1993) explained that although it is not likely

that the meticulous research will be replicated, it is necessary to explain the methods used to arrive at the study's findings. The fifth technique, rich descriptive text, is provided in the narratives found in Chapter 4. Lastly, the concept of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is applied by future researchers. The researcher provided "sufficient descriptive data" (p. 298) for this study.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I explained the ethnographic research method utilized in this study. Participants were selected from the states outlined and identified by the New England Commission on Higher Education and the Middle States Higher Education Commission. Due to the large African American population within these states, I believe it provides me with an adequate number of potential participants. In addition, the high number of colleges and universities aided in the selection of African Americans actively employed in the higher education industry who work at PWIs. Chapter 3 detailed the steps that were taken to gain access to participants. The chapter also described the process of informed consent and outlined the actions to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Chapter 4 will be the presentation of the results of this study.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the factors that encourage or inhibit men who identify as Black or African American on their career pathway to executive leadership roles in PWIs. Recognizing and understanding their journey can identify and offer the necessary steps in cultivating realistic expectations of those in higher education to assist with correcting and creating pathways needed for men who identify as Black or African American to achieve such positions in executive leadership. The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources reported that in 2017 only 7% of higher education leadership administrative positions at PWIs were held by individuals who identified as Black. Despite numerous research that connects Black students' success to having Black administrators as role models in leadership, non-faculty Black male administrators are underrepresented in higher education (Bimper, 2017; Gardener, 2019; Ross et al., 2016). A qualitative phenomenological study research design was used to learn the lived experiences of six participants in this study. Qualitative phenomenology was applicable for this study since it allowed for highlighting lived experiences which involved perception, thought, memory, and emotion or feeling (Holloway & Gavin, 2017). Participants' experiences, perceptions, and ideas related to executive leadership advancement at PWIs were examined and presented.

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ1. What factors encouraged African American men on their career pathway to executive leadership roles at PWIs?

RQ2. What obstacles or inhibitions did African American men encounter while pursuing

executive leadership roles at PWIs?

RQ3. How does identifying as an African American male at a PWI affect the leadership

pathway in his career pursuits?

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is an overview of the data

collection and analysis. The second highlights the demographics of the participants with a brief

description of each. Gathering demographic information and writing the narrative for each

participant allowed for a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. The third and final

section highlights the themes and subthemes that emerged from the participant's lived

experiences.

Analysis Method

Data collection began after permission was obtained from the UNE's IRB. An email was

sent to all participants who expressed interest in my research. The email contained all pertinent

information regarding the requirements for participation in the study and the contact information

to communicate directly with the researcher to schedule an interview if they decided to

participate. Six potential participants responded and scheduled interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom® individually with each participant

at the time of their choosing. The interviews lasted an average of 54 minutes. Use of a semi-

structured protocol allowed me to ask a mix of basic demographic, structured, and open-ended

questions. The initial part of each interview gathered descriptive information regarding their

basic demographic information. The second part of the interview focused on personal work

experience. The third part of the interview focused on current and future aspirations as a leader

in higher education. The final section of the interview focused on the barriers and obstacles that

have affected the participant as a higher education professional. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using the transcription technology platform Otter.ai®. Transcripts were reviewed and a copy sent to each participant via email for member checking and to confirm the data was accurate (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2019). No revisions were made by any participant. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect their privacy.

All notes were transcribed and organized, and the data coded using the coding service NVivo®. The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) protocol was used to identify themes, patterns, and trends using a structured method developed by Moustakas (1994) for IPA qualitative data analysis (Alase, 2017). Data were analyzed through the process of descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual comments (Smith et al., 2009). According to Alase (2016), data coding requires three generic cycles. The first generic cycle is a process that gradually codes the sometime lengthy and convoluted responses by research participants into meaningful statements (or sentences). This process is meant to help researchers break down the responses into a format (i.e., block of sentences or statements) that the researchers can condense and manage. During this cycle, I was able to identify keywords and phrases. I also began to understand the core of each participant through his lived experience, noting how it contributes to my study.

The second generic cycle is another condensation process that further helped me with condensing what the research participants were expressing. Alase (2016) stated that "even though the first [and second] coding process[es] will break down the participants' responses into manageable format, the condensed coding will still accurately represent the thoughts and *lived experiences* of the participants" [emphasis added] (p. 88) More importantly, the third and final

generic cycle stage is what Alase (2016) described as the category phase (or stage). This stage allowed me to narrow down to extremely few words the responses of the participants. In this final stage, the category stage, I captured the central meaning of the research participants' *lived experiences* in one or two words. Alase (2016) stated that "utilizing the generic coding method allows the researcher to break down the participants' responses meticulously and methodologically without diminishing or misrepresenting the core meaning of their responses or *lived experiences*" (p. 88–89)**.** After coding was completed, five themes emerged: (1) Intersectionality, (2) Financial Distress, (3) Career Advancement, (4) Mentorship, and (5) Representation. These themes were present through the lived experiences of the participants on the barriers in higher education leadership. The following sections will present the results and findings from this study.

Presentation of Results and Findings

As a result, from coding, demographics and five other themes emerged. Each participant was given a pseudonym. The following will discuss the demographics for each participant and then the themes that emerged from coding.

Participants

There were six participants in this study. Each participant identified as a Black or African American male who was currently employed at a PWI in the United States. Each participant met the criteria that was established in Chapter 3. In addition to identifying as Black or African American, each participant had at least a Master's degree and currently holds a supervisory role at their current institution. To ensure that confidentiality of the participants was protected, pseudonyms were used. All participants agreed that any data collected would be audio-visual and

each participant was provided with a participant information sheet and gave verbal consent before the interview began.

Participant One

Participant One, age 52, held the title of Provost and Vice President for Learning for a college located in eastern United States. He has been working in higher education for 30 years. His highest degree obtained was Ph.D. His university is a public, non-profit institution.

Participant Two

Participant Two, age 31, held the title of Assistant Director, Residential Center for a university in northeastern United States. He has been working in higher education for six years. His highest degree obtained was a Master's degree. His university is a private, non-profit institution.

Participant Three

Participant Three, age 38, held the title of Director of Financial Aid for a university located in midwestern United States. He has been working in higher education for 16 years. His highest degree obtained was a Master's degree. His university is a public, non-profit institution.

Participant Four

Participant Four, age 36, held the title of Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer for a university in western United States. He has been working in higher education for 12 years. His highest degree obtained was Ph.D. His university is a public, non-profit institution.

Participant Five

Participant Five, age 37, held the title of Director of Diversity and Inclusion for a university in northeastern United States. He has been working in higher education for 12 years.

His highest degree obtained was a Master's degree. His university is a private, non-profit institution.

Participant Six

Participant Six, age 42, held the title of Director of Undergraduate Admissions for a university in eastern United States. He has been in higher education for 19 years. His highest degree obtained was a Master's degree. His university is a public, non-profit institution.

