YES SHE CAN:

EXAMINING THE EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER PATHWAYS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN 4-YEAR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

YES SHE CAN:
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presented by Ransford Pinto,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

To all the women who believed, encouraged, supported and advocated for me to pursue graduate education. All your sacrifices and investments paid off. I could not have done this without you.

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And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States speak about the experiences and characteristics that have contributed to their academic achievements, career advancement, and success. This dissertation also examined how the intersection of race, gender, and class influenced the educational and career pathways of the nine Black women participants. Using the narrative inquiry method and intersectionality as a theoretical framework, I inductively identified themes within the story of participants' educational and career journeys and experiences. This study found that the high expectations of participants' parents served as an educational success imperative. Other themes that emerged illustrated that non-linear paths, and family-life balance and mentorship were all factors in the participants' journeys toward senior leadership. The Black women's transcendence of racial, gender, and class discrimination became the impetus for developing a leadership style that is focused on students' success. This study's ultimate goal is to use the participants' stories to provide hope and a blueprint for young African American women who aspire to be leaders in the academy or any professional field—to equip them with the tools that will enable them to say "yes, we can."

CHAPTER 1

Background and Rationale of the Study

In the past 2 decades, the United States has witnessed several women rising to top leadership positions within politics, the federal government, and the corporate world. For instance, in February 2014, Janet L. Yellen became the first woman to serve as the chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board of Governors (Hunter, 2014). In January 2014, Mary T. Barra became the first woman CEO of General Motors Company (GM). Also, in September 2018, Dhivya Suryadevara became the first woman chief financial officer (CFO) of GM. The appointment of Mary and Dhivya makes GM the world's only top automotive manufacturing company with a female CEO and CFO (St. John, 2018). In January 2012, Virginia M. Rometty became the first chair, president, and CEO of International Business Machines Corporation (Lohr, 2011). At the federal government level, Condoleezza Rice assumed office as the U.S. Secretary of State on January 29, 2005. Condoleezza was the second female in the position, after Madeleine Albright, but the first African American woman (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). On the political front, Nancy Pelosi, on January 4, 2007, became the first woman to be elected as the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (Benenson, 2007). Another political milestone for women in the United States was achieved on July 26, 2016, when Hillary R. Clinton became the first woman to win a major U.S. political party's presidential primary contest (Dann, 2016).

While the women referenced above are not an exhaustive representation of the achievements of women in America, they suggest that the U.S. is experiencing a cultural shift that is paving the way for more women to participate in leadership—a domain that

has historically been male-dominated. Northouse (2016) explained the need for this cultural shift by highlighting the narrow way leadership is conceptualized and practiced. According to Northouse, in the early 20th century, scholars attempted to determine the characteristics of great leaders. The theories that were promoted were called “great man” theories, because they concentrated on finding the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leadership—positions traditionally held by men (Northouse, 2016, p. 19). Additionally, during this time, it was believed that only “great” people were born with and possessed leadership characteristics (Bass, 1990; Northouse, 2016). Indeed, these great people were exclusively thought to be men. Eagly (2005) argued that, because leadership has been traditionally considered a masculine enterprise, “the leaders who emerge are disproportionately men, regardless of the sex composition of the community of followers” (p. 463). Horsford (2012) argued that “such theories have not similarly explored the natural, inborn or divine gifts and traits associated with the ‘great woman,’ and certainly not women of disadvantage and color” (p. 13). The underlying gender and race dynamics that great men theories did not addressed, has created opportunities for scholars to challenge the definition of leadership in the 21st century to include the characteristics of women.

Leadership Defined

Although the definition of leadership has been a topic of scholarly debate for more than a century, consensus on a universally agreed-on definition has yet to be established (Northouse, 2016). Northouse (2016) posited that many of the explanations of leadership over the century have been influenced by world affairs, politics, and the discipline in which the topic is studied. Rost (1991) examined the definitions of

leadership written from 1900 to 1990 and found more than 200 different descriptions. Rost noted that the leadership definitions that appeared in the first 3 decades of the 20th century “emphasized control and centralization of power with a common theme of domination” (p. 47). Rost provided an example of how leadership was defined at a conference on leadership in 1927: “the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation” (Moore, 1927, p. 124). According to Bass (1990), a leader is an individual who inspires others to follow and cultivates an environment of teamwork, trust, and collaboration. He further defined leadership as

> the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, and as initiation of structure. (p. 11)

From these two perspectives, a leader is responsible for influencing the behavioral changes of followers.

In the 1980s, Rost (1991) offered a robust scholarly contribution to what leadership is supposed to be. Several themes emerged in his work, such as do as the leader wishes, achieve group or organizational goals, manage, exert influence, demonstrate the traits of a leader, and pursue organizational transformation. The debate and research about leadership in the 21st century, according to Northouse (2016), have not developed new definitions; rather, they emphasize the approach an individual takes to influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Approaches to leadership include:

- Authentic leadership – emphasizes the authenticity of leaders and their leadership.
- Spiritual leadership – focuses on the leader using values and a sense of calling and membership to motivate followers.
- Servant leadership – stresses the use of "caring principles" to help followers become more autonomous and knowledgeable.
- Adaptive leadership – describes a leader who encourages followers to adapt by confronting and solving problems, challenges, and changes.

Additionally, some leadership scholars have identified several leadership styles such as transactional, transformational and laissez-faire (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Burns, 1978). Indeed, leadership is a complex concept, making it difficult to have a generally agreed-on definition. However, a common thread that permeates through all definitions is the notion of influence, which is also related to the concept of power. Power is the capacity or potential to influence (Northouse, 2016, p. 10). Individuals who have power can sway other people's beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action through available resources. While there are no explicit theories about power and leadership, the concept of power is often linked with leadership. People usually view those in leadership positions as individuals who wield power over others. Hence, power is often considered synonymous with leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Leadership in Higher Education

Leadership in higher education may be more complex relative to other public and private sectors. This complexity arises because college and university leaders are expected to provide intellectual leadership, embody institutional values, and shape

institutional policy and practice. They are expected to be chief fundraisers and advocates for their institutions. Furthermore, they have to work with past, current, and future students, while spending time with boards, donors, agencies, lawmakers, faculty, community members, and business leaders (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). To be a successful leader in higher education, especially as pressures have grown over resource instability and demographic change, an individual must rely more on highly skilled, diverse, and networked teams of senior leaders for support (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

Leadership in higher education has historically been masculine (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Johnson, 2016), which some scholars attribute it to gender barriers, discrimination, and a late entrance into academia (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Glazer-Raymo, 2008). However, extant research bears the reality that women are making significant contributions and strides in higher education. For example, the number of women presidents in higher education is improving, increasing from 26% in 2011 to 30% in 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Even though there has been some progress, women are significantly underrepresented in senior management levels in all fields (Cuadrado, Navas, Molero, Ferrer, & Morales, 2012; Desilver, 2018; Gagliardi et al., 2017). Despite women earning more than half of all bachelor's and doctoral degrees (Johnson, 2016), efforts to increase the presence and achievements of women in the workplace, particularly in senior leadership positions in higher education, leave much to be desired.

The dearth of women representation in senior leadership positions within institutions of higher learning remains a matter of great concern (Gagliardi et al., 2017). An even more significant concern is the underrepresentation of African American women

in these high-ranking positions (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Higher education institutions, which should be affirming spaces that encourage women's participation and open windows of opportunity, have failed to diversify their high-level leadership to reflect the rapidly changing demographics of their student bodies (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Although a high number of African American females have earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), the most current *American College President* report revealed that only three out of every 10 university presidents are women and less than one in five presidents (17%) are racial/ethnic minorities. In addition, women of color hold only a 5% share of the 30% of all women presidents (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

Whereas there has been a substantial increase in African American women occupying academic leadership positions in higher education, they continue to be far less likely to rise to high-ranking administrative positions (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Scholars have reported that African American women in academia are confronted with challenges—such as racial battle fatigue, isolation, loneliness, and systemic discrimination—that hamper their career advancement (Arnold, Crawford, & Khalifa, 2016; Carter & Peters, 2016; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Harley, 2008; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Turner, 2002; Watson, 2001). Still, some African American women have successfully navigated these negative experiences to become university presidents, vice presidents, chancellors, vice chancellors, provosts, and deans. Due to their underrepresentation in senior administrative positions, particularly at 4-year institutions (Johnson, 2016), not much is known about the experiences of these women or characteristics they possess that

contribute to their success as leaders in higher education. Black women's success stories serve as valuable resources in understanding their experiences and producing practical strategies that will improve school and workplace environments (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Given the dearth of research on their leadership journeys, I desire to learn more about how the Black women who are senior leaders in universities arrived at such a high executive level. How have they been able to persevere and navigate the complex spaces within higher education administration? What is their educational and career success formula? These lingering questions undergird my urgency to chronicle and better understand the successful educational journeys and career experiences of Black women who occupy senior-level administrative positions in 4-year universities. Hearing directly from the women themselves, this dissertation sought to serves as an additional vehicle to own their stories.

This dissertation investigates the educational and career journeys of African American women who are senior leaders in higher education. Through the use of narrative inquiry, this dissertation seeks to gain insight into how African American women describe their educational journeys and administrative career pathways to senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States. The women's stories would inform educators and university leaders to create an educational environment that fosters the intellectual growth of young Black women as they aspire to leadership in the academy and other professional fields.

Problem Statement

Young Black[1] female students face multiple and intersecting forms of oppression in their educational journeys. For example, some scholars have explored the experiences of young Black women in schools for kindergarten through Grade 12 students (K-12 schools) and found that teachers and administrators often view the social behavior of African American girls as inappropriate, backward, angry, promiscuous, loud, and unladylike (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Harris-Perry, 2011; Morris, 2005, 2012; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Furthermore, researchers have continued to examine discouraging statistics on the overrepresentation of Black girls in school discipline (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015; Morris, 2012; Wun, 2014, 2016). Black girls represent 58% of the student population in public elementary and secondary schools who were referred to law enforcement as part of school discipline and 16% of all girls who were subjected to school-related arrests (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

In higher education, Black female students continue to deal with negative stereotypes and racial prejudices that influence their ability to establish relationships with members of the college community, especially in predominantly White institutions (Banks, 2009; Solórzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). Howard-Hamilton (2003) stated that even though Black American women have been invited to participate in higher education, they are considered and often treated as outsiders with no voice—hence the idea that a "sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American women and the

[1] I use the terms African and Black interchangeably.

dominant group" (p. 21). This *outsider within position* contributes to Black women college students' feelings of isolation and invisibility, and sometimes even feeling as if they must serve as the voice of all Black people because they are the only one in their programs (Bartman, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

Continuing beyond students' level, Black women's participation in higher education as faculty and their career journey to top-ranking positions are fraught with challenges (Battle & Doswell, 2004). Indeed, they must navigate all the negative institutional barriers, structures, and cultures that impede their advancement. For example, The Chronicle of Higher Education (2018) reports that, as of Fall 2016, Black women held more instructional faculty positions than Black men overall but not at the rank of full professor, which is a crucial rank that often determine one's eligibility to become a senior-level administrator. Also, the "think leader, think male" concept (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, & White, 2015, p. 73) among senior leadership in higher education limits opportunity and success for women (Hart, 2006). Indeed, White men have been and still hold the majority of senior-level leadership positions in higher education across the United States (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Gooden, 2009; Tatum, 2008).

Generally, women are disproportionately concentrated in positions that are less visible and do not lead to top leadership positions compared to men (Bowles & McGinn, 2005; Northouse, 2016). Even when women are promoted to senior leadership positions, they are more likely than men to be placed in precarious, riskier situations and are less likely to be included in key networks (Northouse, 2016). While women, in general, have been excluded from the old boy network (Linehan, 2001), African American women are more widely ostracized (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). For example, Bell and Nkomo (2001),

in their study to understand the experiences of Black and White women as they navigate their managerial careers, found that African American women managers experienced more isolation and exclusion from informal networks.

Even though there has been an increase in women's participation in leadership, the pace is plodding, especially in higher education (Gagliardi et al., 2017). When gender is coupled with race, the disparity is even more substantial for African American women (Evans, 2007b; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Stanley, 2009). The number of minority university presidents has barely increased over the last 3 decades, with women of color continuing to be the most underrepresented. In 2011, for example, women of color represented 9% of all college presidents (Cook & Kim, 2012). However, this diminished to 5% in 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

Despite this disparity and the negative experiences, African American women still rise. They have overcome the limited academic opportunities and have earned more than 50% of the doctoral degrees among the Black population (Johnson, 2016), and a few now occupy senior-level leadership positions in higher education (Gagliardi et al., 2017). However, their success stories, which might serve to inspire the next generation of African American young women, have mostly been left out of literature. According to a report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (2013), 53% of African American girls expressed a desire to be leaders and were 75% likely to consider themselves as leaders. If academic literature features the success stories of high-achieving Black women in academia, business, and any other field, it will serve to portray a positive image to young Black girls that "*yes we can*" also be leaders.

The presence of Black women in the corridors of power is not only necessary in substance but also essential in its symbolism. Black female leaders can substantively add new and diverse approaches to the act of leading while also inspiring younger generations to follow in their footsteps. Therefore, it is imperative for researchers to examine how Black women senior leaders navigate the power structure and privilege within higher education and how they develop the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required for successful leadership. Documenting their narratives regarding their success and recognizing their contributions to the educational process highlight their qualities, skills, and abilities.

Purpose of the Study

Although the body of research on Black girls and women, in general, is growing, there is a dearth of studies that exclusively examine the educational and career successes of African American women in senior-level administrative positions. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how Black women in senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States speak about the experiences and characteristics that contribute to their academic achievements, career advancement, and success. Findings from this study provided insight into the research participant's support systems and how they navigated the challenges, and obstacles they encountered on their educational and career journeys. Additionally, the findings highlighted on what made a difference for the participants and how they perceived their pathways to senior leadership in higher education. The ultimate goal is to use the stories of the participants to provide hope and a blueprint for young African American women who aspire to be leaders in the academy or any professional field.

Research Questions

This study was guided by an overarching research question: How do African American women describe their educational and career pathways to senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States? The following subquestions expanded the data collected and the results:

1. What educational and career experiences do African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities say enhanced their journey?
2. What are the characteristics of African American women that they describe as contributing to their career advancement and success in senior leadership positions?

Overview of the Theoretical Framework

Finding and applying an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding the educational and career journeys of African American women can be challenging (Hughes & Howard–Hamilton, 2003). Nevertheless, I utilized the intersectionality theory to examine how the interaction of gender, race, and class impacted the educational and career journeys of this study's participants to understand their success stories. Intersectionality provided me with a robust approach to examine the multiple identities of African American women leaders and how these identities relate to their career journeys within the hegemonic, masculine field of higher education leadership. Undoubtedly, African American women experience multiple unrelenting discriminations in their everyday lives. Being Black, female, and American places African American women in a state of *multiple consciousness* where their intersectional identities influence their realities.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) is credited with coining the term *intersectionality*. Davis (2008) defines intersectionality as the "interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangement, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (p. 68). Crenshaw utilized intersectionality as a theoretical lens to expose the ineffectiveness of single-axis approaches—race and sex—to address the discrimination Black women experienced. Crenshaw (1991) stated that "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately" (p. 1244). Crenshaw contends that scholars need to show how gender and race interact to shape Black women's lived experiences. Specifically, Crenshaw's (1989) "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics" article, critiqued feminist theory for placing White middle-class women's experiences at the center of every woman's reality. Crenshaw (1989) also exposed the limitations of antidiscrimination law to address issues of racism and sexism that directly influence Black women's employment experiences. She argued that

> Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take

> intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (p. 140)

Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) offered me the opportunity to analytically center a marginalized group—African American women—while understanding how their unique characteristics enhanced their career advancement within the hegemonic space of higher education. An in-depth explanation and operationalization of intersectionality are provided in Chapter 2's theoretical framework section. The application of the intersectionality framework for this dissertation, I believe, made a significant contribution to the body of research on African American women in higher education leadership. Through this dissertation, I sought to extend the literature on the application of intersectionality theory, while also making specific contributions to the literature of Black women in higher education administration.

Definitions and Descriptions of Terms

For this dissertation, the following terms are defined:

African American woman refers to an individual woman born in the United States who has an origin linked to the Black racial groups in Africa. It includes people who would identify or check the racial box as Black, African American (McKinnon & Bennett, 2005). In this regard. I use the terms African American women, Black women, and Black females interchangeably.

Leadership is a process whereby one influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2016).

*Senior leadership position*s refers to campus-level positions that require the individuals serving in those positions to make budgetary decisions that affect students,

professors, and professional staff. These positions include the president, vice president, chancellor, vice chancellor, provost, or dean.

Overview of Research Methodology

This qualitative study explores how African American women navigate their educational journeys and administrative career pathways to senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities. Creswell (2013) described qualitative research as an "intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (p. 42). Considering this metaphoric logic helps reflect on the complexities of this study. The participants for this research were African American women whose identities, personal attributes, qualities, skills, and life experiences have profoundly influenced their success.

Merriam (2009) described four critical characteristics of qualitative research: "the focus is on the process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive, and the product is richly descriptive" (p. 14). Because I am interested in the educational and career stories of African American women who are senior leaders in 4-year public universities, I designed this study with a methodology that utilizes narrative inquiry to enable participants to tell their stories. Narrative inquiry is underpinned by the ontological, epistemological, and heuristic assumptions that reality is created through narratives; people make sense of the real world by imposing story structures. Narrative provides researchers with methodologies for analyzing individual stories and relating them chronologically to the participants' lived events (Bell, 2002; Creswell, 2012; Savin-Badin & Major 2013; Slembrouck, 2015).