Theme One: Intersectionality

All participants agreed that the intersection of race and gender impacted their leadership advancement at predominately White institutions. All participants agreed that Blacks in higher education at PWIs are deemed to experiences as they relate to all things Black. I believe that intersectionality plays a pivotal point in our lives to tell our true stories on how being who we are, rather than based on race or gender, can cultivate our lived experiences. Participant One mentioned that being a Black male at his PWI, he was aware of Black stereotypes.

> Physicality how one shows up. I am a Black man of a certain age with locs, for many people, especially when you start thinking about senior level leadership, that is a challenge to deal with because there are many negative impressions of people with locs, period. Interesting enough, I have been asked in some workplace settings, if I was Rastafarian, which is one of the perceptions that, people with locs are Rastafarian, and while there may be Rastafarians who wear locs, locs are not inherently a Rastafarian adornment.

Participant Three spoke about being Black and the various stereotypes:

> You know being a Black male, you can be characterized as rough or direct, angry or all

these things that is really confidence. Throughout my last 16 years and where I am today, there are a lot of skills and a lot of things I had to learn to kind of soften my approach, just listen, and not necessarily always have to respond. Soft skills that I have to learn over time.

Participant Four spoke about how his career as a Black man in higher education was going to be challenging:

When I began, early in my career, it became clear that the only way that I would be successful in my career is if I were not as vocal or opinionated about things I found to be challenging about the institution. For example, I felt when I worked at my first institution, in Vermont, I had my fair share of students and colleagues who have, for all intents and purposes, micro aggression. I felt like my authority was undermined because I was Black. I have been micro aggressed as a Black when I was called the name of another Black colleague. I have had my credibility questioned.

Participant Five mentioned the following as it relates to intersectionality:

There have been times that I am sure others have experienced when you may still be very young in your career and the way in which you may be received or the way in which you are welcomed to the table or your idea is shared…that can be disparaged. It can make you feel as if you are second guessing yourself, or you share and someone else shares and that idea is great coming from someone else but not coming from you.

Participant Six outlined his struggles:

I hinted at this earlier as it relates to age disparities as well being a Black male. There have been many times that you know what you know, but you may be young in your

career. The way that you are received, welcomed to the table, your ideas shared can be disparaged. It can make you second guess yourself and that the idea is great coming from someone else but not you.

Throughout the interviews, the participants were cognizant of how intersectionality has inhibited them from success in achieving leadership positions at PWIs. In the next theme, we will discuss how financial distress has inhibited their way of living and their motivation to apply for more advanced leadership roles.

Theme Two: Financial Distress

The participants in this study expressed how financial barriers stifled their career development that could possibly hinder them from growing professionally. Participant Two stated:

A lot of the best roles, like for example, a lot of best schools in the New England area, the New England area is very expensive. Another area down the West Coast of California is very expensive. So, unless you are given a housing stipend, it's going to be very difficult for you to travel and seek out those opportunities as it relates to career trajectory and growth.

Participant One spoke about marital status and demographics:

For people of color, your marital status come into play very quicky and those other marital type demographics. Are you married? Do you have children? Those kinds of things can become barriers to your career success and your career trajectory, even though its illegal, but how many people have committed an illegal act and then told you they're going to commit an illegal act?

Participant Three gave a unique and detailed explanation of how starting a family can stifle career development as it relates to the financial aspect of being in higher education. He stated:

Black people have always been behind the eight ball when it comes to financial resources. And sometimes you must invest in yourself in order to advance. There were some things that I personally sacrificed in order to advance my career. I only have one child and part of that is because of my career and my wife's career. Things were not in sync when we had conversations about having more kids. When you look at the cost of childcare and we have the resources, but it was like $1,200 a month for childcare at that time. Our parents were still working so you have to weigh all of those things, and sometimes people put personal over professional before they make those decisions. I happened to have made the decision to kind of put my career first, is it a regret, I don't know.

Participant Four spoke about how compensation can affect the work of both faculty and staff by saying:

We were looking at our retention numbers. And there is often a notion that universities don't retain students of color and universities don't retain faculty and staff of color. So, our report that we put together, we were able to see that we were retaining a high number of faculty, but we weren't retaining a high number of minoritized staff. We had to go back and look at that, okay, and say, Why are some of our staff members, why are we having a higher turnover rate of staff members, again, lack of professional development and lack of opportunities for advancement within the institution? So, I think those are

some of the areas that are important and it's also feeling compensated for the work that you do. Yes, we all know higher education is not a get rich quick scheme. But you still want to feel valued through your compensation of the work that you are doing. If we are asking somebody to run a mentoring program that's not necessarily tied into a job description or if we're asking somebody to develop XY initiative, make sure that either they have some grant money to do something or again, some release time for something else, making sure people feel valued for the work that they do. So monetarily professional development support, so I think those are some of the areas that we see.

Participant Five spoke of certainty as it relates to the financial aspect of being a Black man working in higher education:

For example, I would say, and I don't know if I necessarily have hard data to prove this but I'm willing to stand, but I know studies have shown that and historically, I've seen that Black men and women are paid at lower rates compared to their White colleagues. I see that as a huge social economic barrier. Even with pay equity, educational or credential exchange, I think it is very much tied to socio-economic status because you have to be able to have the means to get those degrees and those credentials to be valuable with a society or industry. I feel like the institution's cycle, in this piece, I want to call like, authenticity in the workplace, specifically, the ability for Black and brown folks to be able to express themselves and be their fully whole self, within the workplace. To be loud, to be charismatic, and to be fully Black, Latino, or Asian.

Transparency will be needed at these institutions to ensure pay equity is for all employees. No one should be discriminated based off their race, gender, or ethnicity. The

participants expressed their thoughts about how pay equity has inhibited their progress in pursuing other positions at PWIs. Next, we will understand their career advancement at PWIs.

Theme Three: Career Advancement

Throughout the interview process, all the participants expressed career advancement or the lack thereof. Giving the climate of today's higher education job market, we can suspect that employment opportunities are welcoming to anyone who meets the criteria and apply. All participants expressed that having completed their graduate studies opened the door for advancement in higher education. Participant One spoke about his trajectory into his role. He stated:

> I stayed in higher education, and even as I contemplated moving from a department chair to an Associate Dean, for instance, I understood that the terminal degree would certainly be advantageous. Were there challenges along the way? Absolutely. There were. At one point, in the institution where I started, where I was, at the time, there were a number of people who had moved from faculty or from department share roles to enter Dean roles, who did not have terminal degrees. Most of those individuals worldwide, most of them were female. But then there came a shift. And suddenly, the terminal degree became an expectation. It became an expectation. But right around the time, African Americans started to apply for some of those same level jobs. Luckily, the people who were applying also had terminal degrees. So, when I noticed a shift in the expectations, I also noticed that the African American counterparts had the terminal degree when their White counterparts did not. So that was a challenge because it posed at least an ethical challenge of the ethics of the organization and the ethics of the people who will be in leadership

making those decisions.