In qualitative research, a narrative inquiry is both a project and a method (Creswell, 2013). As described by Moen (2006), the narrative approach is a "frame of reference, a way of reflecting during the entire inquiry process, a research method, and a mode for representing the research study" (p. 57). In addition, narrative can be either spoken words or written text that provides a chronological account of research participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2012; Czarniawska, 2004). I utilized the narrative method to explore the various intersections of identity, educational attainment, and professional success experienced by the African American women who participated in this study, all of whom are senior leaders in 4-year universities. Through this study, I sought to reveal a compelling and insightful metanarrative among this group of women.

The principles of narrative inquiry pervaded every step of this dissertation process. The study drew on the experiences of African American women who have achieved success in their education and careers in higher education administration to build a metanarrative with the potential to benefit younger generations. I designed my investigative approach in such a way that it was open to reveal the unique ways that the research participants defined success. In particular, my insistence on not prescribing a specific definition of success[2] in this study—at least, not until I had gathered all the data from the participant interviews—is evidence of my intentional effort to center the voices of the participants. This dissertation needed to capture the stories of Black women and theorize them in insightful ways. In this way, identifying themes can be shared with students and lower-ranked university administrators who are navigating their knowledge

[2] A definition of success is, at last, offered in Chapter 6 by reporting on the many ways that the participants define it for themselves).

acquisition, practical experiences, and individual development plans. As such, this research sought to empirically examine the factors the participants believed to have contributed to their education and career success.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants for this study. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) defined purposive sampling as "the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population. In other words, the researcher selects the sample using experience and knowledge of the group to be sampled" (p. 113). It was critical for me, as the researcher, to select this specific population of women because the study required an exact demographic type. I recognized, as did Merriam (2009), that "purposeful sampling directly reflects the purpose of the study and guides the information-rich cases" (p. 61). Due to the limited number of African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities, I also utilized the snowball sampling strategy, sometimes referred to as network or chain sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2009). This selection strategy involved asking participants to recommend other potential participants who fit the parameters of the study. In total, I planned to recruit eight to 10 participants for this study. However, I ended up recruiting nine participants who occupy various senior leadership positions—president, vice president, chancellor, vice chancellor, provost, vice provost, and associate dean.

I used semistructured interviews, conducted face to face, by telephone, face time, and zoom that lasted approximately 120 minutes. With the permission of the participants, I made audio recordings of the interviews for systematic and in-depth probing without the distraction of note-taking. For each of the face-to-face interviews, I travelled to the

mutually agreed-upon location. I inquired about the educational and career experiences, opportunities, and pathways that have positively influenced participants' journeys to the top. Before each interview, I collected additional data (e.g., news articles, press releases from the university regarding the participant's appointment(s), and resumes/curricula vitae [CVs]). These documents enhanced my understanding of the educational and career trajectories of the participants. Specifically, the resumes and CVs provided a summary of their academic qualifications, experiences, skills, abilities, and career accomplishments, giving me a snapshot of their career pathways.

Significance of the Study

While my objective was to learn about the journeys and successes of African American women leaders in higher education, I hope that the contextual stories and agentic discourses advanced in this research can inform educators, university hiring committees, and young Black women as they aspire to leadership in the academy and other professional fields. This dissertation is intended to offer insight into the educational and career successes of African American women who occupy high-ranking positions in 4-year universities in the United States. Regardless of their success, the voices of African American women leaders are less frequently heard, and their stories are less often documented in academic literature. My methodological choice to use narrative inquiry allowed participants to share their stories and, now, seeks to move the academy and hopefully other social institutions toward an enhanced understanding of what has influenced their success. The results of this research study are intended to advance the understanding of the characteristics that contribute to the success of Black American women who are senior-level administrators in U.S. 4-year public universities.

Furthermore, this study is intended to provide encouragement and strategies for Black women who wish to pursue a senior-level administrative position. Finally, this research adds to the knowledge about the unique potential, skills, abilities, and experiences of African American women, serving as an impetus for higher educational institutions to fulfill the promise of equal opportunity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced my dissertation with an outline of some of the distinct challenges that African American women in topmost leadership positions encounter. Throughout this dissertation, I highlight the significant context that frames the educational journeys and career trajectories of Black women in senior leadership positions in higher education. In the next chapter, I review the literature on the educational and leadership experiences of African American women in U.S. universities.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the characteristics that contribute to the academic achievements and career advancement of Black women in senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States. This review of the associated literature examines the educational and leadership experiences of African American women in the United States. It includes a historical perspective as well as contemporary challenges, opportunities, and successes of African American women. As such, this review of literature is divided into three parts. First, I provide an overview of historical and contemporary perspectives on the experiences of young African American women in PK-12 and higher education in the United States. As scholars (Gregory, 2001; Wilson, 1989) have suggested, a historical framework is relevant in seeking an understanding of the unique academic experiences of Black women within institutions that were initially not designed for them. Significantly, this section elucidates how educational processes discriminate against African American women. Second, I review the literature, highlighting demographic representation, challenges, and survival strategies that African American women leaders employ in their leadership roles in higher education. Finally, I account for the relevance and application of intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to this study.

As Lerner (1992) wrote:

> Black women have always been more conscious of and more handicapped by race oppression than by sex oppression. They have been subject to all the restrictions

> against Blacks and those against women. In no area of life have they ever been permitted to attain higher levels of status than white women (p. xxii)

To fully appreciate the struggle of African American women, it is necessary to review the history of the oppression they have experienced both in society and in education, keeping in mind that the educational system in the United States was created for White males. It is imperative to state here that this review is, by no means, exhaustive in recounting the challenges Black American women have experienced in their quest to obtain education and to uplift the image of the people of African descent. Instead, this review is an assemblage of literature that has a broad bearing on my dissertation.

A Brief History and Current Perspective of African American Women in PK-12 Education

The total denial of education to Black people in the United States was a way to oppress and reinforce slavery. During slavery between 1619 and 1865, laws and customs made it a crime for enslaved Africans to seek education or teach others to read and write (Morris, 2016; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003) because they were considered as "things or property" and a source of labor (Finkelman, 2012, p. 109). Also, slave owners believed that education would "spoil the best nigger in the world" (Davis, 1983, p. 100). Hence, "the first time you [were] caught trying to read or write, you [were] whipped with a cowhide, the next time with a cat-o-nine, and the third time they cut the first joint off your forefinger" (Perry et al., 2003, p. 13). Furthermore, slaves who resisted and ran away were subjected to whipping, branding, and increases in their time of indentured service (Finkelman, 2012). While all enslaved Africans were subjected to physical labor and brutal punishments, women, especially, were more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

They “were flogged and mutilated, as well as raped” (Davis, 1983, p. 7). According to DuBois (1958), during slavery, Black women were “acting as reproductive centers for slavery, their bodies were used to maintain the bondage that held them captive, a maternal paradox that could not have been anything less than mental and physical torture” (p. 169). Slaveholders considered slave women as

> breeders—animals whose monetary value could be precisely calculated regarding their ability to multiply their numbers . . . moreover, since they are breeders as opposed to mothers, their infant children could be sold away from them like calves from cows. (Davis, 1983. p. 7)

The threat of being physically abused did not quell their desire for literacy, though (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003). For enslaved Africans, the ability to read and write was more than a path to freedom—it was a communal act, a political demonstration of resistance to oppression, and a powerful tool for the liberation struggle (Cornelius, 1991; Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003). For Black women, literacy was a means of reclaiming their human dignity and personhood. Williams (2005) told the story of an enslaved Black woman who memorized the letters in notes and newspapers found in the master’s home and shared them with other slaves and the entire community. Over many generations, the African American woman has valued education and its efficacy as a powerful catalyst for facilitating the essential connection between self-improvement, change, and empowerment within her community (Collins, 1990). However, efforts to educate Black Americans often witnessed violent reprisals. For example, in Connecticut, Prudence Crandall’s school for Black girls was destroyed by a mob in 1833 (Evans, 2007a).

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed some educated Black women becoming instrumental in shaping the educational landscape for African American girls and women. They include Nannie Helen Burroughs (1879-1961), Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), Anna Julia (Haywood) Cooper (1858-1964), Charlotte Hawkins Brown (1883-1961), and Lucy Diggs Slowe (1885-1937; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Nannie Helen Burroughs, for example, graduated from high school in Washington, DC. Burroughs attended Eckstein-North University in Kentucky, where she received an honorary master of arts (M.A.) degree in 1907 (Hine, Brown, & Terborg-Penn, 1993). After being denied a teaching position in Washington, DC, Burroughs moved to Philadelphia and worked as the associate editor of *The Christian Banner*, a Baptist newspaper. At the 1900 National Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia, Burroughs delivered a powerful speech titled "How the Sisters Are Hindered from Helping." This startling speech served as an impetus for the formation of the Woman's Convention, an auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention (Harley, 1996; Thomas & Jackson, 2007).

With Burroughs' tenacious effort, the National Baptist Convention approved and established a school for African American girls in Washington, DC. In 1909, Burroughs' long-held dream became a reality when the National Training School for Women and Girls opened with her serving as the president. According to Thomas and Jackson (2007), the school offered classes in "domestic science, missionary work, social work, home nursing, clerical work, printing, dressmaking, beauty culture, shoe repair, and agriculture. Additionally, classes were provided in grammar, English literature, Latin, drama, public speaking, music, and physical education" (p. 360-361). The school operated under Burroughs' leadership until her death in 1961. Three years after Burroughs' death, the

National Training School for Women and Girls was renamed the Nannie Burroughs School. The school currently operates as a private, coeducational elementary school in Washington, DC.

Another trailblazer who contributed to shaping the educational landscape for African American girls and women is Mary McLeod Bethune. Born in Mayesville, South Carolina, Bethune attended Scotia Seminary in Concord, North Carolina, and later the Dwight Moody's Institute for Home and Foreign Missions in Chicago (now the Moody Bible Institute) with the hope of becoming a missionary in Africa. However, her application was denied by the Presbyterian Board of Mission. Bethune moved to Florida with her husband, Albertus Bethune, where she worked at a Presbyterian church. During her time in Florida, Mary realized that African American girls had few educational opportunities. Consequently, she established a boarding school in October 1904, the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls, with five girls and her son, Albert Bethune (Henkes, 1997; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). To support the school financially, Bethune and her students baked and sold pies and made ice cream.

In 1916, 12 years after opening the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls, Bethune established the Mary McLeod Hospital and Nurse Training School for African Americans on the East Coast (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). In 1929, the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls merged with the all-male Cookman Institute to become Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune served as president of Bethune-Cookman College until 1942 when she retired, but she continued as a trustee of the institution until her death in 1955 (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). While Nannie Helen Burroughs and Mary McLeod Bethune differed in their approaches to

activism and educational programs, they were “united in their belief that African American women had to assume the initiative in educating themselves and their people” (Thomas & Jackson, 2007, p. 360).

The systemic and systematic denial of equal access to education for African Americans was challenged in a court of law (*Brown v. Board of Educ.*, 1954). The ruling ended Jim Crow laws and state-sanctioned legal segregation and sought to provide equal educational opportunities for all children. Over 6 decades since the landmark decision, African American girls, in particular, have been subjected to various policies that render them vulnerable to disciplinary practices and dehumanization in U.S. schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (2016), Black girls constitute 8% of the K-12 student population nationwide. However, they represent 13% of students who receive one or more out-of-school suspensions. Black girls make up 20% of girls in public preschools but represent 54% of female preschool children who have received one or more out-of-school suspensions. In 2012, for example, a 6-year-old kindergartener, Salecia Johnson, was arrested, handcuffed, and hauled to a police station in Georgia for throwing books, toys, and wall hangings (D’Arcy, 2012). Similarly, Jmyha Rickman, an 8-year-old elementary student, was handcuffed and driven to a police station in Illinois in 2013 after throwing a tantrum at school (Durante, 2013). Even though Rickman is an autistic student who suffers from depression and separation anxiety (Morris, 2016), she was kept in juvenile detention at the Alton Police Department for 2 hours (Durante, 2013).

Data reveal that there are disparities in educational opportunities and discipline between students of color and White students generally (U.S. Department of Education,

2015). Also, young Black girls and women have had different educational experiences when compared to young Black boys and men as their experiences relate to access to formal education, exclusion from scholastic participation, bias in the curriculum, and instruction (Zamani, 2003). Teachers and administrators often view the social behavior of African American girls as inappropriate, backward, angry, and promiscuous (Chavous et al., 2008; Harris-Perry, 2011; Morris, 2005; Skiba et al., 2002). Disobedience and disruptive behaviors are subjective and discretionary, and Black girls who exhibit confrontational or assertive attitudes are often regarded as loud and unladylike (Morris, 2016). Scholars have described scenarios in which Black girls are forced to choose between being considered a “good” girl—code for acting White—or a “bad” girl—acting loud and ghetto (Lei, 2003; Morris, 2012). Lei (2003) illuminated on this concept further, stating that “loud black girls” use their perceived “loudness” to resist patriarchy practices. As Blake, Butler, Lewis, and Darensbourg (2011) alluded, the perceived failure of Black girls to conform to traditional standards of White femininity—nice, pleasant, respectful, quiet, reserved, and submissive—may be the reasons for high referral rates.

Nationwide, Black girls represent 58% of the student population in public elementary and secondary schools who were referred to law enforcement as part of school discipline, as well as 16% of all girls who were subjected to school-related arrests, despite being only 8% of the total school-aged population (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). For instance, a 16-year-old honor student was expelled because of a poor science experiment in Florida (Klein, 2013). Also, a school resource officer threw a 16-year-old to the floor for insubordination in South Carolina (Ford, Botelho, & Colon, 2015). Though the officer was relieved of his post, the female student and her peer who

videotaped the incident were arrested for violating the “disturbing schools” law (McLeod, 2015). Indeed, each of the young Black women in the aforementioned incidents experienced stricter school discipline policies. Black girls are more likely to be punished in school than White, Hispanic, and Asian girls (National Women’s Law Center [NWLC], 2017). Comparatively, Black girls are 6 times more likely to be suspended from school than White girls and account for one of three school-related arrests (NWLC, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Family Involvement and Expectations in Black Students’ Education

Even though both young African American women and men experience unfavorable school ordeals, research on parental involvement and expectations suggests that families play a significant role in students’ educational success. Several studies have posited that parents who have high educational expectations for their children set those high standards early in their children’s lives, which leads to students’ own high expectations and corresponding academic achievement (Benner & Mistry, 2007; Clark, 1983; Neuenschwander, Vida, Garret, & Eccles, 2007; Rhea & Otto, 2001; Trusty & Niles, 2004; Zhan, 2006). For example, Rhea and Otto (2001) and Trusty and Niles (2004) found that parents’ expectations are strongly associated with the educational expectations of their children and are influential in the transmission of educational values.

Also, studies have demonstrated that parents’ educational accomplishments influence the expectations they have for their children’s educational attainment. Specifically, research has shown that the more education parents have acquired, the

higher their expectations are for their children's educational attainment (De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2004; Hossler & Stage, 1992; Raty, 2006; Zhan, 2006).

In relation to African Americans, scholars have found that Black parents' educational expectations for the academic success of their children are positively correlated to their children's personal expectations and high achievement scores (Flowers & Flowers, 2008; Gill & Reynolds, 1999; Jeynes, 2007; Trusty, 2002; Wood, Kaplan, & McLoyd, 2007). Though dated, Clark's study (1983) remains significant; it studied the family life of high-achieving and underachieving African American students from low-income homes. Clark found that the parents of high-achieving Black students were actively involved in their children's education, set realistic and high expectations, established role responsibilities, and had positive parent-child relationships. Conversely, Clark found that parents of underachieving students were less involved in their children's education and set imprecise and unrealistic goals for them. Nonetheless, positive teacher expectations foster students' expectations, even when parental expectations are low (Wood et al., 2007). Clark's findings (1983) support the notion that a parent's involvement and expectations positively influence student success.

Similarly, Spencer, Grimmett, and Kambui (2015) examined the experiences of African American parents and their high school children's academic achievement. The authors utilized a phenomenological qualitative approach and narrative analysis to understand African American parental involvement and children's academic achievement. Spencer et al. (2015) found that parental involvement in the education of their children motivates them to do well in school. In addition, parents intentionally seek

opportunities for their high-achieving children and acknowledge the positive influence of faith in the children's success.

While the aforementioned studies highlighted the positive impact of Black parents' involvement and expectations on the academic success of their children, research has suggested that African American parents perceive White teachers and administrators as having less expectations for their children (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2006; Murray, 2012), especially when issues of low academic achievement arise, at which point the student often bears the blame (Milner, 2006). On the other hand, Gay and Kirkland (2003) reported that White educators' greatest concerns center around their limited personal and professional experiences with individuals who are racially, ethnically, and culturally different than themselves.

Despite the challenges, young Black women are enrolling in universities and colleges at a higher rate than in the past (Snyder & Dillow, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In the next segment, I provide a brief historical account of the experiences of African American women in higher education. In addition, I give a brief history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and their contributions to the education of Black people in the United States. I also highlight the current status and trends of Black women in colleges and universities.

A Brief History of African American Women in Higher Education

Before the Civil War, Blacks and women were not permitted to go to college or university (Giddings, 2006; White, 1999). Oberlin College has been credited as the first institution of higher learning in the United States to admit women and African Americans (Evans, 2007a; Jones-Wilson, Asbury, Anderson, Jacobs, & Okazawa-Rey, 1996).

Chamberlain (1991) noted, “Women first gained their entry to institutions of higher education in the United States when Oberlin College admitted women students in 1837—more than 200 years after Harvard College was founded for the education of young men” (p. 3). At Oberlin, Black women were confined to a literary degree (L.D.) course of study, considered the “ladies’ course” (Evans, 2007a, p. 21). In 1850, Lucy Stanton Sessions became the first African American woman to complete the L.D. requirements at Oberlin (Evans, 2007a).

Even though few colleges were opened to women and African American students (Evans, 2007a; Mabokela & Green, 2001) for more than a century, documentation of the historical beginnings for women in higher education does not “accurately account for the higher education of African American women” (Rusher, 1996, p. 16). Scholars have reported that, in 1862, Mary Jane Patterson became the first Black woman in the United States to earn a bachelor of arts degree (B.A.), obtaining it from Oberlin College (Cowan & Marquire, 1995; Evans, 2007a; Littlefield, 1997). Three years after Mary Jane Patterson, Fanny Jackson Coppin graduated with a B.A. in 1865, while Mary Church Terrell and Anna Julia Cooper both earned their B.A. degrees in 1884 (Evans, 2007; Henle & Merrill, 1979). In 1869, Fanny Jackson Copping (an Oberlin graduate) became the principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, making her the first Black woman to lead a higher education institution in the United States. In 1889, Josephine A. Silone Yates became the “professor and head of the Natural Sciences Department at Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri” (Littlefield, 1997, p. 166). By 1900, approximately 252 African American women had earned bachelor’s degrees out of 2,541 Black awardees (Evans, 2007a).

While educational opportunities in the pre-Civil War era were bleak (Evans, 2007a), the end of World War I witnessed an increase in the number of Black Americans earning college degrees. Evans (2007a) reported that, by 1918, about 7,304 had received bachelor's, 145 master's, and 25 doctorates. Even though Black women had a higher rate of college attendance relative to Black males, Black women's graduation rate and attainment of bachelor's degrees from highly ranked universities was woefully behind Black men and White women (Evans, 2007a). Also, opportunities were not extended to Black women to join honors programs or preparatory classes that determined their eligibility. Again, they were kept out of prestigious universities that offered opportunities for graduate school (Evans, 2007a).

As Solomon (1985) noted, "In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the black college woman was the exception of the exceptions in that neither black nor white colleges wanted her" (p. 76). For example, in 1929, Dorothy Height was denied admission to Barnard College—a White women's college—because of the institution's quota of two Black women per year. Even though Height had the qualification when she appeared for the admission interview, and they found that she was a Black, her application was immediately rejected (Evans, 2007a; Fears, 2004). In 1939, Lucile Bluford, an African American woman, was admitted to the University of Missouri Journalism School. However, the day she arrived at the school, she was denied entry when the university realized that she was a Black woman. Bluford sued the university, and in 1941, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled in her favor. After the ruling, the university closed its graduate program, citing that most of the professors and students were serving in World War II. In that era, African American women were an average of

"30 years behind Black men and White women in earning the bachelor's, 13 years behind in the master's, 24 years behind in high honors like Phi Beta Kappa, and 50 years behind in earning the Ph.D." (i.e., a doctor of philosophy; Evans, 2007a, p. 58). Higginbotham (2001) argued that "for much of the twentieth century, racist ideologies were the rationale for policies and practices of exclusion" (p. 12) in education.

When African Americans began participating in education, Black men enrolled more than Black women (Evans, 2007a). However, their enrollment witnessed a significant downward shift, which scholars (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2015; Roach, 2001) have attributed to the high rate of incarceration, employment right after high school, racial stereotypes, and a host of challenges on predominantly White campuses.

African American women continue to face significant social, political, and racial subjugation. In the Jim Crow era, a time of racial segregation, Black women were permitted to enter designated public spaces only to serve White people (Cardwell, 2010). Nevertheless, they persevered, viewing education as a means of social advancement. Indeed, the inferiority impression resulting from slavery inspired an intense desire to pursue education as a means of achieving parity both socially and economically (Mabokela & Green, 2001). Notwithstanding the barriers of slavery, post-Civil War challenges, and Jim Crow, some African American women muddled through to earn doctorates. They include Sadie Alexander, who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania; Georgia Simpson, who graduated from the University of Chicago; Eva Dykes, a graduate of Radcliffe College; and Jane Bollin Offutt, a graduate of Wellesley College and Yale Law School (Rankin, 2001). It is indisputable that Black women have been playing an essential role in educational progress and elevating their race in the

United States. Yet, they often do not receive acknowledgment for their achievements and contributions in the field of higher education (Patton, 2009; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). As Zamani (2003) described, the importance of African American women in society and within education has traditionally been "preceded by white men, white women, and African American men" (p. 7).

A Brief History of the Contributions of HBCUs to the Education of Black People in the United States

Before the Civil War, educational opportunities for Blacks were nonexistent, particularly in higher education. Public policies, statutory provisions, and structures prohibited the education of Blacks (Jewell, 2002). As a result, HBCUs were established to meet the postsecondary education needs of Black Americans (Brown & Freeman, 2002; Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010). The first higher education institution for Blacks, the Institute for Colored Youth, was founded in 1837 in Cheyney, Pennsylvania. Seventeen years later, in 1854, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania was founded, and in 1886, Wilberforce University in Ohio was established (Gasman et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 1991). The enactment of the second Morrill Act in 1890 was crucial in the provision of higher education for Black Americans. The act required states with racially segregated public higher education systems to provide a land-grant institution for Black students. In essence, the act stipulated that states with segregated colleges and universities would forfeit federal funding unless they established agricultural and mechanical institutions for the Black population (Gasman et al., 2010). After the passage of the act, public land-grant institutions specifically for Blacks were

established in each of the Southern and border states (Gasman et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

It is of significance that HBCUs were among the first institutions to provide women access to college due to their open-access mission (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Jewell, 2002). Although Black men outnumbered Black women in terms of college and professional school enrollments at Southern colleges in 1900, the trend in college matriculations changed among Black women by the 1930s (Allen et al., 2007). In 1900, for example, 3,115 Black men and 761 Black women were enrolled in HBCUs in the South. However, by 1935, a little over 12,000 Black men and about 16,000 Black women were receiving college and professional education throughout the South (Anderson, 1988).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), as of 2016, there were 102 HBCUs in the United States. Of the 102 HBCUs, 51 were public institutions, and 51 were private nonprofit institutions. The majority of these institutions were located in the Southeastern and Midwestern regions of the United States: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia (Brown & Freeman, 2002). In the 2015-16 school year, 48,900 degrees were conferred by HBCUs, of which 69% were bachelor’s and 16% were master’s degrees. Black students earned 81% of the bachelor’s degrees and 70% of the master’s degrees conferred by these institutions. At both levels, Black females received the majority of the degrees awarded (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

HBCUs have been playing significant roles in the professional development and opportunities for Black Americans since they were established. Anderson (1988) argued that White teachers refused to teach Black students during the era when the public education system was being created. Hence, Black teachers had to be trained quickly to meet the educational needs of Black students. Due to the high demand of teachers, a large number of HBCU students went through teacher education programs, while other Black students enrolled at teachers' colleges (Anderson, 1988). These institutions are credited with raising the literacy rate among newly freed slaves who could not read (Ballard, 1973). Furthermore, HBCUs provided opportunities for African Americans to serve as teachers, administrators, and campus leaders (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007). In addition, the education HBCUs provided created a strong foundation for lawyers, doctors, and leaders to serve the Black community (Allen et al., 2007; Anderson, 1988).

Even though HBCUs represented 3% of all degree-granting institutions in the United States in 2013, they accounted for 17% of the universities supplying the most African American applicants to medical school in that same year (Gasman, Smith, Ye, & Nguyen, 2017). In addition, HBCUs produce more of the nation's African American medical doctors than predominantly White institutions (Capers & Way, 2015) and house 31% of Black chairs and 10% of Black faculty in medical schools (Rodríguez, López, Campbell, & Dutton, 2017). Also, Knight, Davenport, Green-Powell, and Hilton (2012) reported that 50% of African American faculty members in predominantly White institutions received their bachelor's degrees at an HBCU.

Current Trends and the Status of Black Women College and University Students

African American women have been making significant progress in participating in higher education and attaining various degrees. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows that between 2002 and 2012, African American women's enrollment in higher education increased from 1,270,200 to 1,882,700 compared to Black men, whose enrollment increased from 708,500 to 1,079,400 (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). The National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2017) reported that, in 2014, while females constituted the higher percentage of undergraduate students across all racial or ethnic groups, the widest gap was in the subpopulation of African Americans, in which women made up 62% of the total enrollment of Black students compared to 38% for Black men. Trends in graduate school enrollment were similar to those in undergraduate enrollment. Between 2000 and 2014, Black graduate student enrollment increased from 9% to 14% (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

For many years now, African American women have been earning a significantly higher number of bachelor's degrees compared to African American men (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Banks, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). According to Snyder and Dillow (2013), between the 2002-2003 and 2011-2012 school years, Blacks overall had a 49.3% increase in the attainment of bachelor's degrees. Regarding the difference by gender, the number of African American women holding bachelor's degrees increased from 82,759 in 2002-03 to 121,908 in 2011-12. The number of African American men earning bachelor's degrees also rose, from 41,494 in 2002-03 to 63,610 in 2011-12. In the most recent National Center for Education Statistics report (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), the graduation rate for African American women was 45% relative to

35% of African American men. Also, in relation to the graduation rate of White students, females graduated at a rate of 66% compared to males' 60% rate.

Similarly, women overall have earned more master's and doctoral degrees than men in the last decade. But, it is more evident for Black students than for students of other races. In the 2013-2014 academic year, females received 70% of the master's degrees awarded to Black students (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). At the doctoral level, Black women earned 4,802 and 7,632 degrees in 2003 and 2012, respectively (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Recent data confirms that Black women continue to outnumber Black men in doctoral-degree attainment. In the 2013-2014 school year, for instance, the number of African American female students who were conferred doctoral degrees stood at 64%, compared to Black males, which was 36% (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The data seem to suggest that Black women are muddling through well in college. However, a thorough look at the numbers reveals that Black women are underrepresented as college students relative to White women (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

In general, Black students must deal with racism, hate, and White supremacy in their educational journeys. A study by Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, and Bylsma (2003) sought to find African American students' experiences of everyday racism at a predominantly White college. Using a daily diary format, the students reported different types of perceived racist incidents, such as verbal expressions of prejudice, bad service, staring or glaring, and awkward interpersonal exchanges. Students reported interpersonal prejudice as the most common of experiences, which usually happened during interactions with friends in intimate circumstances. Most importantly, these experiences had a significant emotional impact on students' levels of comfort and feelings of being

threatened during the interactions. These treacherous forms of racism on university campuses make academic life very difficult for Black U.S. students (Chao, Mallinckrodt, & Wei, 2012). As Mainah and Perkins (2015) explained, racism is

> not a simple collection of beliefs and attitudes, but a conscious, systematic strategy and process of social and political control and stratification aimed at excluding some groups of people from opportunities and benefits, undermining people's lives and rights, eroding their self-worth, and upholding the degradation of their global consciousness. (p. 9)

Although it is by no means a small feat for African American women to participate in graduate-level education and graduate with advanced degrees, the statistics only tell the results, not their experiences. Every university student experiences some challenges and stresses related to academic rigor, time management, independence, and relationships (Kreig, 2013). However, navigating college as a Black person and the intersection of race, gender, and class contribute to the overwhelming challenges Black women college students encounter (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Watt, 2006). Zamani (2003) stated that "being female and African American places African American women at the confluence of two forms of oppression" (p. 7). Indeed, Black women college students in the United States face an additional "double oppression—racism and sexism" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 19). Scholars have argued that African American female students are members of two historically marginalized groups in higher education (Banks, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Hence, they have unique experiences while in college relative to Black males. Furthermore, scholars have explained that Black women, in general, have to endure the combination of race, sex, and

class and have termed the experience as “triple jeopardy” (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 174) or a tripartite or threefold shroud of oppression (Gregory, 2001, p. 124).

Black female university students have to deal with negative stereotypes and racial prejudices that influence their ability to establish relationships with members of the college community, especially in predominantly White institutions (Banks, 2009; Solórzano et al., 2002; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). These experiences may trigger psychological distress, negatively affecting the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of Black women college students (Love, 2008). King (2003) conducted a study to examine the psychological effect of prejudice attributed to African American women college students. The Black women research participants were made to imagine themselves in an audiotape scenario where White male students made negative evaluations of them. Overall, the results found that racism and the combination of racism and sexism predicted increased stress and decreased social self-esteem for African American women college students. Steele (2010) confirmed that awareness of negative stereotypes toward one’s social group diminishes one’s ability to perform.

Howard-Hamilton (2003) advanced the idea that African American women occupy an *outsider within position* in higher education. She explained that even though Black American women have been invited to participate in higher education, they are considered and often treated as outsiders with no voice—hence the idea that a “sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American women and the dominant group” (p. 21). This outsider within position contributes to Black women college students’ feelings of isolation and invisibility, and sometimes even feeling as if they must serve as the voice of all Black

people because they are the only one in their programs (Bartman, 2015; Shavers & Moore, 2014; Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

Acknowledging and understanding the unique challenges experienced by African American women university students is essential in developing and implementing strategies to support their continual success in higher education. Even though Black American women continue to struggle to access higher education despite seen and unseen obstacles, they persevere with the same tenacity and determination exhibited by their foremothers to seek leadership positions in higher education. In the following section, I highlight the demographic representation of African American women in leadership positions, their challenges, and some strategies they employ in their positions.

Demographic Context: The Invisibility of African American Women Who Are Higher Education Senior Leaders

Studies have documented the continuing rise in the enrollment of minority students and women in colleges and universities (Johnson, 2016; Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016, 2018). Johnson (2016) wrote that women accounted for more than 50% of all undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees conferred in the last decade. Furthermore, Black women hold more assistant and associate professor positions than Black men but not at the rank of full professor (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018). Though the number of African American females in academia is growing, the same cannot be said about institutional leadership. Currently, the long-standing gender gap in higher education leadership remains wide. The underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions within 4-year public universities remains a matter of concern for the higher education community at large (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The *American*

College President Study (Gagliardi et al., 2017) revealed that among all 1,546 university president, chancellor, and CEO respondents, 465 (30%) were women. Of the women, 385 (83.1%) were White, 41 (9%) were African American, 13 (2.9%) were Hispanic, six (1.3%) were American Indian, and eight (1.8%) were Asian American (p. 8). The sobering conclusion from the report is that there is a "slow pace of change in the diversity of top leadership positions at U.S. colleges and universities" (p. 59). The racial and gender composition among leaders "continues to be White (83%) and male (70%)" (p. 4). The reason is that universities prioritize experience in presidents' searches (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Also, there are issues that relate to biases. Furthermore, higher education is an incredibly hierarchical system, officially and unofficially, and has been structured to exclude women and especially women of color. Hence, the pool of candidates is skewed toward White men, which works against efforts to diversify the presidency (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

On the pathway to becoming a dean, provost, vice chancellor, chancellor, vice president, or president of a higher education institution, candidates must earn a doctoral degree and have successfully served through the faculty ranks (Turner, 2007). The *American College President Study* (Gagliardi et al., 2017) reported that about 80% of university presidents are holders of Ph.D. or doctor of education (Ed.D.) degrees from the education, social science, and humanities or fine-arts fields. The study also indicated that about 30% of the presidents served as an interim, 43% were chief academic officers or deans, 16% served in other senior campus executive capacities, and 15% traced their work history outside of academia. Typically, senior administrative leaders in colleges and universities transition from being a professor to department chair to dean to provost to

vice president and then president. An underlying assumption of this monolithic administrative career path is that everyone within the ranks is an academic.

For example, Madsen (2006) examined the educational and career journey of 10 women university presidents (eight Caucasian and two African American) and how they developed the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required for successful leadership. The researcher conducted individual in-depth interviews, each approximately two to three hours in length, using a phenomenological research methodology. The findings revealed similarities in the educational backgrounds and professional career paths among the women presidents. In addition, the study reported that most of the presidents emerged from provosts, vice presidents, vice chancellors of academic affairs, and vice chancellors of administration and finance. Unfortunately, what this study did was put all participants in the same basket by refusing to acknowledge the unique experiences of the African American women presidents. It is essential for this study and future research to investigate how Black women senior leaders have navigated the complex U.S educational system and developed strategies for success. Such an exploration acknowledges the intersection of race and gender as experienced by African American women and how they have navigated the system to reach the top of leadership in 4-year universities.

Of course, not every qualified academic can be or chooses to be an administrative leader in higher education. However, to determine Black women's eligibility within the pool of potential candidates for the position of dean, provost, vice chancellor, chancellor, vice president, or president, it is important to examine their representation regarding college enrollment, degree attainment, and faculty status. Data and reports (The

Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018; Johnson, 2016; Snyder et al., 2016, 2018) have indicated that there are more than enough qualified women to fill the vacancies left by the ever-increasing turnover in higher-level university positions due to age (Gagliardi et. al., 2017). Still, the pathway to senior leadership positions in the academy is narrow for African American women in particular. A cursory look at their upward mobility in the academic hierarchy shows that their numerical representation at the highest levels almost disappears precisely at the full professor and senior administration ranks. There is a body of literature, which is described next, that cites the barriers and challenges that Black women must overcome to succeed in their senior-level leadership positions.