Participant Two spoke about applying for a mid-level position:

It is all about connection or being connected. I remember specifically interviewing for a

mid-level position. It was me and another person who was working in the same role.

They were saying that they (other candidates) had good relationships with the people at

the school. And I remember specifically somebody asked me, "Hey, do you know

(redacted)? I knew them but not very well, though the other candidate knew of them very

well. When I was offered feedback on why I didn't get the position, I was told that I did

very well, people like you but I didn't get the position.

Participant Three stated achieving his graduate level degree was a result of both personal

and aspirational issues. He stated:

As far as personal aspirations go, one just wanting to obtain as many degrees as possible,

but also wants to kind of get to that ultimate degree as well. So that PhD [Doctor of

Philosophy] was one that I think, personally, was a goal of mine to achieve, but also

knew that it would help me professionally as well, too, and in my professional goals and

aspirations. Strive to one day be a university president. So, not looking at that path, you

do have to have that terminal degree. So I wanted to make sure that I obtained my

doctoral degree to get to that professional aspiration that I have, but also from the

personal aspect. It's one that is a personal pride for me to obtain, but then also serves as a

kind of like to say for others to look up to, or for others to strive to complete as well, too.

So, demonstrating that Black men do get those doctoral level degrees Black men do get

those senior level positions within higher education institutions and PWI. So, for me, it's

both personally and professionally.

He also spoke about how he was passed over for a promotion:

Absolutely, you know, and I'm going to go back to the example that I had, you know, was it because of the color of my skin? Was it something that I said, was it something that I did? You know, was I too vocal? Have I been too forceful? Have I been too direct? You start to question yourself. You started to question your abilities. I did a very niche thing. When I went up for that promotion, and because I was in the Outreach Unit and as part of the Outreach Unit, we went out with the admissions team, we went out across the city, we were the ones that were going out and doing the presentations. And I wasn't doing any hardcore Title IV program administration. So, they tried to put me in a box not knowing that I could do some of those things, because I did it before I even got there. And it was, it was one, the one thing that stuck out to me the most in those experiences. I had already had my Master's degree before I got there. And my boss for the last seven years at that time, she said, you know, as you're looking for these director positions, they're going to want somebody with a Master's degree. And it caught me off guard. And I looked at her and I said, I already have my Master's degree. And at that time, I had had it for years. And I had an interview for a position that she interviewed me for, and I had already had my Master's degree. So it is, somebody stays and makes you feel inadequate, like you're not worthy like that. You're not good enough. What did I do? Did I say something, all these things come up to make you feel inadequate, just because of the color of your skin.

Participant Four spoke from both a staff support and faculty route as it relates to earning a

graduate level degree. In part stating:

> Either the faculty route or the staff support route, in order to advance and climb up the
> ladder, it's important to have those degrees, so people want to see your academic
> portfolio. So, having those advanced degrees allows you to climb the ladder on the staff
> side from coordinator to director, director to AVP [Associate Vice President], a VP [Vice
> President] level, senior administration, straight, senior administrative level. So those
> degrees are important to climb, especially for individuals of color for Black men I would
> say our, our advancement may be more of a struggle than some of our peers or White
> colleagues or White men. Oftentimes what we see at the senior administrator level at the
> VP level, or a VP level and above, you do need to have that terminal degree, where
> sometimes some of our White peers or White men can have their MS [Master of Science]
> or MBAs [Master of Business Administration] and still sit in senior level positions, which
> are often not the case for Black men, unless you're an athletic director but having that
> terminal degree, I feel is important because it allows you to have a seat at the table and
> allows you to be a voice for the voiceless, and advocating for those who look like you or
> whose voices are often not heard.

Participant Five stated that once he received his graduate degree, the door leading to a
career advancement track did not happen immediately. He stated:

> My specific degree, which is higher education, Student Affairs Administration,
> for anyone who usually gets that degree, first off, since they start in a lot of entry level
> positions, and is going through those positions where in some ways pay your dues to
> begin to sort of think about what those next steps are where you're so career wise, I

mean, most of those roles at the start are generalist roles, which allow you to start to develop your skill set and help you to identify your potential.

Participant Six mentioned intimidation:

I would say intimidation, not by me, but intimidation of me by others. I don't see myself as being intimidating as others might, because I, my demeanor, is a little different, maybe than others. Like, if I know you, you know me, and we know each other. But if you don't know me, I may talk, but I may not say a lot, and I'm more observant. And then I decide, like, okay, this is what we're doing. And then we go from there. But I think for some, if you don't fit in a particular box, or if you're not like everyone else, they don't know what to do with you. They don't know how to take you. And they may think you'd be great for something, having you do it now. They will say, "Oh, yeah, they were great, but they weren't sure." So, I think that's something that does kind of preclude, and sometimes people are a bit intimidated or unsure if you're actually going to be better than they are. And I think that's something that you can't really hold somebody back from what their potential is. Additionally, I think there are times that when that does happen, you might look at something different, you might do it a little bit better than somebody else, and they should not be happy and push you forward. But sometimes some people keep you back because they're intimidated by that.

It is evident that an advanced degree can help and assist with Black men achieving leadership roles at PWIs. The participants expressed their trajectory into their executive leadership roles at PWIs. Participants also expressed the lack of diversity in executive leadership roles and how more steps and actions are needed to ensure the advancement of people of color.

The next theme will explain the participants' experiences as they relate to mentorship.

Theme Four: Mentorship

Even though the transformation of our educational systems has seen steady progress, many of the participants reflected on the notion of mentorship. There are some organizational strategies that are in place or possibly taking effect at the participants' institutions to ensure that mentorship is taking place, but it begins with leadership. All six participants mentioned that it is necessary to understand the steps institutions are taking to mentor the next generation.

Participant One stated:

> We do promote mentoring and we are moving to mentoring for employees, period. We are looking at, especially in our career ladder positions, there are several career ladder positions that we have at our institution. So, we are looking at how do we promote mentoring for those positions, some of which move into supervisory roles. In higher education we tend to circulate credentials of the people coming into the institution. And we don't circulate people who are internal candidates when they move up the career ladder.

Participant One defined his perception of leadership as:

> Leadership as someone who has both a vision but also listens to others to understand their needs and desires. His style of leadership was to practice a system of actions that really propel everyone moving forward for the greater good. He also stated that leadership should be democratic to some extent. Everyone should have a seat at the table, everyone should have a voice.

> Participant Two stated:

Not for minorities, but it was not a huge focus then, however, now we are seeing an

influx of students of color, so we are beginning to see the number of faculty and staff of

color increase to support those students.

He further explained that "leadership is being responsible for everything within your duty and

leading a group of people."

Participant Three stated:

We have a strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion. I believe that it could be

stronger. However, that is one thing that is passionate with me at any institution I've

worked in. Professional development, career develop has been super important to me

because I know what it has done for me. So that is one that I carry along with me, to

promote those opportunities to make sure that the staff are getting the development that

they need to advance in the future; to build their skills and skill sets to set them up to

make them more marketable in the future.

Participant Three defined leadership as: "Leadership is someone that is well-rounded; being a

strategic visionary, knows how to delegate and knows how to manage, be result oriented and

understand the end game and not the end result."

Participant Four stated:

I can only speak for the department I work in. I am not sure if the institution as a whole

offers mentoring programs. I would say that the university is very decentralized and so

there is a lot or limited depending on how you look at that are done within colleges. We

do have some mentoring programs that are run by our professional staff and some run

through our graduate students. We do have/had a liaison for career development.

As it relates to leadership, Participant Four said: "Leadership is an individual who can lead as well as listen. A leader must be able to create direction for those they are supervising, and the direction must be clear."

Participant Five stated:

I think what often happens is that when mentoring happens, it's usually out of just building informal relationships with others, it's building relationships with other folks going out of their own way to build those relationships with those folks, just to have that connection. I feel like that informal mentoring, when it comes to institutionally supported mentorship programs, unless someone in a role like mine, goes out of their way to really develop some sort of pipeline program or some sort of mentorship program, there isn't anything that would be institutionally supported. Because there isn't a clear, there's no indication in the institution that there is a problem with the way that BIPOC [Black, Indigenous and people of color] leadership is sort of dwindling. And because people don't see it as a problem, they don't see that it's anything worth investigating. And so, because of that, I do not feel supported at the institution. And I think that is where we continue to slow the cycle of like departures from positions or things like that, or people being passed over promotions and things of that nature. So, I believe there's a need for it. And I believe that the institution has an opportunity to do something differently, but it must be committed to not only looking at what it is doing culturally, that prevents a person from being successful and capable of driving.

He described leadership as: "Leadership is having the ability to mobilize a group of people toward a common purpose, whether it's an organizational, mission, or deliverable goal."

Participant Six stated:

Not formally at all. I believe it's much more of an informal and it's typically staff of

color. And much more by what area you happen to fall in here. If you are in student

affairs, you might find someone that you link up with there. If you are in academic

affairs, the same is true. And then some of us do take responsibility for bringing someone

else along. But outside of that, nothing formally, that has been structured that that exists.

Yeah. And why do I think that is the case? I do not think it's necessarily, but it's not

something that is prioritized on an institutional level. And even as some things have

shifted, and, like the agenda being said, that we want to enhance our diversity of our

representation of students or enhance our diversity across our student body and such, it's

still not something that is formally put together, where you see it or you see like the

vehicle that's going to help us to get there, it might be said, but it's not an official

vehicle.

Participant Six defined leadership as: "Leadership involves someone who understands that they

are constantly still learning themselves and they do not know everything, someone who does not

put themselves first."

Participants expressed that for effective mentorship at their institutions to happen, it must

start with the intentions of leadership at their institutions. Mentorships are needed to ensure that

the process of making someone ready for the next level in leadership is to start. The final theme

will discuss representation and how it affected the participants while working at PWIs.

Theme Five: Representation

Representation within the optics of leadership is needed to devote the necessary changes

required in higher education and the demographics of the student population seen at PWIs. Participant Three stated his views on representation:

> It is very low, definitely at your predominantly White institutions. This my second director's role and I was the only Black and the only Black male in leadership at both institutions. It has caused me to take a step back and not Imposter Syndrome but why did I get here? Why aren't there other people that look like me sitting around at this table that I am sitting at? My perception is there is a need for it and are my Black brothers and sisters ready to take on this position? And now that I am a director sitting in a seat, how do I prepare other people that look like me on this track?

Participant Five stated:

> I am thinking there are concerns that I have. Apart from my boss and her boss, that they are the only Black individuals within the entire cabinet. I am grateful that they are there, but just looking at the metrics that Black men and Black women were very severely underrepresented at every level of the institution. I have seen a majority of Black women leave and the only Black person in HR [human resources], who was a male left over this past year. So, most units in our institution are mostly White. So, they solved the gender problem, but when it comes to the representation of Black men and woman, we have a long way to go.

Participant Four stated:

> I would say it is not great at all. So, our college is a part of the larger university, and so a handful of colleges at our university, but our current administration leadership, our two department chairs, our Associate Deans, we have one Associate Dean who identifies I

think, as Asian, Asian American. And then one who identifies as African and so as far as from senior administration or upper administration, reporting up to the Dean, I would probably be the only Black male. And we do have a handful of White women who report up to the Dean, a person that identifies as African, who is the Associate Dean, but I would say as far as from our college administration, it's very limited and lacking. I think there are opportunities, potential opportunities of changing that. But I think sometimes, again, that leadership likes to have people who look like them so that processing is the same, I think, from the university leadership. It is largely homogeneous from the racial and ethnic background, there are a couple of Associate Vice Chancellors who identify as minoritized. But as far as that senior administration reporting up to the chancellor, it is largely homogeneous.

Participant One spoke about how the Bakke decision set the precedent of diversifying in higher education. Bakke is a 1978 Supreme Court case which held that a university's admissions criteria which used race as a definite and exclusive basis for an admission decision violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.:

> My perception is that we need more. I think that we need greater diversity. If we even look at the Bakke decision, the decision from the Supreme Court talked about the benefits of racial and ethnic diversity, not to the minority community but to the non-minority community. That's the community that benefits the most for racial and ethnic diversity. However, where many people seem to get hung up on is, you're taking something from me. What I've seen often is, rather than looking at how does this advance the agenda of

the institution, the perception is that the institution is a welcoming place for everyone and is an inclusive place for everyone. People get hung up on what you have, you are taking something from me. And so like, when it's seen as an entitlement, when I feel like I'm entitled to this position, or someone that looks like me, is entitled to this position.

Participant Six gave his historical view at his institution:

It's gotten somewhat better, but it was very difficult in the beginning. At the beginning, I didn't see many people that looked like me. And when I did, they were mostly African American women. They knew each other, about the same age and tenure. They worked together and worked very closely in some type of collaborative way, so they were familiar. I felt outside of that. There was a very small growing group, specifically Black men, that were kind of up and coming. And there were just things that I did not necessarily do, that they did, that kind of precluded me from being necessarily very close with them, too. And so, I wasn't a loner by any means. But I just did not have that group, immediately, when I was much younger in my career, that I could just kind of, you know, grab onto, or let my hair down and be like that. So, I felt like I always was on and always was trying to kind of figure out what the next level would be. And I was fortunate the doors opened, but now it's very different, very, very different. And some of that, I think just comes with professional growth on your side, that I may be more open, to be quite honest with you, to receiving and interacting and doing things. Because it's, I'm just in a very different place right now, you know, personally and professionally. And I was also very young, to be where I was going in my career. And so, there was an age gap, big age gap between me and my immediate peers. And so, I did, and sometimes I think, probably