Barriers and Challenges Encountered by Black Women Who Are Higher Education Senior Leaders

The opportunities for Black women in the field of higher education administration has expanded to include the presidency. However, their career journey to the top-ranking positions is fraught with challenges (Battle & Doswell, 2004). They have to jump and navigate all the negative institutional barriers, structures, and cultures that impede their advancement. African American women leaders at predominantly White institutions are often viewed and judged based on the color of their skin and gender. Indeed, their experiences of racism and sexism are not mutually exclusive; instead, they occur in tandem (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) argued that “White women may experience gender discrimination, whereas African American women may experience both gender and racial discrimination” (p. 176). Said differently, the gender and racial discrimination contribute to African American women being overlooked for leadership development opportunities.

Similarly, Scott (2011) contended that "the intersection of race and gender biases often result in workplace inequities that distort others' perceptions of African American women's capabilities and, thus, permeate the everyday experiences of African American women" (p. 13). This doubly oppressive experience puts African American women senior leaders under a magnifying glass, exposing them to scrutiny and criticism and, therefore, making it harder for them to lead effectively. Smith and Crawford (2007) recounted the story of an African American woman who holds a senior-level position in higher education in New York State and who experienced racism and sexism:

> I was a little bit surprised with the racism and sexism problems when I moved to West Virginia or Rochester, New York. I do not believe that I was oblivious to racism, but it was not as blatant. It was directed at me, and those are obstacles that are really hard to get through. (p. 5)

The authors explained that the overt racism and sexism and the time and energy their participant spent in dealing with them made her role as an administrator more challenging.

African American women in higher education leadership endure more than racism and sexism. They also live through classism that shapes their unique position and experience (Crocco & Waite, 2007). Multiple scholars have suggested that African American women experience exclusion, condescension, isolation, and loneliness in their administrative positions (Barksdale, 2007; Bartman, 2015; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Mainah, & Perkins, 2015; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Turner, 2002; Watson, 2001). As studies have revealed, African American women are underrepresented in the topmost leadership positions in higher education (Gagliardi et al.,

2017; Johnson, 2016), hence they have few peers of their race and gender. Thorpe-Moscon and Pollack (2014) described this phenomenon as being the "other" in the workplace. The feeling of otherness (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014) can be a form of isolation, which may lead to few professional friendships or to limited participation in work-related social activity. Further, this otherness can result in invisibility and a corresponding lack of promotional opportunities. Thorpe-Moscon and Pollack (2014) asserted that

> people who feel like an 'other' not only feel different but also feel separated from the essential group. . . . People who are different may take on the status of outsider: they are not truly embraced as part of the team, and they are excluded from opportunities. (p. 2)

This exclusion contributes to the low number of African American women in senior leadership positions.

Simpson (2001) noted that African American women in the topmost leadership positions in higher education "are too often the 'only Black women' or the 'only Black person' in their setting and this alone makes them ripe for multiple emotional pitfalls" (p. 655). Similarly, Jimison (2008) described her career trajectory, experiences, and the issues of isolation and loneliness this way:

> I will admit, as a person of color, that it was not easy working at an institution that was not diverse. I often felt isolated. As the only Black woman in a management position at the college at the time, I never quite felt accepted in my work environment. (para. 4)

The underrepresentation of Black women in high-ranking administrative positions leaves them with limited contact with colleagues who share the same gender, race or ethnicity, culture, and life experiences, hence the low numbers and dispersion of African American women in higher education senior leadership positions (Harris, 2007).

The repeated racist experiences that African American women encounter on university campuses can lead to the feeling of racial battle fatigue. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) described racial battle fatigue as "social-psychological stress responses (e.g., frustration, anger, exhaustion, physical avoidance, psychological or emotional withdrawal, escapism, acceptance of racist attributions" (p. 552) directly associated with being a person of color and a target of racism. Harley (2008) posited that

> African American women at predominantly White institutions suffer from race fatigue—the syndrome of being overextended, undervalued, unappreciated, and just knowing that because you are a Negro in residence that you will be asked to serve and represent the "color factor" in yet another capacity. (p. 21)

Arnold et al. (2016) contended that when Black faculty members constantly have their credentials questioned, have a heavy workload, are not respected by White colleagues, and are culturally, socially, and professionally alienated, their frustrations can result in strained relationships.

Another challenge that impedes the career progression of African American women to senior-level positions within institutions of higher learning is what Padilla (1994) referred to as cultural taxation. Padilla posited that higher education administrators impose on faculty and administrators of color to respond to certain types of situations; they "assume that we are best suited for specific tasks because of our

race/ethnicity or our presumed knowledge of cultural differences" (p. 26). African American faculty and administrators are often expected to address diversity-related issues within the institution and participate in university meetings in which they are expected to be the only one to represent all African American people (Barksdale, 2007; Harley, 2008; Nichols & Tanksley, 2004; Smith & Crawford, 2007). Since African American women leaders in the academy are very few, especially at the senior leadership level, they become overwhelmed and feel *tokenized*. Joseph and Hirshfield (2011) reported the frustrations of an African American female professor on the expectations from her colleagues to be the departmental voice of diversity:

> I feel that my colleagues may feel in the back of their mind . . . if we're talking about an issue, then I'm going to bring up the aspect of race, culture, diversity as it applies to the given situation. Whereas they are able to talk about that same topic and never acknowledge any aspect of being affected by those kinds of issues. And so I wonder sometimes if I'm . . . stereotyped as the voice of diversity. That's the only thing I'm going to contribute to the conversation. (p. 126)

Additionally, African American female leaders are usually asked to serve in other capacities, such as mentoring other women of color and students of color (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011).

Furthermore, institutional barriers that obstruct the career advancement of African American women to senior leadership positions in colleges include "a lack of job advancement opportunities, a lack of mentors, or being presented with only stereotypical female worker challenges" (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005, p. 4). It is a challenging task

to match African American women in a mentor-mentee relationship given that they lack peers in midlevel to senior-level positions (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Huston, 2007; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Smith & Crawford, 2007). In their study on African American female college and university presidents, Jackson and Harris (2007) argued that the "limited number of Black American female college and university presidents makes it difficult for aspiring leaders to find role models who have managed to break through the barriers of race and gender" (p. 119). The lack of mentorship opportunities also becomes an additional concern for Black women in these positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Mainah & Perkins, 2015).

In addition, the power structure within educational administration can determine who ascends the career ladder. Frequently, Black women are discouraged from stepping onto the ladder in the first place (Davis, 2016). African American women are given insufficient information or receive no encouragement to pursue leadership positions from friends, coworkers, and past employees, while African American men are encouraged to enter administration more frequently (Growe & Montgomery, 1999). This phenomenon persists even though women who earn doctoral degrees are more likely than men to desire an academic career (Jackson & Harris, 2007).

On a larger scale, African American women have been excluded from the old boy network (Linehan, 2001; Searby & Tripses, 2006) that is typically made up of White men, sometimes White women, and, on a smaller scale, Black men who hold very influential positions. The lack of participation in this networking opportunity for Black American women closes the window on gaining knowledge about future senior-level administrative positions, although they may possess the necessary credentials and

experience, and prevents the women from knowing the intricate details of the application process. The dearth of formal and informal social networks for Black women often results in a lack of opportunity, information, and encouragement, all of which, if made accessible, could lead to career advancement.

For African American women who obtain leadership positions, the kind of treatment they receive from colleagues and other institutional employees often lessens their power and influence within their institutions (Barksdale, 2007; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Turner, 2002; Watson, 2001). This dearth of power, respect, and recognition impedes their proficiency as leaders and, then again, hurts the institutions that otherwise might benefit from their expertise, decision-making abilities, and collegial relationships. Nichols and Tanksley (2004) conducted a study about the barriers and conflicts faced by highly educated African American women, as well as the careful balancing of family obligations and successful strategies that they employ, by examining the members of a national organization comprised of African American women with terminal degrees in education, medicine, law, science, social science, and business. They found that friends, coworkers, past employees, and other professors tried to prevent African American women from achieving their goals. The authors summarized a participant's claim about her not being respected in her position, even with the proper educational credentials: "Some of her colleagues would not refer to her as Doctor but would refer to her as Miss, acknowledging their disrespect for her doctoral degree" (p. 178).

On the issue of marginalization of African American women, Patitu and Hinton (2003) explained it as a "circumstance that has placed these women outside of the flow of

power and influence within their institutions" (p. 82). Unquestionably, marginalization affects the self-esteem of African American women and increases their self-doubt (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), particularly when their positions require that they make important decisions that will impact their departments or the entire institution. The underrepresentation of Black women in senior leadership positions in higher education could be considered as a lack of critical mass. Miller (2003) explained that critical mass "exists whenever, within a given group [of individuals], there are enough members from a particular group such that they feel comfortable participating in the conversation and that [others] see them as individuals rather than as spokespersons for their race" (p. 18). Indeed, there is a lack of *critical mass* of African American women in the academy. Hence, there is a lack of African American women in senior leadership positions, which negatively impacts their work.

According to Patitu and Hinton (2003), search committees usually eliminate African American women using filters, thereby limiting their chances in the hiring pool. Sagaria (2002) identified four filters—normative, valuative, personal, and debasement—that search committees use as screening devices in an administrative search. The *normative* filter focuses on qualifications, such as candidates' education, administrative experience, credentials, academic accomplishments, or technical expertise. The *valuative* filter is used to screen candidates on their professional behavior, leadership and decision-making style, and their fit and image within the university. The *personal* filter looks at a candidate's personality, character traits, attitudes, habits, family composition, and sexual orientation. Finally, the *debasement* filter is typically used for screening Black women and men. Search committees use the debasement filter to question the seriousness or

genuineness of Black women's and men's interest in a position while devaluing their experiences and competencies (Sagaria, 2002). Even though there has been a scant gain in the numbers of Black women in the upper echelons of higher education leadership, they are incredibly underrepresented compared to White men, White women, and Black men (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Johnson 2016).

Coping Strategies Employed by African American Women Who Are Higher Education Senior Leaders

Coping is the way individuals manage stressful life circumstances. Identifying stressors provides a person the ability to eliminate the causes and thus alleviate the effects (Orzechowska, Zajączkowska, Talarowska, & Gałecki, 2013). Coping strategies, therefore, are the efforts an individual initiates to try to master, tolerate, reduce, overcome, or endure stressful events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research has highlighted various coping strategies that are used by African American women in educational leadership positions, such as reliance on religion or spirituality, family, and professional organizations and conferences.

Religion and Spirituality

Despite the negative experiences that Black women have endured in their senior administrative positions, many perceive leadership as a calling in pursuing their positions (Bower & Wolverton, 2009). Some scholars have found that African American women educational leaders rely on their faith in God, spirituality, and belief that a higher power guides their work (Agosto & Karanxha, 2011; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Johnson-Bailey, 2003; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010). Black women may find support and stress relief in their spirituality through praying, reading the Bible, and

attending church services (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007). In dealing with adverse situations in their positions, some African American women administrators in the academe may activate their spirituality, pray to God, and allow the higher power to intervene (Agosto & Karanxha, 2011). Patitu and Hinton (2003) described the coping strategy of a research participant who serves as a vice provost for student development in a Research II institution: “Her strong faith in God and her prayer life, like those of the other four women, stand out as her main coping mechanism” (p. 83).

Likewise, Witherspoon and Taylor (2010) reported how one of their participants, Avery, relies on her faith to persevere: “This job is hard, but I will stay until He tells me to do something else. He [God] never promised us this life would not be hard. I knew this job was deep when I took it. So did He. If He saw fit to give me the position, then He thinks I can handle it. He does not give us more than we can handle” (p. 28). Henry and Glenn (2009) believed that the faith Black women have in God is a connective strategy to assist them in “overcoming the issues of isolation and marginalization they experience in higher education” (p. 10). Witherspoon and Taylor (2010) argued that any attempt to discern the meaning of African American women’s faith would be incomplete without a critical reflection upon *the Black church*. They further claim that there is no single body of doctrine that describes the Christian religious identity of Black people in the United States. However, there is a common experience that comes from the formation of the Black Church. Henry and Glenn (2009) added that spirituality is a significant component of Black Americans’ identity and a powerful means for personal growth, especially for African American women in groups. Douglas and Peck (2013) offered similar findings based on their exploration of the role of spirituality across the Black diaspora. Therefore,

it is by no means a surprise that Black women in topmost leadership positions in higher education, who are overburdened with a plethora of professional demands, may resort to establishing supportive relationships with other Black women who share the same spiritual connectedness and everyday struggles.

Family

Similar to spirituality, the family has been cited as providing a strong support system and encouragement for African American women administrators (Caldwell & Watkins, 2007; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Smith & Crawford, 2007). For example, Crawford and Smith (2005) conducted a qualitative study about African American women who hold or held senior-level administrative positions, such as assistant dean, associate dean, dean, vice president, executive vice president, associate vice president, assistant to the president, provost, chancellor, and president. One of the participants described the influential role her family played in her life:

> My parents were role models. My father taught and pastored a church . . . and my mother was a professional secretary. This was very influential in helping me understand how one works and keeps it together. My mother was an organized person who taught us how to survive in the black community and the white community. (p. 60)

In a similar qualitative study, Davis and Maldonado (2015) utilized the intersectionality theory to explore the lived experience of African American women and how they developed as senior leaders in higher education. The authors found that family members laid a strong foundation for research participants to develop the ability to

become successful, maintain integrity, demonstrate confidence, and remain resilient. Cheung and Halpern (2010) contended that women in topmost leadership positions rely on their husbands and extended families for support. In particular, the women credited their husbands for taking on a substantial share of household chores and providing emotional support and encouragement.

Professional Organizations and Conferences

Another strategy that African American women faculty and administrators have been utilizing is connecting with other Black women in the academy during professional conferences (Henry & Glenn, 2009). For instance, the African American Women's Summit has been hosting preconference workshops at the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) annual conventions for some time (Henry & Glenn, 2009). Also, the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE), a national organization that promotes the intellectual growth and educational development of Black women in higher education, organizes conferences to celebrate the accomplishments of Black women in higher education (ABWHE, n.d.). Other known educational organizations—such as the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), and American Educational Research Association (AERA)—provide professional conference opportunities for "Black women in the academy to connect and to share their personal and professional struggles and success strategies" (Henry & Glenn, 2009, p. 11). Indeed, annual conferences have become necessary for Blacks in higher education to meet and connect with their colleagues and role models who look like them.

Mentoring African American Women Leaders

Scholars have described mentoring to be a process by which an individual establishes a developmental relationship with a protégé to assist that person on the career path and provide professional experience as needed (Clayton, Sanzo, & Myran, 2013). Researchers have posited that, for a protégé to learn from a mentor, they should possess characteristics such as strong learning orientation, motivation, honesty, confidence, dependability, loyalty, and communication skills (Mullen, 2010; Searby, 2014). A mentoring relationship usually exists between a senior colleague or a more experienced individual who gives time, support, valuable insight, and encouragement to a junior colleague or a less experienced individual (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hudson, 2016; Santamaria, 2003). Thus, mentoring provides protégés more promotional opportunities, higher job satisfaction, and increased retention; introduces the protégé to important member of the organization; and builds more self-confidence (Dow, 2014). And mentoring opportunities must incorporate mentors' and protégés' positive interpersonal traits (Irby, 2017).

In higher education, mentoring is considered an essential ingredient that enhances one's advancement and career development (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Van Der Linden, 2005). Individuals who have ascended in higher education administration have used mentorship as an opportunity to share, empower, and encourage protégés (McDade, 2005). The resources that mentors provide to mentees, such as references, access to opportunities, and exposure to professional networks and associations, are some of the benefits of mentorship (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019). Mentors in higher education usually remove existing barriers for less privilege, especially those seeking senior-level

leadership positions. Thus, mentorship is a critical way to prepare and encourage Black women who aspire to be leaders (Bates, 2007; Mullings, 2014).

Even though mentoring Black women, especially in predominantly White institutions, lessens the challenges related to their professional experiences (Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013), it is important to note that Black women experience invisibility, social exclusion, poor mentoring, stymied career advancement, and low self-efficacy, all of which results in a limited number of Black women leaders who are readily available to effectively provide support and mentoring (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008; Patton, 2009). Due to the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education, they are overrepresented on boards and committees to the extent that their overall effectiveness suffers (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Patton, 2009). Essentially, there is a lot of work to be done to provide quality mentoring experiences to African American women in higher education institutions because they often find it difficult to locate suitable mentors (Patton & Harper, 2003).

More so, it is difficult to identify mentoring strategies that effectively contribute to the success of African American women (Grant, 2012). Scholars have suggested mentoring as an effective strategy to achieve institutional leadership success and succession planning (Briscoe & Freeman, 2019; Grant, 2012; King & Gomez, 2008). But there is scant evidence in the literature as to a conceptual framework that could measure the effectiveness of mentoring outcomes for African American women in predominantly White institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Finding and applying appropriate theoretical frameworks for understanding the educational and career journeys of African American women can be challenging (Hughes & Howard–Hamilton, 2003). For this study, I desired to use a framework that centered the voices and perspectives of research participants. Also, I sought a framework that would undergird my research questions and guide the interpretations of the findings. Furthermore, I searched for a theory that seeks to understand the multiple identities of African American women and the interpretation of their unique experiences. Lastly, I looked for a framework that would help me understand and learn how Black women claim their place within educational and leadership spaces in higher education. I selected intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) as the most relevant for this dissertation.