create some distance, you know, just we are almost like a safety, you know, type of thing. But it was just interesting. You know, it is interesting, I think that there is more representation now. Specifically, now, you know, even after coming out of the pandemic, I have seen, I remember 15 years ago, you only saw people of color going into Chief of Diversity Leadership (CDL) roles, and they weren't even defined beyond just Chief Diversity Officer CG. Oh, and that is what most people were reaching for. You didn't see many Black Vice Presidents of enrollment or people that were, you know, Associate Provost or Vice President for enrollment and things like that. And I did see a couple ascend to that, that I knew well, you know, and I just kind of watched to see what were they doing? That was different to get there. But I'm seeing more people now, you know, run CDL roles, such as the CDL role, there's VPS, you know, of diversity, there's, you know, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work. So, it is much more inclusive, and much more expansive. And I was just talking to a colleague yesterday, you are also seeing people now getting paid their worth, instead of just, you know, having a good job that pays somewhat well, if you are someone who's an expert in DEI work, or Vice President for diversity, you should be on par. And we are seeing the same thing as a VP for enrollment because your work is no different. You know your level of expertise. And what you achieved to get to that point is not different. So that is something it's been really interesting to watch more recently, to see how there is some type of feeling like there's some movement there.

The participants expressed that representation is still needed at PWIs. Many expressed that the progress has happened but there is some work that needs to be addressed and completed

to ensure that Black men are able to see more than just themselves involved in the conversation. The participants expressed that it should not be just for optics, but representation means that every student that looks like them will have a voice in leadership to ensure not only their safety but ensure that their experiences at PWIs are a positive one.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to use a phenomenological qualitative study to explore the factors that encourage or inhibit men who identify as Black or African American on their career pathway to executive leadership roles in PWIs. Six participants were interviewed and talked about their personal experiences as a Black or African American male working at a predominately White institution. The participants came from a variety of universities and work experiences. Originally, 152 codes or themes emerged from the data analysis. The themes were organized on their similarities into five overarching themes: Intersectionality, Financial Distress, Career Advancement, Mentorship, and Representation. All participants held a leadership role at their current institution of employment, had a graduate degree or higher, had at least five years of professional work experience, and currently work at a PWI.

Participants shared a variety of stories that have affected their time in higher education and why they still pursue this path. They see themselves as leaders of change at their institutions. Given the fact that all the institutions these men work at are seeing a rise in students of color, they are making a space for them, to feel welcomed and safe. All the participants see themselves in higher education to change the perception of what it is to be a Black man in an executive leadership role.

The findings of Chapter 4 show and identify the barriers that still exist in higher

education. These barriers have hindered the selection, promotion, or retention of the talent at PWIs and the advancement of Black men into executive leadership positions. The responses varied, however, sentiments of the same oppressions were present throughout the findings. This will serve as the foundation of the recommendations and conclusion presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement sparked a national and global racial reckoning and conversations about representation for people of color. Entities from major corporations to large media outlets have added diversity committees, hired more Black employees, and recruited people of color for top-level positions (Corfah, 2021). Universities are often regarded as a site for embracing multiculturalism and diversity; however, historically this has often conflicted with an enduring legacy of racial inequality (Alexander & Arday, 2015). While we have made a great effort in academia to ensure that Black voices are heard, there is still a lot of work to do nationally to ensure the safety and the education of Black students at predominately White institutions.

To address the importance of ensuring that Black men are needed in executive leadership roles at PWIs, I examined the lived experiences of Black or African American men through the lens of men who transcended into leadership roles at PWIs by using the phenomenological design method. Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support, or challenge policy and action (Lester, 2022). I examined the stories of Black men who had leadership positions/roles who overcame obstacles while pursuing executive leadership positions, using the social support theory and critical race theory. This qualitative study utilized interviews to capture the stories of these professionals and to understand the

obstacles they encountered on their journey.

 The purpose of this study was to examine and identify the factors that encouraged or inhibited Black or African American men on their pathways to executive leadership roles at PWIs. Participants who met the criteria outlined in Chapter 3 were interviewed. Interview questions focused on their personal work experience, current and future aspirations as a leader in higher education, and barriers and obstacles that have affected them as higher education professionals. Each participant had the opportunity to conduct a member check of his own transcript. Once the member check was completed, each transcription was imported into NVivo® for coding, organization, and interpretation. Five themes emerged from this process: Intersectionality, Financial Distress, Career Advancement, Mentorship, and Representation. In the next section, findings from the three research questions that underpinned this study are addressed. The findings are aligned with the literature, and recommendations are offered for practice and future research. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) state that Chapter 5, the conclusion, provides concluding statements and recommendations that flow directly from the findings of the study. Additionally, they claim that conclusions are "assertions based on your finds and must therefore be warranted by the findings" (p. 271).

Interpretations and Importance of Findings

 According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) qualitative research starts with questions, "and its ultimate purpose is learning" (p. 233). Interpretation is an intuitive process, and not mechanical or technical (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This section outlines the interpretations and important findings of each research question that guided this study.

Interpretation for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What factors encouraged African American men on their career pathway to executive leadership roles at PWIs? The question was created to understand what representation means to these men and how it affect their professional lives at these institutions. Literature denotes that the very presence of Black males in these positions serves as a counternarrative to the system that created the PWI in the first place (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Sleeter, 2012). Social support and critical race theory were used as a lens, with career advancement and representation to answer this research question.

Being Represented at Predominantly White Institutions

Harper (2009) emphasizes the need for student affairs professionals to better understand how Black male identity affects Black males' academic and social experiences. All participants from this study supported this clam because they too were students enrolled at PWIs. These men explained that being enrolled at PWIs shows others that they are talented and gifted. Participant Five shared that he had limited experiences seeing Black men in executive level leadership position and felt that it's across the board. He also stated that there are more Black women in these roles compared to Black men. All participants felt that seeing a Black man in an executive leadership role shows that their talents at PWIs can resonate and be a beacon of hope for the next generation of leaders. Research shows racial differences in educational access and academic achievement (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2017; Office of Civil Rights, 2016). Extensive research has been done on the effect of minority-based organizations and their importance to student achievement. Many underrepresented students, including African Americans, rely on the support they get from minority-based organizations, and credit much of their success to these

organizations at PWIs (Willie, 2003).

Lack of Diversity

While the idea of transitioning to a more diverse population at PWIs is not without

challenges (Hunn, 2014), the benefits are much more rewarding, in that students will receive a

better quality of cross-group interaction; enhanced classroom discussions; stronger communities

and the workplace; enhanced personal growth and a healthy society; and a more economically

competitive America (Morris & Grbic, 2015). To this end, the role of educators must extend to

include advocacy for underrepresented student groups. This also stands true to include hiring

Black men in executive leadership roles. Many of the participants stated that their current

executive leadership team diversity and composition does not reflect the current school

population. Many institutions have seen an increase of women in these roles. Participant Six

indicated that his institution has gotten better, but in the beginning it was difficult. He stated that

when it came to Blacks in leadership roles, typically they were in positions related to diversity.

Participant Three stated that he is currently the only Black, male or female, in leadership. He also

wondered if it was due to his work and accomplishments, or it was to achieve diversity in the

cabinet.

All participants in the study identified as Black men and talked about how difficult they

found it to advance while working at PWIs, as evidenced in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, Jackson

(2001) identified three key institutional enablers of the success of African American

administrators in predominantly White colleges and universities. These enablers were: (a) well

thought-out and published sets of practices for recruiting and hiring staff of color sending a

positive, welcoming, and supportive message to potential incoming and current staff (Gasman et

al., 2011); (b) PWIs should commit to diversity in which colleges and universities include educational components about diversity in all institutional training programs for their personnel (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus, 2011); and (c) a campus and community orientation in which administrators of color are given an orientation to both the campus and to the community in which the college or university was located (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Based off the research conducted, the participants indicated that recruitment of Black men in key roles must begin with the hiring process. As mentioned by Participant Five, he stated that the human resources department is solely made up of White women. There are no people of color that work in the office, which has and will continue to hinder the hiring of people of color, especially Black men.

Data from this study suggested that Black men have unique needs to consider as leaders to excel (Collins et al., 2017). As a result, findings from this study answered the first research question and was supported by the literature. In the next section, I will explore Research Question 2, reporting the findings of the extent to which Black men describe the obstacles they encountered while achieving executive leadership roles.

Interpretation for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What obstacles or inhibitions did African American men encounter while pursuing executive leadership roles at PWIs? The question was created to explore and understand what is or has prevented these men from achieving executive leadership roles at these institutions. As the body of knowledge continues to grow around Black males rising to senior leadership and administration levels, there has been very little research done to understand their experience once they are in those positions (Lewis, 2009). Social support, critical race theory, intersectionality, and financial distress answer this research question.

Black Males Getting Hired at Predominantly White Institutions

According to Zippia (2022), 70.3% all human resources managers were women. The breakdown of races is as follow: Whites occupy 64.9%, Hispanics or Latinos occupy 15.5%, Blacks or African Americans represent 11.2%. Institutions of academia must ensure that representation is shown throughout the hiring process. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) found that even with the presence of language supporting diversity goals, search committee members enacted racial biases due to their protection of Whiteness and application of colorblind discourse. This discourse materialized in search processes as coded discussions of dominant cultural fit, the presence of one token minority committee member, and the inconsequential nature of diversity in the evaluation process (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). All mentioned the lack of representation of African Americans at PWIs. Participant Three stated that while he just achieved his second role as a director, he remains the only Black and Black male in leadership at his institution. Participant Five stated some concerns that he has. He stated that Black men and women are severely underrepresented at every level of his institution. He stated that the human resources department at his institution is all White. He also mentioned that even though his institution may have solved the gender problem, there's a long way to go as it relates to representation for Black men and women. Ward and Wolf-Wendell (2009) suggested that the overall growth of diversity in higher education administration, both racial and ethnic, will be significantly challenged over the next three decades. The minimal presence of Blacks as full-time faculty and tenured administrators suggests that more research needs to be done to understand the reasons why (Espinosa et al., 2019).

Physicality and Being Black

All participants spoke about how intersectionality has a place in their hindrance of being hired or promoted. According to Chun and Evans (2009), the word diversity refers to demographical characteristics that differentiate groups of individuals. These characteristics include race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation. As melting pots of diversity, colleges and universities serve as incubators of social change, tolerance, and cultural exchange. Enrollment of minorities continues to increase among the nation's largest institutions, which directly correlates to the cultural shift happening across the country. Participant One mentioned that the way he shows up to a room or meeting has hindered him. He stated that being a Black man of a certain age for many organizations in higher education was a challenge because of the impressions people have against older people. Secondly, due to his hair being in locs, many people identify him as Rastafarian. He also mentioned how having a Southern accent has brought on stereotypes. One stereotype that resonated with Participant One was how colleagues viewed him as unintelligible or had not mastered the English language. Participant Two stated that being Black, you really do not get the answers you need because your supervisor might be of a different race, ethnicity, or gender and they may not understand the questions or possibly the implications of answering a question posed by a Black man. Many of these perceptions contribute to creating barriers for African Americans striving to obtain leadership positions. According to Cook and Glass (2013), these barriers comprise discrimination, bias, racial tokenism, lack of quality mentoring, exclusion from social and informational networks, and downgrading. These barriers contribute to the methodical underrepresentation of African Americans in leadership and administration positions (Cook & Glass, 2013).

Credentials Questioned

The avenues in which Blacks have been criticized about having the correct credentials for their positions have been a narrative in the United States. Many of the participants felt as though, at times, their credentials to lead a team were questioned. Participant One stated he thinks credentials are only circulated when it comes to hiring external candidates. He mentioned that at times, you must prove to your colleagues that the outside candidate is great for the position. Participant Three stated that whenever he was up for a promotion, he felt his credentials were questioned. He stated that he was in communication with his director, and that he was ready for a promotion within the department. She assured him that he was indeed qualified for the promotion. However, he found out that the position was given to someone else that had a Master's degree. He stated that he told his director that he in fact had a master's degree. Participant Three also opened up concerning his family. He mentioned that expanding his family was one of the toughest conversations he and his wife had. Choosing your career versus starting a family probably has affected many Black men trying to achieve executive leadership positions. The majority of the participants noted that their advanced degree allowed them to pursue more leadership positions at their institutions. The minimal presence of Blacks as full-time faculty and tenured administrators suggests that more research needs to be done to understand the reasons why (Espinosa et al., 2019). Although White undergraduates represented only 52% of the student body in 2016, almost 75% of full-time faculty were White. In public four-year institutions, only 5.1% of 345,000 full-time faculty were Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Hence, there is a need for more advancement at these institutions to ensure representation is reflected at PWIs.

Data from this study suggested that due to the lack of research on the subject, Glenn (2010) chose a qualitative approach, which permitted a natural discovery of the true meaning of a specific human experience. As a result, findings from this study answered the second question and were supported by the literature. In the next section, I will explore how identifying as a Black male at a PWI affects his leadership pathway.

Interpretation for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: How does identifying as an African American male at a PWI affect the leadership pathway in his career pursuits? The question was asked to answer how the idea of leadership is reflected on men of color and if it could be two separate entities that do not necessarily reach the desired population and do not retain Black males at PWIs. Social support theory and critical race theory mentorship and intersectionality were used to answer this research question.