The intersectionality framework foregrounds women Black women. It emphasizes the examination of how race, gender, and class identities of Black women intersect to create their unique experiences. Thus, intersectionality refers to the interaction of social and cultural constructs, which are useful in understanding the complex experiences of African American women leaders in the workplace (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). When race, gender, and social class intersect, they influence the social realities and lived experiences of Black American women (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Horsford & Tillman, 2012; Parker, 2005; Stanley, 2009). In other words, the intersection of race and gender is of particular importance to understanding Black women because of the complex political and social context in which they live in the United States (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). Intersectionality provides researchers with a framework to avoid the “single-axis” analysis (Tefera, Powers, & Fischman, 2018, p. viii) that focuses on specific social

identity (e.g., race, gender, or class), and instead, opens an intellectual opportunity to identify the gaps and silences between these identities. By applying an intersectional approach to research, scholars are able to "socially locate individuals in the context of their 'real lives'" (Berger & Guidroz, 2009, p. 1).

Engaging with intersectionality (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Horsford & Tillman, 2012) in this study required me to substantiate how the multiple identities of African American women influence their educational experiences and empower them as they cross *figurative borders* (Crawford, Walker, & Valle, 2018) to shape the structural dynamics of power and inequality within the hegemonic masculine field of higher education leadership. Indeed, I used intersectionality to understand how Black American women who are senior university administrators are challenging and shaping policies, systems, and discourse while establishing themselves as leaders who work across identity and cultural contexts. I heard directly about the experiences, opportunities, challenges, and successes of Black American women in senior leadership positions in higher education. As such, I believe that intersectionality offered me the opportunity to center their voices and experiences while countering narratives about their identities, capacities, and capabilities. In the following section, I explain intersectionality within the context of my study.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989) referenced Sojourner Truth's legendary question "Ain't I a woman?" that she posed at an 1851 women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio, and that query could be considered an early example of intersectionality. In Truth's speech, she described her inhumane experiences of slavery to assert that the experiences and rights of

African American women are significant to the fight for women's rights. Scholars such as hooks (1981), Patricia Hill Collins (1989), Angela Davis (1983), Audre Lorde (1984), and the Combahee River Collective (1982) have all illuminated the interdependence of race, class, and sex in forming a system of oppression and inequality. In 1982, for example, a small group of African American women in Boston released "A Black Feminist Statement," which argued that race-only or gender-only analyses do not completely represent the social injustices that African American women experience and that Black women experience race, gender, social, class, and sex injustices simultaneously (Combahee River Collective, 1995).

Drawing from the tradition of Black feminism and activism, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with coining the term *intersectionality*. The theory of intersectionality asserts that various forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, classism, and genderism, do not act separately but work together, thereby creating a system that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). In other words, intersectionality emphasizes the multidimensionality of Black women's lived experiences. In her article "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics," Crenshaw (1989) critiqued feminist theory for placing White middle-class women's experiences at the center while exposing the limitations of antidiscrimination law to address issues of racism and sexism that directly influence Black women's employment experiences. Crenshaw (1989) stated that the entire feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse needed to be "rethought and recast" (p. 140) in

order to be able to embrace the experiences and concerns of Black women. Crenshaw (1989) argued:

> Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated (p. 140).

To Crenshaw, feminist theory has lost its significance for Black women because it advances the course of White women while overlooking the experiences of women of color. Also, in public policy discourse on the needs of Black communities, the interests of Black women, in particular, are usually relegated to the margins.

Crenshaw's use of metaphors helped scholars to think and analyze the ways that power, identity, privilege, and opportunity work against people from minoritized backgrounds. Crenshaw (1989) used a traffic intersection as a metaphor to further illustrate how Black women experience discrimination in many ways. She noted:

> Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. (p. 149)

Using the metaphor of the traffic stop, Crenshaw illuminated how Black women experience racism and sexism simultaneously. This analogy implies the merging of multiple identities, leaving Black women at the intersection unprotected and therefore injured by the legal system. Crenshaw (1989) Crenshaw argued that intersectionality challenges the long-standing judicial approach of adjudicating race and sex discrimination cases in distinct ways because the intermingled discriminatory practices to which Black women object cannot be untangled. She wrote:

> Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men. Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women. (p. 149)

In examining the judicial treatment of Black women plaintiffs in *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, *Moore v. Hughes Helicopter*, and *Payne v. Travenol*, Crenshaw (1989) revealed the flaws in judges' interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Indeed, Title VII prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. However, in the three court cases, Crenshaw noted that the judges treated the issues of race, sex, and gender discrimination as separate and mutually exclusive. According to the judges, the benchmark for sex discrimination against Black women is the experience of White women, and the benchmark of race

discrimination against Black women is the experience of Black men. Simply put, Black women could only claim race and sex discrimination if their experiences were the same as White women and Black men. Hence, the "compound" discriminatory experiences of Black women were not recognized under the law (p. 142).

Furthermore, Crenshaw (1989) used the basement metaphor to demonstrate how antidiscrimination law works against Black women. She described the basement as a hatch, as a means to seek justice. In the basement, some people are standing at the top and some at the bottom. The people at the top, whose heads "brush up against the ceiling" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 151), are disadvantaged by a single factor, while those at the bottom are disadvantaged by many factors. Only the people at the top of the basement have the opportunity to exit through the hatch. Carastathis (2016) emphasized that the basement metaphor demonstrates how those "left in the basement" (p. 97) are people whose experiences and claims are invisible in the legal system (i.e., the hatch).

Crenshaw (1991) broadened her scope in the application of intersectionality to examine violence against Black women. In doing so, she identified three categories of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. Structurally, Black people and women are considered to have a lower identity status in the U.S. (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). Hence, Black women occupy a social position that exposes them to both racism and sexism (Crenshaw, 1991). Representationally, Black women are frequently and negatively portrayed in the media as Jezebel, who is hypersexual and promiscuous; Mammy, who is asexual and nurturing; or Sapphire, who is domineering and emasculating (West, 1995). Politically, Black women are members of the two most subordinated groups in the U.S. that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. That

is, Black women are confronted with advancing the interests of people of color and women, respectively, and Black women may feel torn between the ideas, beliefs, and aims of the two sociopolitical groups that claim to represent women and claim to represent Black people.

These three categories of intersectionality highlight the overlapping ways that race and gender influence violence against women of color, which contemporary feminist and antiracist discourse have failed to consider. Therefore, to accurately measure the subjugation of Black women, researchers must understand how race and gender interact to shape the various dimensions of Black women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). So, Crenshaw (1989, 1991) invited scholars to acknowledge the legacy of exclusions of women of color from feminist and antiracist works and the influence of those omissions on both theory and practice. Crenshaw (1991) cautioned that intersectionality is not a new "totalizing theory of identity" (p. 1244) but rather an analytical framework for understanding structural power relations.

Since the theorization of intersectionality, scholars who have utilized it have accentuated that it is "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Intersectionality is a way of theorizing identity as well as understanding the "multiplicity of social, historical, and cultural discourses" (Mattson, 2014, p. 10). Indeed, intersectionality serves as the theoretical framework for examining "multi-dimensional research variables and presents an approach that grew out of feminist and Black feminist standpoints" (Witherspoon, 2009, p. 54). Parker (2005) described intersectionality as a framework for interpreting and analyzing the experiences of African American women in

positions of authority in predominantly White organizations. As a research framework, intersectionality provides an in-depth understanding of how racism, sexism, classism, and other social realities affect Black women (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Stanley, 2009).

Hancock (2013) argued that empirical research conceptualizes intersectionality as a theory that "fits four standards of empirical social research: (1) it explains a phenomenon, (2) it is grounded in a substantive literature, (3) it is falsifiable, and (4) it is methodologically agnostic" (p. 260). Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) further maintained that

> what makes an analysis intersectional . . . is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. This framing – conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power – emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is. (p. 785)

Collins (2012) situated the analytical capability of intersectionality best by explaining that it

> challenges binary thinking, shifting the analytic focus on the fluidity among, interrelationships between, and co-production of various categories and systems of power. As a result, epistemologically, intersectionality highlights the various standpoints that "inter" social locations occupy; these alternative standpoints challenge truth claims advanced by historically powerful social actors. (p. 454)

The initial components of the intersectionality theory (race, gender, and class) created a three-part concept used to understand the lives of African American women.

Over time, scholars have broadened it to include the interaction of sexuality, religion, education, immigration status, occupation, socioeconomic status, age, power relation, and other social identity markers, thus creating an opportunity for intersectionality to be more applicable to various marginalized groups (Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 2015; Hancock, 2013; Jones, Misra, & McCurley, 2013; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Shams (2015) utilized intersectionality to explore how Bangladeshi Muslims negotiate their identities to navigate interactions within Mississippi's predominantly White Christian society. The author interviewed 12 (seven women and five men) lower- to middle-class participants. Shams (2015) found that most of the participants distanced themselves from the Islamic religion to peacefully navigate their daily social interactions while highlighting their ethnicity. The author explained that using intersectionality as an analytical framework revealed how "religious, ethnic, and gendered relations of power, as well as the transnational dimensions of privilege and oppression, shape the ways in which the Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants negotiate their identities and social position" (p. 393).

Additionally, Shaw, Chan, and McMahon (2012) used data from the national Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to apply intersectionality to quantitatively examine whether there was an interaction among disability, gender, age, race, and employer characteristics when considering the proportion of harassment complaints versus other forms of discrimination allegations. The authors utilized the Exhaustive Chi-Squared Automatic Interaction Detector (Exhaustive CHAID) to analyze their research data. Shaw et al. (2012) found that an individual with specific characteristics experienced a higher risk of disability harassment; these characteristics included being female or older, having a behavioral

disability, having racial minority status, and working in manufacturing, health care, public administration, or retail industries. The researchers concluded that there existed "the presence of an intersectionality phenomenon that may affect the likelihood of experiencing disability harassment to such a level that would elicit a formal complaint with the EEOC" (p. 89).

Minorities, in general, experience some barriers in their quest for career advancement. However, when race, gender, and social class converge, they create a "double jeopardy" (Jean-Marie et al., 2009, p. 563) for African American women, consequently reducing their possibilities of obtaining leadership positions (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Indeed, gender, coupled with race, inspires perceptions and attitudes that contribute to the dearth of African American women in top executive leadership positions (Stanley, 2009). Some scholars have utilized intersectionality to understand the experience of women of color in educational leadership (Bass, 2009; Horsford, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2013; Peters, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010).

For example, Jean-Marie (2013) investigated the experiences of two early-career Black female educational leaders in the United States. The main question for the case study was, "What are the experiences of highly visible, early career African American principals in a large urban school district? Specifically, how do age, gender, and race intersect in their professional experiences?" (Jean-Marie, 2013, p. 616). She found that the school leaders were confronted with age barriers on their journey to becoming a school leader and with the intersection of racism, sexism, and ageism. Jean-Marie (2013) recounted the experience of one of the principals:

> The head of the department in charge of hiring after the interview called me and said, please keep applying. You were awesome at the interview! They just don't think you're ready because of your age . . . don't have a lot of experience." I asked, "How will I ever get it if I don't get a chance? But thank you for this call." The district had just denied me a position I was qualified for because of my age. (p. 262)

Truly, societies, organizations, and some individuals with socially dominant identities have institutionalized a pecking order to shape societal power and privilege in ways that impact minoritized people.

Over the past several years, higher education scholars have incorporated intersectionality into their research (Mitchell et al., 2014; Museus & Griffin, 2011). For example, Museus and Griffin (2011) described the significance of using intersectionality in higher education research and argued that intersectionality precisely mirrors the diversity in higher education, helps in facilitating the "excavation of voices and realities at the margins" (p. 9), "promotes a greater understanding of how converging identities contribute to inequality" (p. 10), and "avoids simultaneous advancement and perpetuation of inequality" (p. 11). Furthermore, researchers have utilized the intersectionality framework to examine leadership in higher education and faculty (Hernandez, Ngunjiri, & Chang, 2015; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Sulé, 2011).

Jean-Marie et al. (2009) examined the intersection of race, gender, and leadership as it concerns Black women leaders in higher education. Using narrative inquiry as a methodology, the authors interviewed 12 African women administrators. Jean-Marie et al. (2009) defined administrators to include a diverse body of leaders holding titles such

as president, academic dean, vice chancellor, vice president, executive director, and university attorney. They found that research participants experienced segregation, race, sex, and gender discrimination in their pursuit of educational goals and professional careers (e.g., terminal degrees, teaching professions, and administrative roles). The researchers (Jean-Marie et al., 2009) recounted the experiences of one of the participants, Vice President Johnson, when she was a graduate student at an Ivy League university:

> I had the misfortune of an advisor who was very sexist in addition to racist. I remember one day being in the laboratory and this man said to me, why don't you go back to a [Black institution] to get your degree? Being very naïve at the time and not being quick with my smart aleck answers, I said, "But they don't have a Ph.D. at (this institution) in this area." And then one day he took me into the office and said, "I think that you need to take a master's." I asked, "Are you saying these things to me because I am a woman and Black?" He replied, "You are quite justified in your opinion." (p.571)

Jean-Marie et al. (2009) concluded that even though progress has been made in U.S. society, racism and sexism continue to thrive in subtle ways.

Even though there is literature on intersectionality, there is a paucity of research that addresses the educational and career journeys of African American women in senior leadership positions in higher education (Alston, 2005; Byrd, 2009; Horsford & Tillman, 2012; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Stanley, 2009). For this study, I utilized the intersectionality theory to examine the interaction of gender, race, class, career, other social construct identities, and educational journey to understand the success stories of African American women in senior leadership in higher education. Specifically, this

theory provided a framework for learning how African American women have constructed their identities and how their identities have influenced their success within their professional contexts. My aim in applying intersectionality to this study was to facilitate my understanding of the identities that Black women have embodied to navigate the White supremacist, sexist, capitalist, homophobic power structures. These structures have consistently placed Black women at the bottom of the totem pole even while, in the context of this study, Black women have proven that they can and do rise to upper-level administration.

As an emerging scholar, I considered intersectionality to be a conceptual aspiration. I viewed intersectionality as an approach to analyzing and understanding the relationships of power and privilege within educational leadership and how they have shaped Black American women's leadership experiences. As I engaged with intersectionality, I was reminded, as a transnational male researcher, of the importance of allyship and remaining "humble and to look for who is missing" (Harris & Leonardo, 2018, p. 20) in higher education leadership discourse. By studying the educational and professional journeys of Black American women within their own contextual backgrounds, I acknowledge that the context of their lived experiences has provided me with a "deeper understanding of both structural and political intersectionality' (Jordan-Zachery, 2007, p. 261). This study has allowed me to understand how my participants experienced intersectionality. I believe that intersectionality has the potential to transform educational leadership by exposing the systemic power structure and privilege (Bilge, 2014) within the educational system, thereby helping leaders create more equitable and socially just educational spaces.

Many studies have advanced that African American women are confronted with challenges, such as racism, genderism, sexism, race fatigue, isolation, loneliness, and systemic discrimination, that influence their educational and career experiences and advancement (Carter & Peters, 2016; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Harley, 2008; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Turner, 2002; Watson, 2001). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of literature on the success stories of Black women who are in senior leadership in higher education. This study seeks to fill this gap.

Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

As discussed above, there are a plethora of studies about the challenges African American women confront in their educational and career journeys. While it is imperative to know, acknowledge, understand, and speak against the issues that create undesirable educational and career experiences for Black women, it does little to help young Black women, practitioners, and researchers understand how African American women who are university leaders have been able to persevere and navigate the complex spaces within higher education administration. Hence, I approached this study from an anti-deficit perspective (Harper, 2010). Drawing on the reality that anti-deficit theory seeks to identify factors that correlate with success (Gourd & Lightfoot, 2009), I believe that African American women have unique qualities and characteristics necessary for success in any field.

Harper (2010) developed and utilized the anti-deficit achievement framework to explore the successful educational experiences of Black male students in science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses. Harper (2010) positioned the framework as an alternative to dominant theories in education and argued that

> instead of relying on existing theories and conceptual models to repeatedly examine deficits, researchers using this framework should deliberately attempt to discover how some students of color have managed to succeed. . . . The anti-deficit achievement framework is informed by theories from psychology, sociology, and education, each of which can be explored in an instead-of fashion. (p. 68)

In the study, Harper (2010) reframed deficit-based questions to participants to reflect an anti-deficit perspective. For example, he reframed "Why do so few Black male students enroll in college?"—a deficit-based question—to "How were college aspirations cultivated among Black male undergraduates who are currently enrolled?" (p. 68)—an anti-deficit-oriented question. Thus, instead of focusing on students' failures, the anti-deficit achievement framework identifies factors that help students to succeed in higher education. Underpinning this framework is the idea of providing opportunities for successful individuals to share their experiences (Harper, 2010).

Indeed, inviting African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities to share their success stories is the main purpose of this research. The anti-deficit achievement framework has not been applied previously to this specific population. However, I believe that its application to my study is appropriate because my participants can be said to be successful, given the documented challenges they have encountered and their current positions. There is so much to learn about how they navigated their educational and career journeys. If we are to refocus research about the

underrepresentation of African American women in senior leadership positions in higher education, then researchers must listen to the voices of those who have been successful. Just as Harper (2010) did, I have framed my research questions and interview protocols to reflect an anti-deficit perspective.

Synthesis of Intersectionality and Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

Intersectionality explains that Black women experience racism and sexism simultaneously. As the overarching framework of analysis, intersectionality also draws attention to structures of power and oppression that affect Black women. Since educational institutions are a microcosm of the larger society, Black women experience racism and sexism in those environments. More importantly, study participants were asked to offer their understanding of their educational and career experiences, which is a form of Critical Race Theory's tenet of counter-storytelling (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Counter-storytelling is actually a resource that exposes and critiques the dominant ideology, which propagates racial stereotypes.

Additionally, this study acknowledges that Black women have some agency in their journey to academic and career success. Indeed, anti-deficit achievement framework describes how students of color utilize their agency to "persist and successfully navigate their ways to and through various junctures" (Harper, 2010, p. 67) of their educational journey; specifically before college (pre-college socialization), during college (college achievement), and after college (post-college persistence). However, it is essential to acknowledge that it is difficult for *all* students of color to exercise their agency when there are imbedded structural challenges within the broader educational system. Even

though I did not use anti-deficit as my analytical framework, utilizing both intersectionality and anti-deficit achievement framework shaped the research design and provided a contextual understanding of participants' academic and career success stories. In other words, African American women experience with power, privilege, and oppression before, during, and after college. Constructs from both frameworks were utilized to develop the interview protocol. But intersectionality was solely used to analyze the data.

Chapter Summary

My review of the literature revealed a rather chilling historical and current discourse about the experiences of African American women in the U.S. educational system and the professional challenges they encounter. Also, there was enough information to suggest that African American women are underrepresented in the topmost administrative positions in higher education relative to White men, White women, and Black men. As I sought to learn the complexities of African American women’s identities and experiences, I came to recognize that using intersectionality theory and the anti-deficit achievement framework in my study would have significant implications for research about the educational and career journeys of African American women in higher education. Particularly, African male researchers, like me, could benefit from intersectionality and an anti-deficit perspective as they seek to unlearn their cultural biases in an effort to become an active ally and advocate. The next chapter provides an in-depth discussion of this study’s research design. The chapter also provides a comprehensive overview of how narrative inquiry best supports this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Research Design

My primary intention for this study was to obtain a deeper understanding of how African American women describe their educational journeys and administrative career pathways that have led them to senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities. Given this aim, a qualitative approach was appropriate to best answer my research questions. Creswell (2013) described qualitative research as an "intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (p. 42). Considering this metaphoric logic is helpful in reflecting on the complexities of this study. The participants for this research were African American women whose identities, personal attributes, qualities, skills, and life experiences have profoundly influenced their journey to success. Hence, it is through qualitative methodology that I will be able to capture and make sense of participant's experiences. As Merriam (2009) states "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5), which describes the best structure for this study.

Merriam (2009) described four critical characteristics of qualitative research: "the focus is on the process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive" (p. 14). I agree with Thorne's (2008) assertion that the research purpose and questions should guide the selection of methodology. Because I am interested in the educational and career stories of African American women who are

senior leaders in 4-year public universities, I searched for a methodology that would give access to the voices of these Black women. Narrative inquiry was the most suitable for this study since it helps research participants to tell their stories. In particular, I implemented a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) research design to enhance my learning about the life experiences of nine African American women senior administrators. I sought to make visible their lived experiences that have often been rendered invisible and to place the silenced voices of the research participants at the center of my analytical framework. This methodological approach was best for my study because it tapped into the tacit knowledge of participants and revealed their hopes, fears, and circumstances. Thus, using a narrative approach opened a window of opportunity to discover participants' beliefs and experiences. I believe that understanding the biographical stories of African American women who are educational leaders helps to interweave their personal experiences around race and gender and gendered power relations within the United States' higher education system. My goal for this study was twofold:

1. To use narrative inquiry to explore how African American women who are senior leaders in 4-year public universities talk about their educational and career journeys.
2. To use the findings to contribute to the discourse on academic success strategies and leadership development for young African American and Black women in the diaspora who aspire to management in academia or any professional field.

Narrative Inquiry

The history of narrative inquiry as a research method is well documented (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Savin-Badin & Major, 2013; Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008). Narrative has become an essential method of analysis in the social sciences (Booth & Booth, 1996; Clough, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Lyons, 2007). Narrative is one of the primary methodologies of qualitative research, because it provides data grounded in personal historical and biographical experiences that are connected to the power of an individual's voice (Cole, 2009; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Fraser, 2004; Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). It is based on the premise that individuals understand their own lives and the world through the story (Andrews, Squire, & Tambokou, 2008).

Narrative inquiry is a flourishing qualitative research methodology, yet it has no universally accepted definition (Andrews et al., 2008; Bold, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004; Riessman, 2008). Polkinghorne (2007) defined narrative research as the study of stories to deepen the "reader's understanding of the meaning conveyed in a story" (p. 483). To Clandinin and Connelly (2000), however, a narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. It is a "way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieu" (p. 20). Kim (2016) explained narrative inquiry as a "way of understanding human experiences through stories" (p. 190). It involves the collection of stories while focusing on the meaning individuals assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2012; Czarniawska, 2004; Josselson, 2007). As described by Moen (2006), the narrative approach is a "frame of reference, a way of reflecting during

the entire inquiry process, a research method, and a mode for representing the research study" (p. 57). In addition, narrative can be either spoken words or written text that provides a chronological account of research participants' lived experiences (Chase, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Czarniawska, 2004). Indeed, narrative inquiry "values plurality through its propensity to generate multiple knowledges—both 'reality' as well as taken-for-granted truths—making visible the ethics and politics embedded therein" (Namatende, 2016, p. 51). Therefore, it was essential for me to situate my study by illuminating participants' stories and their meaning.

Narrative inquiry is underpinned by these ontological, epistemological, and heuristic assumptions: (a) Reality is created through narratives (b) People make sense of the real world by imposing story structures (c) Narrative provides researchers with methodologies for analyzing individual stories and relating them chronologically to the participants' lived experiences (Bell, 2002; Creswell, 2012; Freeman, 2015; Riessman, 2015; Savin-Badin & Major, 2013; Slembrouck, 2015). As narrative is rooted in sense-making (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), my focus in this study was to draw upon the success stories as a form of life history by exploring how participants make sense of their educational and career journeys.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discussed five elements (temporality, people, action, certainty, and context) that are central to conducting a narrative inquiry study. The *temporality* concept has to do with researchers recognizing that any event or experience has a past, present, and implied future. What happens before and after a story shapes the current narrative. Hence, locating a story within prenarrative, narrative, and postnarrative time frames is of vital importance. Central to any narrative research are *people*, who at

every point in time "are in a personal change" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 30), necessitating that researchers consider the stories of participants as an ongoing process. In the narrative inquiry, the concept of *action* is considered as a "narrative sign" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 30). This notion is important because an interpretation must be applied to a story in order to understand. Without action or understanding, stories would be meaningless and unknown. *Certainty* is the fourth element of narrative research. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry researchers do their best to avoid certainty by creating possibilities for multiple interpretations of a story. The fifth element Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized in the narrative inquiry methodology is the importance of *context* in "making sense of any person, event, or thing" (p. 32). In essence, individuals experience events or circumstances differently, and narrative inquiry provides an opportunity to capture contextual meaning in a story.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) five elements of narrative research were a good fit for this study. First, the race, gender, and sexism incidents that African American women encounter have a past, present, and implied future (temporality). Second, the research participants developed over time as students and in their roles as university administrators (people). Third, the research participants actively persisted in their pursuits of academic achievement and, even now, are persevering in their leadership positions (action). Fourth, the researcher and the participants made meaning of their educational and career experiences (certainty). Fifth, this study's participants did not experience situations in the same way (context).

Atkinson (1998) said that the holism of all these elements is central to narrative inquiry. He stated,

> the role of life history [narrative] is primarily to pull together the central elements, events, and beliefs in a person's life, integrate them into a whole, make sense of them, learn from them, teach the younger generation, and remind the rest of one's community what is most important in life. (p. 19)

In a similar fashion, I drew on narrative methods to pull together all the various intersecting identities and educational and professional successes of this study's participants. I utilized narrative inquiry "to illuminate the reality and complexity of experience" of these African American women senior leaders in 4-year universities (Cole, 2009, p. 564).

As an emerging scholar who used narrative methods in this study, I strived to understand and make sense of research participants' stories. Additionally, I acknowledged that knowledge or reality is socially constructed, contextually bounded, and complex (Glesne, 2006) and can be in any shape or form. I agree with Holmes (2004) that "a person's reality is shaped within a cultural, social, political, and economic landscape that influences how they perceive themselves as the individual events that occur that shape and define their reality" (p. 25). Indeed, context plays a critical role in every individual's reality, which informs their stories. People share many similarities, yet their life stories take different twists and turns. In particular, Clandinin (2007) suggested that narrative inquiry is an important approach that provides marginalized people an outlet for their voices to be heard.

I believe narrative provided me a way to explore the intersecting realities of my research participants in a way that other qualitative methods could not. Moreover, for the African American women in my study, I believe narrative inquiry created an

emancipatory and empowering avenue whereby the participants could own their voice (Giroux, 2005). Thus, this narrative approach was well suited for this dissertation because it allowed individuals "who have been traditionally underrepresented, marginalized and disenfranchised in higher education an opportunity to tell their stories in formal scholarly writing thus challenge and question the dominant white, male, Western research ethos in the university" (Glesne, 2006, p. 3). Through the use of narrative inquiry, these accomplished Black women who volunteered as study participants could tell their success stories, which have been little heard in academic literature.

Participant Selection and Sampling Procedure

Selecting research participants requires an intentional, strategic, and well-thought-out approach, and the individuals chosen must possess the characteristics and qualities described by the researcher. For this study, potential participants included any African American woman who occupied a senior leadership position—such as the president, vice president, chancellor, vice chancellor, provost, dean, and department chais—in a 4-year public university within the United States. I chose to focus on these positions because individuals in these roles are required to make budgetary and other critical decisions that affect students, professors, and professional staff. For this research study, an African American woman was defined as an individual who was born in the United States and identifies as Black.

An interview with a university president, vice president, chancellor, vice chancellor, provost, or dean could be considered as an *elite interview* (Harvey, 2011; Kezar, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). While there is no universally accepted definition of the term elite, some scholars (Harvey, 2011; Smith, 2006) have shaped their

definitions to fit the description of their research participants. In this regard, I define my participants as elite because they are highly educated individuals holding positions of power and influence in educational institutions that guard their images very carefully. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), interviewing elite persons comes with the advantage of obtaining valuable information from them because of their positions; they can provide a unique perspective on their institutions relative to their own experiences, and they can provide a broader view of their role within an institution.

A purposive sampling technique (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002) was employed to select participants for this study. Gay et al. (2006) defined purposive sampling as "the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population. In other words, the researcher selects the sample using experience and knowledge of the group to be sampled" (p. 113). According to Maxwell (1996), purposive sampling is "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 70). This technique permits researchers to select participants according to their unique characteristics (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). It was critical for me, as the researcher, to select this specific population of women, because the study required an exact demographic type from which I could glean lots of information. I recognize, as did Merriam (2009), that "purposeful sampling directly reflects the purpose of the study and guides the information-rich cases" (p. 78).

Due to the limited number of African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities, I also utilized the snowball sampling strategy, sometimes referred to as network or chain sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2009). This

selection strategy involves asking participants to recommend other potential participants who fit the parameters of the study. By asking the participants to refer me to other potential participants, the "snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (Patton, 2002, p. 237) Also, this sampling approach provided me with the flexibility to use my preexisting relationships with some of the participants. Through snowball sampling, I sought potential participants from my professors and university administrators within my network who have working relationships with individuals who fit the parameters of my dissertation. One of the unique characteristics of narrative study is that it does not have "automatic starting or finishing points" (Squire et al., 2008, p. 1). Therefore, it was difficult to determine the appropriate number of participants that would constitute the ideal sample size for this study. However, I sought to recruit eight to 10 participants for this dissertation and ultimately selected nine.

Meeting the Black Women Higher Education Senior Leaders

To protect participants' identities, the Black women provided their preferred pseudonyms. Also, I chose aliases for their hometowns and the institutions they attended and excluded some details about their identities. Though the omitted information may have been interesting to some readers, I prioritized the protection of my participants while also attending to the fidelity of the narratives they shared. I strived to provide appropriate facts, faces, figures, and places that enhanced the understanding of the participants' journeys without compromising their anonymity.

Each of the nine participants in this study identified as an African American or Black woman, except one who identified as mixed (born to a Black mother and White father). As stated earlier, they all chose their pseudonyms: Dr. Mari, Dr. Janice, Ms. BB,

Dr. PG, Dr. Dixon, Dr. Asantewaa, Dr. JJ, Dr. Anthony, and Dr. Happy. At the time of this study, all the participants had terminal degrees but one, who was currently pursuing her doctorate. The years of experience in senior leadership positions in higher education varied between the participants. Three participants began their careers in a K-12 setting, ranging from a substitute teacher to a high school principal. Three were tenured faculty members before assuming leadership positions, and five were student affairs professionals. Indeed, each participant had a unique story about how they entered into higher education administration and the strategic decisions they made at various career junctures.

Table 1

The Participants

Name	**Current Position**	**#Years in Higher Ed.**	**Work Locale Region**
Dr. Anthony	Vice Chancellor	31	Northeast
Dr. Asantewaa	Vice President	10	Midwest
Ms. BB	Chief of Staff and Interim Vice President	30	Midwest
Dr. Dixon	Vice Chancellor	17	Midwest
Dr. Happy	Vice Chancellor	32	Northeast
Dr. Janice	Vice Provost	10	Midwest
Dr. JJ	President	36	Midwest
Dr. Mari	Vice President	17	Northeast
Dr. PG	Associate Dean	22	Midwest

Data Collection

As I critically engaged with intersectionality and narrative inquiry in this study, I was required to recognize "the poignancy that characterizes the Black woman's intellectual positioning" because they are usually underappreciated as scholars and leaders (Copeland, 2006, p. 208). Hence, I aspired to learn, understand, interpret, and present the experiences of African American women in senior leadership positions in higher education. I collected data by gathering stories about Black women's educational journeys, career paths, feelings, thoughts, and successes. At the same time, I avoided "sugarcoating their oppressive realities, and naming them as valid epistemologies" (Arnold, 2014, p. 57). I solicited data primarily through narrative interviews (See Appendix B to review the interview research protocol). I believe that interviews provide an opportunity for qualitative researchers to delve deep into research participants' past lives and obtain a special kind of information. As Fraser (2004) suggested, "An interview is a critical tool for developing new frameworks and theories based on women's lives and women's formulations" (p. 185). It was, therefore, a useful data collection method for this dissertation on African American women. Through the interviews, I elicited rich data and also engaged in conversational and interactional encounters with my participants.

I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured style (Kim, 2016). I this interview style, I had a prepared set of interview questions, however, I used the questions to guide the interview. This helped me to maintain focused rather than dictate its directions. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) said that research participants tend to provide more detailed responses in a face-to-face interview compared to a telephone interview. Therefore, I strived to conduct a face-to-face interview, even if it required the use of Zoom or

FaceTime technologies to conduct face-to-face online interviews. Nevertheless, two participant requested for a telephone interview for flexibility, and two were conducted via zoom because I was logistically constrained to travel. The remaining five interviews were conducted through face-to-face.

I utilized an open-ended interview protocol which Kim (2016) describes as "narrative interview" (p. 164). Open-ended question permits the interviewee to take whatever direction to share their story. I began each interview by asking a grand narrative question" "How did you get to your current position?" I believe that this question helped participants to tell their stories about their journeys and experiences from their perspectives. In addition, I trusted that this approach would elicit rich data and allow me to engage in a meaningful encounter with my participants. I also paid attention to participants' idiosyncrasies, such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, ensuring that the process was "interviewee-oriented rather than instrument-oriented" (Fraser, 2004, p. 185). I collected about 18 hours of interview data, with each interview lasting approximately 120 minutes. With the permission of the participants, I made audio recordings of the interviews for systematic and in-depth probing without the distraction of note-taking. In this regard, I had to be sensitive to confidentiality. Each participant's anonymity was protected by using a pseudonym during the entire data collection process, due to the personal nature of the research and the type of questions asked. Also, participants were informed of the nature of the risks associated with this study prior to their participation and offered the option of withdrawing from the study at any time (See Appendix C to read the consent form that each participant signed, which included an explanation of the risks involved).

With any research that involves humans, researchers must gain the trust of their participants to enhance their ability to collect high-quality data and also to minimize the power dynamics. Trust is built over time, and I concur with Harvey (2011) that researchers should try to establish a rapport with their elite participants "from the moment they first contact them to the interview itself and beyond the interview" (p. 3). Kezar (2003) argued that, in an elite interview, "mutual trust is more easily developed if the interviewee knows the researcher believes them, at least initially" (p. 405). As I prepared to conduct this study's interviews, I paid particular attention to how I introduced the study and myself so that I could establish a relationship and trust with the participants. As Kezar (2003) noted, elite interviewees are more likely to share their personal perspectives if they feel comfortable with the interviewer. Before conducting the interviews, I endeavored to be transparent and provide participants with enough information about who I am, my motivation for the study, the nature of the research, the duration of the interview, the usage and dissemination of the data, and the protection of their identities.

Interviews

Creswell (2013) suggested that researchers "commit to extensive time in the field" (p. 49). I committed to meeting with each participant per their availability and to traveling to their campuses or preferred locations, as necessary. Although the interview protocol (Appendix B) served as a guide, it was not the only tool for data collection. I collected additional data (e.g., news articles, press releases from the universities regarding the participants' appointments, and resumes/CVs). I asked each participant to email me a copy of their current resume or CV. Also, I surfed the website of the

institutions where participants worked to obtain the press releases about their appointments. The purpose of collecting the current resume from each participant was to understand better the educational and professional background and career accomplishments that contributed to the individual reaching a leadership position in her career. Information from the resumes allowed me to inquire about specific experiences during the interviews.