Personal Ideology of Leadership

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), the five practices of exemplary leaders are (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. The main theories of leadership include (a) trait theory, (b) situational leadership, (c) transactional leadership, and (d) transformational leadership. There is not one set way to lead a team but many ideologies that have fixed our personal narrative on how we should approach leadership. Each participant was asked to define leadership, and each man had his own unique definition for leadership. As melting pots of diversity, colleges and universities serve as incubators of social change, tolerance, and cultural exchange. Enrollment of minorities continues to increase among the nation's largest institutions, which directly correlates to the cultural shift

happening across the country (Chun & Evans 2009). Participant One defined leadership as someone having both a vision but also listening to others to understand their needs and desires. His style of leadership was to practice a system of actions that propelled everyone moving forward for the greater good. He also stated that leadership should be democratic to some extent. Everyone should have a seat at the table, everyone should have a voice. Participant Two defined leadership as being responsible for everything within your duty and leading a group of people. Participant Three defined leadership as someone who is well-rounded, being a strategic visionary, knows how to delegate and manage, be results oriented, and understand the end game and not the result. Participant Four stated that leadership is an individual who can lead as well as listen. A leader must be able to create direction for those they are supervising, and the direction must be clear. Participant Five stated that leadership is having the ability to mobilize a group of people toward a common purpose, whether it is an organizational, mission, or deliverable goal. Lastly, Participant Six stated that leadership involves someone who understands that they are constantly still learning for themselves, and they do not know everything, someone who does not put themselves first. It is evident that the data provided by these participants support the literature (Cook & Glass 2013) because it proves that the evolution of leadership theories is changing. There is not one set rule or guidance on how to lead your institution.

State of Educational Leadership

The unfortunate reality is that access to a quality education still remains elusive to Black students of all ages. And even for those who are privileged to attain access to higher education, their ability to move in and out of higher education institutions while remaining psychologically and emotionally intact and uncompromised is an obstacle (Tuitt et al., 2018) The emergence of

the Black Lives Matter movement has shifted the state of educational leadership across the country. In 2017, the Black History Month theme was titled "The Crisis in Black Education" (Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), 2017). Each participant identified certain aspects of the current state of educational leadership. Participant Six felt as though there is a lack of consistency. He mentioned that it is much more "me" or institutional centered and not for the greater good. Participant Five stated that he believes that the state of educational leadership is being operated like a business. He believes that it is less about developing the passion for learning among humans but more about manufacturing degrees. Participant One stated that educational leadership is a pivotal moment. Given the fact that we are amid a pandemic with social, ethical, and economic unrest, he believes that it is pivotal but also challenging. He brought insight that we are seeing presidents and vice presidents serve shorter terms than previously before. He stated that these roles were held for about 10–15 years, now we are seeing these positions average about five years.

Data from this study suggested that African American leadership in higher education was limited in breadth and scope (Jackson, 2004). Based off the literature review and the participants' interviews, the research questions were answered and added support to the current research.

Data from this study used social support theory (Leahy-Warren, 2014) and critical race theory (Castelli, 2022) to examine the lived experiences of Black men, who navigated obstacles while pursing executive leadership positions as PWIs. Throughout the study, each participant mentioned barriers and obstacles they had go through to get to the next level in their career. Data showed that Black men want to stay in higher education, especially at PWIs because their representation and voice is needed to assist the students to champion not only change for the

student body but also for themselves. Each participant expounded on the need for a community of their peers to help them through the everyday obstacles of being a person of color. This study increased the understanding of the lives of Black men ascending to the ranks of executive leadership at PWIs.

Implications

This section discusses the implications aligned with the rationale and significance of this study as outlined in Chapter 1. Exploring other Black men's perceptions of why there are barriers in higher education allowed them to share their stores with me. The statistics throughout the research shows that there is a lack of Black men in these roles. Only 3% of faculty members in higher education are Black males (Turner & Grauerholtz, 2017). In contrast, 83% of college presidents identify as White and 70% identify as male, while only 8% identify as Black, 2% as Asian, and 1% other (American Council on Education, 2016). I also wanted to know their viewpoints of being seasoned leaders in higher education and working at PWI. The goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience—both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced (Teherani et al., 2015). This study provided all six participants the platform and opportunity to share their lived experiences of being a Black or African American male at PWIs as they try to ascend to an executive leadership role.

There is opportunity for Black men who desire to transcend into executive leadership roles. PWI leaders can suggest certain leadership and minor administrative roles to high-performing and promising Black male faculty on campus to introduce them to the field of administration (Scott, 2010). This path will require overcoming challenges, barriers, and personal ideology as mentioned by the participants in this study. We are seeing the population of

PWIs increase in diversity. We are seeing that many Black students are coming to PWIs for a better education, networking opportunities, or by choice. These students need to see someone that looks like them to know that they are in a safe space to be themselves. Greater representation by these groups in professional positions within higher education is important for maintaining a warm and welcoming environment for minority students. Participant Four spoke about working at an institution in Vermont and wanted to ensure that students of color had someone to speak up for them when he left for his next level in higher education. In the same vein, many of our PWIs need to understand that the demographic of students that are coming to their institutions will not look like their faculty, staff, or Board of Directors. Understanding these will better prepare the school to cater to the needs of the desired diversity. According to the Association of Governing Boards (2016), minorities comprise 24% of public university and state system board members and just 13.5% of board members of private universities. Furthermore, trustees and Boards can also serve as a check by asking informed and pointed questions; however, Boards themselves are not very diverse. According to the Association of Governing Boards (2016), minorities comprise 24 percent of public university and state system board members and just 13.5 percent of board members of private universities. Furthermore, when this study separated the trustees of minority serving institutions (MSIs) from those of majority institutions, the numbers fell further, to 17 percent of non-MSI public colleges and universities and to 11 percent at private non-MSI institutions.3 (Spencer Stuart, 2015).

Feelings of isolation for African American professionals on PWIs can be stressful. African Americans are often called on to work with students of color on campus which can prove to be both physically and emotionally draining (Gardner et al., 2014). Black men in higher

education executive leadership roles can provide their institution's need to proactively assess information so that they can work collaboratively to periodically review themselves as mentioned by the participants of this study. Promoting Black faculty and staff members into leadership positions will help colleges identify and address racism in their institutions (Whitford, 2020). They can facilitate, re-enforce, and strengthen diversity education programs, policies, and procedures through department training and workshops. These men can work with higher education administrators in articulating the importance of inclusion of African American male students, faculty, and staff. Involvement should include all facets of decision making made at mainstream institutions of higher education.

Lastly, African American males at PWIs need to be cognizant of the power of partnerships as mentioned by the participants of this study. By doing so, they can concentrate on eliminating seen and unforeseen barriers of oppression and inequities of African American males. These men can participate in motivating mainstream institutions of higher education staff to critically reflect on their assumptions, values, and practices for social change by understanding and embracing the proper intent of diversity involvement in higher education administration.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the factors that encouraged or inhibited African American men on their pathway to executive leadership roles at PWIs. Data gathered from one-on-one interviews, a literature review, and the development of emergent themes provided the research with the opportunity to create the following recommendations.