Phoenix (2008) noted that there is an advantage in allowing a storytelling process to take different directions, which includes a focus on both big and small stories. I approached each interview process based on the characteristics of a semi-structured interview—the beginning of each interview was directed by the protocol. However, once the interviews developed into a natural conversation, I allowed the stories to unfold nonsequentially. This shift implied to me that I had established a rapport and a deeper level of trust with my *elite* participants (as defined earlier in this chapter). This evolution—from a structured to a more relaxed interview process—allowed the participants to reexamine some life situations they may not have thought about in quite some time. Also, some of my questions caused participants to consider some aspects of their lives they previously had not considered. When such a situation occurred, I allowed time for reflection as a sign of respect for the participant. Their ability to navigate and view such situations during the interviews with hindsight and maturity often elicited new perspectives, which assisted me in my interpretation of the information.

Data Analysis

Narrative inquiry uses several data analysis strategies (Czarniawska, 2004; Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysis can take the direction of what was said (themes),

how the story was told (structural), and for whom the story was intended (dialogic/performance; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Riessman, 2008). For this study, I was interested in the first, the theme. I agree with Creswell (2013) that narrative inquiry data "need to be analyzed for the story they have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points for epiphanies" (p. 189). Inductively approaching the data analysis process allowed me to identify patterns among the participants and organize themes from the bottom up (Creswell, 2013) rather than forcing data to fit the theoretical framework. I worked back and forth between the themes and the data to establish a comprehensive set of themes. This process involved active interaction with participants so that they had a chance to shape the themes. I believe this analytical approach allowed me to learn about the educational experiences and career successes of Black American women who are higher education senior leaders.

Qualitative data analysis is "always an ongoing process" that comes right after each interview (Rapley, 2004, p. 26). I followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps for thematic analysis in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Braun and Clarke (2006) posit that thematic analysis is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework, therefore it could be used within different theoretical frameworks. Hence, this thematic analysis was informed by intersectionality framework.

Step 1: I transcribed the audio recordings verbatim. I used a web application called Dedoose to upload the transcripts. I then read the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings of the interviews to obtain a holistic view of each participant's story. The careful reading of the transcripts allowed me to identify relevant sentences, phrases, and paragraphs that addressed my research questions. Through the process of reading, it

was critical that I pay close attention to what was said and how participants expressed themselves, and possibly the metaphors or terms they used. Through the multiple iterations of reading the transcripts, I generated initial list of ideas for coding. That is, I highlighted (in Dedoose) words and phrases which were repeatedly mentioned by research participants or sentences that answered my research questions. Additionally, I created an analytic memo for each participant where I made note of the connections between their stories and the research questions and compared participant's experiences.

Step 2: Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that the coding process is a part of the analysis that organizes data into meaningful units. This phase in the thematic analysis process involves production of codes from the data. I approached the data with my research questions and theoretical framework in mind. In other words, the coding process was theory-driven. I used Dedoose to create code names and connect them to the highlighted sentences and phrases that provide context to identified meanings. I gave equal attention to and worked systematically through all the transcripts so that the code names I generated would convey the sentiments in the original narratives.

Step 3: I searched and synthesized the data to identify patterns or themes. This process involved organizing the codes into themes that address similar issues or research questions. Essentially, I considered how different codes came together to form an overarching theme and subthemes. I also considered the relationship between codes and themes. By the end of this phase, I had a collection of themes, subthemes, and all the excerpts of the data.

Step 4: after identifying and grouping themes, as narrative analysis emphasize (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Riessman, 2008), I reviewed and refined the themes. The theme-

reviewing process involved reading all the codes, and compared the highlighted sentences to consider whether they formed a coherent pattern or not. Similarly, I reviewed each overarching theme and subtheme to ascertain whether they reflected the meaning I took from the data. By the end of this phase, I had a good idea about how all the themes fit together to tell the overall story.

Step 5: I defined and refined the themes. That is, I identified the essence of what each theme was about and the aspect of the data each theme captured. I then organized the themes to form a complete picture of the participants' collective experiences. It is important to state here that I made an intentional choice not to consult intersectionality theory for the analysis, instead preferring to use inductive coding so that themes emerged naturally. My concern in using intersectionality was that I would deductively code the data and attempt to fit participants' stories into the framework.

Step 6: I interpreted the data while putting together themes that had emerged to provide readers a clear understanding of individual participant experiences. This final phase involved writing a coherent story while contextualizing it relative to existing literature. I recognize that my identity and experiences as a Ghanaian male might have inevitably influenced the ways I made sense of the research data. Therefore, I utilized trustworthiness strategies in this research.

Trustworthiness

A significant component of any research endeavor is the ability to ensure that the study is high quality (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Given the interpretive nature of qualitative studies, establishing trustworthiness is important throughout the research process (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the researcher must document

the research process to demonstrate the credibility of the data and findings (Creswell, 2012). Particularly in this study, I utilized the four criteria articulated by Guba (1981) to ensure trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. In the subsequent subsections, I explain each criterion while describing the process I used to address them in this study.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is the accurate representation of research findings. Credibility is the "thorough prolonged engagement in the field and the use of others to confirm findings" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 36). To establish credibility, I conducted peer debriefing and member checking (Creswell, 2013; Meriam, 2009). As Creswell and Poth (2016) describe, a peer debrief is a person who "keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (p. 263). My peer debriefer identifies as an African American woman. After she reviewed the transcribed data, and codes, my peer debriefer challenged my assumptions and asked honest questions about my data and interpretations. Indeed, she helped me view the dataset from a fresh perspective which enabled me to provide rich descriptions of the data while maintaining participant's confidentiality.

After deliberating with my peer debriefer, I engaged in member checking to establish the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. The use of member checking ensured that participants' voices are represented accurately. I provided the participants with their respective interview transcripts and my interpretation of the data, for review. This allowed the participants to check for clarity and confirm the credibility of the

information. The process involved emailing a copy of the transcript to each participant, asking for correction, confirmation, and clarification.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalizability of research. As Morrow (2005) described, transferability is the "extent to which the reader is able to generalize the findings of a study to her or his own context" (p. 252). I may not know who would like to transfer the findings of this study. However, as the researcher, I provided thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the research contexts and findings while incorporating participants' quotes to enhance the readers' decision-making on the data's transferability to their practice.

Dependability

Ensuring dependability requires making the research process explicit. Thus, scholars should ensure that their research processes make sense, are traceable, and are explicitly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Readers' comprehension of the research process enhances their ability to judge the dependability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Koch (1994) suggested, a way to demonstrate dependability is through auditing. I obtained an external auditor who is very knowledgeable about the research methodology and an experienced higher education scholar with an incredible record of publication. The auditor examined my observation notes, codes, themes, and interpretations to ensure that all aspects of the research were aligned.

Confirmability

Confirmability seeks to ensure that there is evidence of connections between the research data, analysis, and interpretations (Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Tobin & Begley, 2004). Adhering to Koch's (1994) recommendation, I have clearly stated throughout this study the reasons for my methodological, theoretical, and analytical choices to help readers understand why I made those decisions. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability is achieved when credibility, transferability, and dependability are established.

Ethical Considerations

One of the many misconceptions about qualitative research is that ethical issues only arise during data collection (Creswell, 2013). Issues of ethics should not be reduced to the procedural matters of gaining informed consent but should permeate through the entire research process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To confirm that I was meeting my ethical responsibilities throughout the research process, I sought approval from the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) before I proceeded with data collection. Once IRB approval was secured, I then emailed an invitation to all potential participants in advance so that they had some time to decide if they would participate. I attached to the invitation a consent form (Appendix C), detailing the purpose of the study, ethical principles guiding the study, the risk involved in the study, and the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Using this strategy gave participants a clear understanding, before they agreed to participate, of the type of data I would be collecting and how it would be used.

Another responsibility as the principal investigator was to ensure that participant anonymity was closely guarded during and after data collection. The confidentiality of participants' personal and professional information was vital to the research process. Hence, subjects were entitled to the protection of their rights (Creswell, 2013). While the

interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for accuracy, neither the participants' names nor their institutional affiliations were associated with the tapes, the transcripts, or any reports resulting from the dissertation. All identifying characteristics were replaced with pseudonyms. This strategy not only protected confidential information but also kept the focus of the study on the participants' stories. The code list that was generated from the interviews and the signed consent forms have been and will be kept under lock in a file cabinet at my residence in Missouri. Upon completion of this dissertation, I will destroy the consent forms, CVs, notes, transcripts, and audiotapes will be destroyed after 7 years.

Since narrative inquiry is a collaborative process that involves mutual storytelling and restorying, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) encouraged researchers to be "aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard" (p. 4). This method necessitates the construction of "a relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). I shared my life stories with participants, disclosing the career opportunities and educational investments women, especially Black women, have made in my life. In the same manner, I remained true to the voices, representations, and experiences of research participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hendry, 2007) as I strived not to own their stories.

Positionality

As a Ghanaian-born male, preparing and conducting a study about Black women was an intricate and daunting process. I agree with Hopkins (2007) that the intersecting ways in which researchers' "various positionalities and identities are revealed, negotiated

and managed in research encounters are crucial to the conduct of ethical research" (p. 388). Indeed, I am required to navigate my professional, personal, and scholarly interests, coupled with my identity, as they may "influence and shape the research encounters, process, and outcomes" (Hopkins, 2007, p. 387). I needed to engage in high-level introspection for this study to avoid approaching my participants with a deficit-based mindset that continues to place women at the bottom of the ladder. My responsibility as a researcher in this endeavor was to understand how my cultural values, beliefs, experiences, knowledge, and epistemology influenced my research.

To this end, I recognized the individual biases I bring to the study of African American women who occupy senior leadership positions in higher education. I acknowledged the ways that my biases might shape my understanding of the data and my interpretation of the findings. For example, my cultural upbringing and shared values have not always expressed a positive view of women who seek educational and career advancement and leadership. As a Ghanaian, I was raised to conform to socially constructed gender roles and cultural norms that say I, as a male, am a leader, and the woman is my subordinate. The male child is believed to be the heir of the family. Therefore, parents invest in his education, leaving the girl to the fate of a future marriage. This social construct has created educational and career opportunity gaps that disadvantage Ghanaian women (Lambert, Perrino, & Barreras, 2012; Senadza, 2012).

Whereas my cultural values and beliefs have not always been favorable toward women, my educational and career journeys both in Ghana and in the United States have been greatly influenced by women who identify as Africans, African Americans, and European Americans. I am privileged! My mother insisted that I go to Teacher Training

College after high school because she felt that I exhibited the qualities of a teacher (a kind personality and soul, the ability to develop a relationship, a love of kids, and a happy disposition). An American woman psychologist, DocBB, as I affectionately call her, opened the door of opportunity for me to earn bachelor's and master's degrees. Mama Jules (pseudonym) made it possible for me to work for the United Kingdom's international organization for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Furthermore, my enrollment into a doctoral program in a Research I institution in the United States was not without the efforts of women, especially an African American woman. Also, I am married to an intelligent African American woman who exhibits excellent leadership qualities and wants to pursue an administrative career in higher education.

All of these factors and identities—son, brother, husband, educator, colleague, mentee, mentor—have helped to shape my allyship, and I am inspired to be an active advocate and partner. If these visionary women saw scholarship in me and sponsored and advocated for me even when I was not in the room, then what are their innate capabilities and traits that society has not been able to harness? My current program, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, has prepared me to view knowledge through a critical lens that is underpinned by social justice. Hence, I have become sensitive to how my epistemology and identity inform my scholarship that empowers marginalized voices.

Due to my characteristics mentioned above and for the sake of my intellectual growth, I made a conscientious effort to remain open and critically aware of my biases during this study. I actively engaged in reflexivity, a process by which the "researcher reflects about how their biases, values, and personal backgrounds, such as gender,

history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during the study" (Creswell, 2018, p. 233). Throughout the research process, I spent time to do some self-reflection and to make sense of my cultural identity and what it means to be a man in my cultural context. More importantly, I engaged in dialogues with my wife and other women mentors who provided me with divergent ways of understanding my data. By recognizing my biases at the onset, I established trustworthiness. As Patton (2009) stated, qualitative research is about "researcher credibility and trustworthiness, fairness, and balance (p. 481). Ultimately, I endeavored to tell the success stories of my participants without distorting them with my positionality.

Research Limitations

Every qualitative research study has limitations, and this study is no exception. Daiute (2014) encouraged narrative researchers to consider the impact their values have in organizing narratives. As I prepared to conduct this narrative research about African American women university leaders, I recognized that I have some values, assumptions, and weaknesses that I cannot control. Specifically, my perspective as a Ghanaian male—born and raised in a cultural environment that has not always had a favorable view of women who seek advancement in education and leadership—may have influenced how I approached the study. Also, I recognized that, as a man researching women, participants might have provided some nuances in their enactment of the agency that I may not have understood.

Also, there was the challenge of gaining access to elite individuals (Mikecz, 2012). I intended to sample more participants, but ultimately got nine. Potential participants are very busy individuals who usually operate under time constraints. Indeed,

gaining access to elite individuals depends a “great deal on serendipity, social networks as well as particular circumstances” (Harvey, 2010, p. 8). As a doctoral student, I have had the privilege of being introduced to some of my research participants by my academic advisor, professors, and some junior university administrators. Over the years, I have maintained my relationships with some of the potential participants. Therefore, I used my connections as opportunities to gain access to or recruit participants. My connections helped me to overcome the limitations imposed by the elite status of the subject pool.

Another potential drawback of this study was the power dynamic between the interviewees and me, the interviewer. Kezar (2003) posited that

> power impacts the nature of the interchange, who guides the process, whose values shape the interview context, the ability to interpret and make sense of the responses, and how the data are ultimately used, and they can determine the structure and flow of the interview process, and the interviewer would have to adapt to the change. (p. 401)

As the interviewer, I recognized my position as a student seeking to learn. I also knew the power my interviewees wielded in their positions and as experts who own their narratives. Therefore, to overcome the power difference, I employed a self-disclosure strategy where I shared my experiences, knowledge, and motivation for the study. I believe that self-disclosure created a rapport.

Finally, because this is a narrative study, the data that were collected cannot be extrapolated to other research methods. Therefore, this research neither seeks to

generalize the findings nor to reify the negative assumptions about Black women that I am susceptible to.

Chapter Summary

This dissertation addressed questions related to triumphs and monumental successes of African American women who are in senior-level administrative positions in higher education. In this chapter, I highlighted my choice of a qualitative research methodology and described why narrative inquiry was a good fit to examine the educational journeys and career pathways of African American women in senior leadership positions in higher education. Perhaps most significant is the connection between my epistemology, the population, and my positionality. The chapter addressed the research method, the approach to selecting participants, data collection, and analysis. Lastly, the chapter outlined the strategies that were employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the research data and to protect the study participants.

CHAPTER 4

Findings from Participants' Narratives of Their Educational and Career Journeys: Starting with Expectations

Beginning in this chapter and continuing across the next two chapters, I present the narratives of the nine African American women who participated in this study, each senior leaders in higher education. More than a summary of lived experiences, each Black woman carefully talked me through their educational and career paths while highlighting the high and low moments of their lives. The participants shared their incredibly personal stories, including details related to married life. The women narrated stories illuminating their trajectories as young girls and as women within homes, schools, and workspaces, demonstrating the diverse realities of navigating these spaces. In addressing research question two across the themes, I highlight participants' unique characteristics that enhanced their career advancement and success within the hegemonic space of higher education.

The themes that emerged from participants' narratives—(a) expectations, (b) nonlinear paths to higher education leadership opportunities, and family-life balance, and (c) mentorship—highlight the complexities and differences in the lives of the women. Notably, *expectations* as motivation (High and Low) emerged as a significant theme that participants experienced in their educational journeys. The expectations of parents and participants varied significantly in the women's journeys, depending on the educational levels of family members. Through the narrative portraits of three participants, I explore the *expectations* theme in this chapter and extrapolate the different ways in which expectations influenced the educational journeys of the Black women.

While elements of the three major themes were the most significant and salient in the narratives of all nine of the African American women, I have decided to present each participant's story according to the theme that was most relevant to each person's lived experiences. Specifically, in this chapter, we meet Dr. Asantewaa and Dr. JJ, both of whom experienced high and clear expectations from their parents. They exhibited interesting similarities when compared to Ms. BB's fascinating narrative, which is also included in this chapter and illustrates low family expectations coupled with high teacher expectations. Overall, each story and theme is meant to highlight a specific common experience for African American women, as informed by the data. It is essential to highlight that each of the nine participants stated that she has a strong commitment to prayer and believes that directly communing with God is key to her life. What follows is my best effort to present the perspectives offered by the participants about their journeys. Also, I offer initial theoretical and literature connections after each chapter because the nature of the data and the themes presented an opportunity to make explicit connections upfront that are unique from some of the overarching connections I make in chapter seven.