The first recommendation is to diversify human resource offices throughout PWIs. As I

stated in Chapter 2, Blacks make up about 12% of HR positions in the United States. Data indicate that approximately 409,000 Black males in the United States hold at least a Master's degree and approximately 88,000 Black males have earned a Doctoral degree. Further disaggregation of this data indicated that only 3% of Black males hold positions as a faculty member in higher education (Turner & Grauerholtz, 2017). Data are harder to obtain and disaggregate when studying the number of Black professionals outside of the role of faculty in post-secondary education. Only 13% of post-secondary administrators are Black (men or women combined) and 34% are Black men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; Turner & Grauerholtz, 2017). If institutions want to increase their staff and faculty portfolio, they must ensure diversity in their HR offices. Before any candidate goes to the next phase of the interview, HR offices must ensure the candidate is a good fit for the school and the position. In addition, to ensure HR offices are diverse, the intention on whom to hire must be pure. Effective communication is needed between HR and the hiring department to ensure what qualifications are needed. Participant Two vividly spoke about how he wasn't promoted, however, prior to his interview, in speaking with his supervisor he stated he was ready for a promotion, but he was denied.

The second recommendation is to have mentorship programs implemented as mentioned by the participants from this study. Mentorship goes back to social support theory (Kort-Butler, 2017). Understanding and knowing who is at your institution can create pathways and networking, otherwise not known. Creating this mentorship program will allow each Black male to network with others to gain the necessary understanding of the *unheard* rules of these institutions. This mentorship program will also enable and cultivate a sense of belonging at these institutions.

The third recommendation is for institutional leaders to offer all staff training opportunities based on identifying, exploration, and development. Participant Five spoke about how, after his degree, he started off with entry level work. He felt as though that he was paying his dues and not really learning and being developed for the next level in his career. By offering training, you are giving everyone at the institution an equal footing to grow and develop necessary skills to be a leader. Training should not be made mandatory; instead, training should be incorporated into the organization's culture, a standard that should be set by the leadership (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). This researcher agrees with Dobbin and Kalev's (2016) recommendations regarding incorporating training, adding that it should be instituted at every level of the organization.

The fourth recommendation is to create a pipeline process for mentorship. Create a foundation or non-profit whose sole mission is to recruit, retain, and incentivize Black men in education. Black men are needed not only in higher education but in the educational system as mentioned by the participants of this study. This foundation will be specifically for men who are currently or who desire to be on a career path to executive leadership positions in higher education. This will cultivate mentorship with other Black men who have positioned themselves to be leaders at PWIs and offer scholarships so that they can achieve the education needed to position them in these roles.

My last recommendation is to diversify cabinet members and Boards of Trustees as mentioned by Participant Five. The cabinet and Board of Trustees should reflect the trajectory in which the university is headed. We often see that many of these positions are held by White men with sprinkles of diversity. The students that PWIs are serving are becoming more racially

diverse, and these positions should reflect the influx.

Recommendation for Future Study

While this study is important, meaningful, and necessary, it was limited in scope. There were also valid questions that arose during the interviews that warrant additional research. All participants shared their perceptions on how Black men are viewed in higher education. However, one participant mentioned that future studies should analyze Black leaders in executive leadership positions. Furthermore, how can entry level staff members model themselves to be successful?

One way to obtain this is to study and speak with Black men who have obtained such ranks. We need to understand who assisted them on their path to executive leadership, were there any allies outside of his support system who helped him, what barriers and obstacles did he face, and how did he overcome them. We are living in a society in which many of our Black educational leaders never had their stories written down or even recorded. We are talking about Black male leaders who were coming through the Jim Crow South. We need to understand the struggles that they had to endure to become successful and powerful leaders at PWIs.

The second area of study I would recommend is understanding the gender bias or perception that may correlate before hiring Black women versus Black men in such leadership positions. While the transcendence of Black men and women is on the rise, understanding their pathways may show us how we either navigate differently or similarly in these white spaces. Do Black women seem less of a threat than Black men? What are the perceptions of Black women versus Black men? These questions would be crucial to know and further explore to see if there is racial divide in the education system.

The last area of study I would recommend would be understanding the trajectory of other minorities to executive leadership roles. As my study mentioned, we are seeing a diaspora of races and ethnicities throughout the United States, especially in the Latino community. I would like to see the trajectory and pathways they had to navigate to reach the level of executive leadership positions at PWIs. I believe that this will help us understand commonalities and differences (if any) they face while reaching these roles.

Conclusion

Institutions of higher education, including predominantly White institutions, historically Black colleges and universities, and Hispanic serving institutions have historically served as the scaffolding of American and global society. These institutions have served as the key to understanding the different aspects of education as well as life. Through the eyes of the world, PWIs are the elite institutions that serve the most critical knowledge, and they have the most resources to ensure their students are successful. This study represents the importance of ensuring that all faces that enter these walls will understand that they are being seen and heard. This study's insights reflect the growth of Black men in executive leadership roles but also the need for them. It highlights the struggles faced by Black men but also gives us more of a gateway to solve and rectify these injustices.

The goal of this study was to examine the barriers that encourage or inhibited African American men on their career path to executive leadership positions. The social support theory and critical race theory assisted with the development of the study and the interpretation of data from the participants' transcripts. The five themes that emerged gave valuable and necessary insight into the journey of six Black men. The results of the study demonstrated that these men

have prevailed in the face of racial inequality and continue to rise to the height of their career and serve as role models for future generations.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your ethnicity?
2. What is your approximate age?
3. What is your highest degree obtained? Where did you receive your degrees?
4. What is your current position?
5. How long has your career been in higher education?
6. In which organizational unit do you now work? (Ex: academic affairs, student affairs, finance, university relations, etc.)
7. Is your institution classified as a PWI (predominately White institution)?
8. Is your institution public or private?
9. Is your institution non-profit or for profit?
10. Did you pursue graduate level studies as the result of personal aspirations or career aspirations? Explain.
11. Did completion of graduate level studies immediately open the door to a career advancement track? If there were challenges, what were they and how did you overcome them.
12. Discuss your previous employment within higher education.
13. Do you presently have any concerns regarding the institution or your position?
14. Discuss your professional aspirations immediately following your tenure in this present position.
15. What is your definition of leadership?
16. Describe your perception of the present state of educational leadership.
17. Describe your experiences, good or bad, with leaders in the higher education industry that shaped your perception.
18. Discuss your perception of racial diversity and minority representation within higher education administration.
19. What is your perception of the racial diversity and minority representation within your current institution's administration?
20. Does your institution's administrative composition reflect the racial composition of the student body? Explain.
21. Does your institution promote mentoring and career advancement programs for minorities? If not, why do you think that is?
22. In your professional opinion, how diverse do you consider your institution?
23. Are there difficulties, perceived or real, that hinder the promotion of diversity within higher education administration?
24. Discuss the barriers, hurdles, or obstacles that you have experienced during your journey to your present position.

25. Discuss racial barriers within higher education that may cause isolation of employees and hinder their career development.
26. Discuss personal and socio-economic barriers that may stifle the career development of a person of color.
27. Discuss any other barriers that may hinder the advancement of diversity in higher education administration.
28. Discuss the barriers that may have directly impeded your selection or appointment to an administrative position in higher education.