Dr. Asantewaa's Journey: High Expectations from Parents, Community, and Self

Dr. Asantewaa, who is currently a vice president, describes herself as an African American woman and was born and raised in Factory City in the Southwestern state of Chameleon—one of the largest in the United States. She comes from a religious family of six children—four girls and two boys—who grew up with both parents in a segregated, all-African American community. Dr. Asantewaa is the fourth child in her family and believes that her family was a "balance between religious order and educational

advancement." Dr. Asantewaa's mother was a staunch feminist and an elementary school teacher, and her father, though a civil engineer, was the pastor of their church. Both parents earned master's degrees, and her father was awarded an honorary doctorate in theology. Dr. Asantewaa has been married for 47 years, has four children, and has described her husband as a "highly conscious Black man, a Civil Rights activist who is not politically threatened." Dr. Asantewaa described her journey from girlhood to womanhood as one characterized by high academic and moral expectations from her family, especially her parents. During her interview, she narrated:

> Both [parents] had their ways of influencing our development. It was understood that all of us . . . [children] were expected to excel in academics and to complete degrees. So yes, in our family, college was a given expectation. They did expect for everyone to graduate with a bachelor's degree. For graduate school, our parents did not really expect us to attend. The graduate degree was icing on the cake but not unusual for the family. We were generations of teachers, dentists, engineers, pastors, and civil rights activists. . . . As far as disciplinary environment, we were held to high ethical standards, taught to pray daily, were punished only when it was needed, and given the tools and training to respect all people, regardless of their social or economic status. We were not monitored consistently. Our parents held us to a level of trust because they knew what foundational structures that they'd already instilled in us. Some of this intersects with our religious affiliations. For example, our father was so committed to Godliness that we felt that disobeying our parents would be a violation of God's principles.

The high expectations Dr. Asantewaa experienced coincided with her family values, derived from the Ten Commandments of the Christian faith (Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you– Exodus 20:12) Also, high expectations were articulated at her predominantly Black elementary and high schools and within the community. She explained that her segregated schools might have had inferior materials, but their standards, teaching levels, and student expectations were broader and higher. She continued:

> Even though we attended segregated schools [pre-*Brown v. Board*], we were held to high expectations by our Black teachers, church members, community organizations, and even socially disconnected street dwellers. They all knew who you were, what your families stood for, and how they wanted you to succeed. In school were people who cared for and expected us to excel. Even the kids who had mental and physical disabilities were given high standards. Of course, there was no special education at that time, but everyone was held responsible for assisting and helping those with disabilities to develop to their capacity.

Due to the consistent exposure to high expectations at home, school, and in the community, Dr. Asantewaa expected nothing less for herself. She internalized these high expectations, which served as a strong foundation for the development of personal identity and her pursuit of educational goals. Dr. Asantewaa attended an HBCU for 1 year and transferred to a predominantly White university. She described her college experience at Mustang State University—a predominantly White, Research I university in the U.S. Southwest—as "survive and get out":

> The first year of my undergrad experience was spent at [Lions University—a historically Black college in the Southwest]. It was the most wonderful experience ever. It was a carryover from my predominantly Black K-12 experience. My sense of self [cultural knowledge and respect], leadership development, and love for truth-seeking were enhanced. But I transferred to [Mustang State University]. I experienced the same racist whiplash my mother experienced. That experience was a "survive and get out" experience. The expectation for Blacks [students] was low. Of all of my degrees and schooling, my lowest grades came from [Mustang]. There was never any explanation for the two derogatory grades on my transcript. . . . They seem to have just believed that Blacks were not capable. There was nothing as a Black person I could do at [Mustang] that could prove my excellence. Nothing!

Though Dr. Asantewaa did not share why she transferred to Mustang, she was more determined and believed in her abilities as a smart young Black woman. Dr. Asantewaa's story places her squarely in the position of both segregated and integrated school environments. She was very emotional in narrating her experiences and the experiences of her mother, who attended the same university. Dr. Asantewaa's mother was part of the first cohort of Blacks to integrate after the *Brown v. Board of Education*

ruling and to graduate from Mustang University. As a young girl, Dr. Asantewaa could detect that her mother's safety was at risk at Mustang because of bomb threats made toward Black students, even though she [Asantewaa] did not totally understand. Dr. Asantewaa recollects reading the headlines of a local newspaper that captured a statement from the president of Mustang State University, who said there would "never be a Negress to graduate from these halls of this white institution." Her mother's college experience taught her (young Asantewaa) something about education as "one of the most powerful and threatening weapons that an oppressed person can have." It is important to highlight that Mustang State University recently honored Dr. Asantewaa's mother with a memorial garden on its campus.

Notwithstanding the "survive and get out" experience in college, Dr. Asantewaa was deeply aware of her identity as a Black woman, belief system, and career goals. She embraced and achieved the high expectations she had internalized. She graduated and accepted a position to teach English, journalism, and humanities at President High School (PHS)—a public school built in the early 1900s for African Americans in Chameleon State. While at PHS, Dr. Asantewaa developed the school's humanities program and study abroad program, thus exposing the students to the wealth of and world contributions made by African nations.

After teaching for several years, Dr. Asantewaa envisioned that she could impact other teachers by spreading her love and passion for students rather than containing it within one classroom. To her, "true teaching and leadership" motivates teachers to change lives. But on her educational journey, she had experienced leadership as a way of "showing compliance and obedience to a system that is determined to keep the status

quo." Dr. Asantewaa wanted to create an emancipatory educational experience for her students. She stated, "I wanted to be the best teacher possible for young people and also to impart social justice elements into the teaching. Teaching can be revolutionary, and I wanted to have the theory integrate with my experiences." Hence, for her graduate education, she enrolled at Cattle State University—a highly ranked, Research I, predominantly White institution located in Chameleon State. Her graduate program's focus was social justice and P-12 (i.e., preschool through Grade 12) school leadership. She had a great experience in her graduate program and earned a master's degree in Educational Leadership and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration.

Dr. Asantewaa believes that part of her "wonderful graduate school experience" had to do with the fact that she had faced the reality of racism. Her undergraduate experience seemed to have instilled bravery into her character to the extent that she developed a strong sense of self and the ability to speak even when placed in an environment divergent from her belief system. So, by the time she got to graduate school, she knew racism "theoretically and experientially" and dared to have tough conversations about race and racism. She was "no longer shocked" by racism's existence on the Cattle State campus. Similar to her segregated K-12 schools, Dr. Asantewaa emphasized the "supportive environment" her academic department at Cattle State University provided for her to thrive. She stated that she had a nationally recognized mentor with whom she could have social justice conversations and feel "no threat."

After graduating with her Ph.D., Dr. Asantewaa accepted an administrative position in Crown City School District—one of the largest metropolitan school districts in Chameleon State and the Southwest that operates over 100 diverse schools. Dr.

Asantewaa explained that her dream was to be a teacher and that she believed all her degrees enhanced her teaching skills and ability to lead educational institutions:

> I have always wanted to be a teacher. There was nothing else that I wanted to do. Teaching is my God-given gift. And so, everything that I have been doing in my educational preparation was to prepare me to teach better and because I knew the power of teaching. I want to plant the seeds of respect of personhood at every platform that comes across my path—elementary, middle, and high school; school building administration; college professor; and university senior leadership level. Everything that I have done has been done with a focus on how we incorporate high levels of expectations for our students. How do we develop individuals to think about how we treat other people? Whether it's by gender, nationality, language, race, ableism, age, etc. How do we think we are educating a whole person and leave that major element of personhood out? So, everything that I have done has been about finding a way to at least implant those seeds. That's the least that I can contribute. I'm not Martin Luther King. I'll never be or desire to be. But I think if each of us will take on that task, the whole society will change.

Dr. Asantewaa's personal identity development was greatly influenced by community organizations, churches, and community members who encouraged and expected young people to represent the Black community's voice and be "activists of courage." She incorporated activism into all aspects of her career—teaching, research, and leadership. In sum, Dr. Asantewaa's family, schooling, church, and community environments shaped her to be a strong social justice educator. She believes that her keen sense of Black womanhood and intellectual identity can be both intimidating and supportive. She stated:

> My identity is beyond race. I'm not only identified as a Black woman, but I adopted Dillard's Theory of Endarkened Feminist Epistemology, which means that I am not just a strong, knowledgeable, conscience woman of color, I'm one who is about the business of doing something about injustice. So, I have the nerve enough to know it but also the courage to try to do it. So, that is my identity, and that identity cannot be suppressed, and it can be very intimidating and threatening in a racist environment. It can be very supportive and respected in an environment where people are truly genuine and seek social justice.

After several years of serving as a K-12 administrator, Dr. Asantewaa was a "target hire" for an assistant professor position at Pit bull University—the premier

university of the Pronghorn State in the Midwestern region of the United States. Her "lifelong mentor," a professor at Pit bull University, was working on a grant-funded project with urban school leaders. They needed a scholar and a "certified administrator who could also teach on a college level, and has urban experience." Given that Dr. Asantewaa had all the required expertise, she was hired. Dr. Asantewaa spent over a decade at Pit bull University. While at Pit bull, Dr. Asantewaa developed and taught several graduate-level courses and published over 50 articles and books. Though Dr. Asantewaa relished her time at Pit bull, she described the environment as isolating for people of color, especially women. She narrated:

> My experience at [Pit bull] on the whole is very good. It grew me up, and I learned a lot about myself. The department is very theory-oriented, and I needed that theoretical environment and influence for the passion that I had. I needed to take a look at my passion, my drive, my life sacrifices, and my life goals about social justice and human rights, and I needed to apply and to know the theories and the authorities behind them. And that's what Pit bull provided me. The actual personal experience was challenging to some degree because it's not a social environment. It is just what I explained; it is very theory-based, and even relationships are framed around scholarship. And so, with me coming in with an urban background, being a woman of color, there was no kinship in that department. . . . I may have been the first full-time, tenure-track female of color in their whole way up in their history. So, I came in at a time where social justice was just beginning to be a part of the discussion and part of the theory. It took years, believe it or not, for many of our respected scholars who are not of color to understand that social justice was not just a research tool, but it was something to live and model your life for. Some of the very ones who were nationally respected for social justice research were people who wouldn't even look at people of color in the eye or speak to them or even give them a thumbs-up for their research or tenure.

While enjoying her retirement as a professor from Pit bull University, Dr. Asantewaa's quest to create an educational environment that supports all students was still alive. The opportunity to "design a program from the ground up and bringing community members together for a greater purpose" influenced her decision to put her "hat in the ring." She ended up being selected for the position of Vice President of

Diversity at Bearcat State University—a small regional public university in Pronghorn State. Since Dr. Asantewaa was the first to occupy the position, there were high expectations from campus and local community members and from students, especially students of color. She described the experience this way:

> There was no department [a division of diversity]. So, in my first year, I was busy hiring people, designing the program, establishing a framework that aligns with the federal compliance and Title IX, and trying to enhance already existing programs. I was also a part of the president's cabinet, which was a leadership group of all vice presidents. So, I was busy, and I felt supported because it [creating the Division of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion] was something that was approved by the regents.

Dr. Asantewaa wrote the institution's first diversity statement, which was approved by the board of regents. Also, Dr. Asantewaa was keenly aware of the city within which Bearcat State University was located. Brownsville is very religious, conservative, and made up of farming communities with close-knit relationships. Ninety-two percent of the population is White. Dr. Asantewaa explained that in Bearcat, and Brownsville as a whole, relationships are critical. Everybody knows everybody, and they promote and support each other a lot. In the institution, people work in departments with their sons, fathers, and grandfathers. The status quo is "held down by relationships, and if you don't know how to break into those relationships and become another one of them, you are only temporary." Hence, Dr. Asantewaa worked to establish community support. She told of her work:

> I went out into the community and developed relationships with church ministers and organizations. I formed an affiliate group that was under my division [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion] that brought city-appointed officials, volunteers, and housewives to the campus for joint activities with faculty, staff, and students.

Dr. Asantewaa believe that having a vision, being transparent, and the ability to build relationships within and outside of the university were some of her traits that contributed

to her success. At the time of the interview, Dr. Asantewaa was about to retire from Bearcat State University. Dr. Asantewaa seems to have achieved the high expectations of her parents, community, and herself. She continues to produce scholarship that highlights the experiences of individuals who were subjected to Jim Crow laws (i.e., state laws passed in the South that established different rules for Blacks and Whites). Dr. Asantewaa argued that the effect of "Jim Crowism is rarely discussed or acknowledged in educational discourse because the system does not even allow you to discuss it or to teach it. You are penalized in institutions for remembering it." She further emphasized that, because of the prevalence of Jim Crow laws in the educational and life experiences of her generation, people have developed some psychological responses to their everyday life. She named these psychological responses as "Post Jim Crow Traumatic Stress Syndrome." She explained:

> It [Post Jim Crow Traumatic Stress Syndrome] causes me to look at things in a very culturally analytical way. And the sensitivities of trying to understand how a group of people can do something to other people the way we were done and have continued to be done. And so that has caused a type of sensitivity I can only term as Post Jim Crow Traumatic Stress Syndrome. It makes me unusually sensitive and emotionally charged when it comes to things related to racism. I saw it [Jim Crowism] in my leadership experiences and my classrooms. It has informed what I do, how I do, and I live by it. I raise my children by it. . . . I refuse to allow that memory to die, and I find a way in my scholarship and classroom to keep that alive.

Dr. Asantewaa believes that her "faith in God is the greatest gift" her parents gave her, particularly her father, at whose feet she learned about God. "Man! If I didn't have faith, I'd have given up a long time ago. I would shut up, close up, and be done with life," she said. Actually, the church served to strengthen her faith that there is something greater than man, even in the midst of experiencing Jim Crow laws. She asked, "What would the point be with lynches and the institutional harm that's done daily to Black

people? If I don't have faith that there was something greater than man, I wouldn't want to live." Dr. Asantewaa has faith in humankind that, as long as truths can be shared and stories can be told, there is hope. There is hope that "people want to do something good." She expressed appreciation for her strong family background, faith, and educational and career experiences but wrestled with describing herself as a successful African American woman. As I describe later in chapter six how African American females have defined career success, I point out that Dr. Asantewaa believes that her faith has helped her build long-lasting relationships and has sustained her while she has engaged in social justice work, which she terms as "God's work."

Indeed, Dr. Asantewaa's faith and the high expectations she experienced contributed to her perseverance, passion, and piety in a life filled with many systemic discriminatory experiences, as well as advancements. Other participants in this study referenced high expectations that were set for them by family, church, community, and schools. Particularly for Dr. JJ, whom we meet next, high expectations were common in her educational and career journeys.

Dr. JJ's Journey: Clear Expectations from Parents and High Expectation of Self

Dr. JJ was born and raised in Magnolia City—a predominately African American tight-knit farming community in the Southwest United States. Dr. JJ described her home city as a "very embracing" town, and despite being one of the most impoverished communities in the country, it has produced some great individuals, such as university presidents, lawyers, musicians, award-winning authors, and professional athletes who "mentor the young people and encouraged them to go to school, stay out of trouble, and get good grades." Growing up as the second child in a religious family home, Dr. JJ and

her siblings were very involved in church and never missed Sunday school—an attitude she has grown to love. Even though her parents were not highly educated—her mother had a high school diploma, and her father attended college but did not graduate—they knew the value of education, as evidenced by their involvement in and attentiveness to her schooling. Dr. JJ is a single mother of a son. She credits her very disciplinarian parents for investing time and resources in the education of all their children. She narrated:

> My parents were working class. . . . They always wanted us to have the best education possible. They were very serious about our schooling and expected us to do our best. Our mother attended the PTA meetings and was the disciplinarian. They both didn't rely on us telling them we had homework. We had to show them we had done our homework. Also, they were very engaged in all of the extracurricular activities that we were involved in.

Dr. JJ recounts that her parents ingrained "college-going" in them when they were children because they believed that obtaining a college degree opened the door to a "better life." Attending college was a clear expectation from her parents—go to school, graduate, and go the college—it was never up for discussion. Dr. JJ stressed that she and her siblings did not have a say or choice in any decision-making regarding their education. She described her predominately Black K-12 schooling experience as "wonderful" mainly because her teachers had high expectations, encouraged their students to "do their very best," and embraced their students:

> The teachers were great and were mentors as well. . . . They allowed me to go beyond whatever was required. They did not pigeonhole me into anything. If it was something that I wanted to do, I could go above and beyond. My parents had always instilled in us that we could be whatever we want to be, and my teachers did the same. I never had a teacher say, "Well, no, you can't be there" or "You can't do that." . . . By the time I got to 12th grade, I knew what the college experience was. I knew what the [college application] process was because the counselors in my high school worked with us. I took my ACT in the 10th grade, I think. . . . In my school, you were either on a college prep track, or you were on a vocational track. I was on a college-prep track, and because of that, we always

> knew what the [college application] process was and what we had to do. Now they have a Pell Grant. Back in my day, they called it the BEOG, which was the Basic Education Opportunity Grant. We knew all about that. And so, it was not a foreign thing for me. It was what I had been prepared to do since my childhood.

Dr. JJ, who is not a first-generation student, stated that her father, aunts, uncles, and elder sister went to college, and they all shared their experiences with her to learn how to navigate the system of higher education. In addition, a lot of Magnolia community and church members who had been to college encouraged her to focus on her studies and go to college. The high expectations and encouragement Dr. JJ received from her family, Black community, and K-12 school teachers were impactful and inspired her to develop higher expectations for herself when she went to college. Dr. JJ received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Tigers University—one of the largest public HBCUs in the country and the fourth-largest university in Donkey State. Tigers University is classified as a research university with high research activity. Dr. JJ described her college experience as "fine" and narrated:

> Like I said earlier, I come from a home and a community that has been producing great individuals who were professionals, and some lived in the community. I was an honor student in college. I went to class regularly, and I rarely met with a professor after class. I just did my work. . . . I had my fun too now, but I did what I was supposed to do. And my parents told me that this is what you're supposed to do. You're going to hold yourself to a very high expectation, and you're going to graduate in 4 years. [During] my time in college, people attended it for 4 years. I didn't even know you could graduate in 5 years. . . . You had to graduate in 4 years. So, I came to college with a lot of cultural capital that I received from my family and my community. So, I knew what the expectations were, and that's what I did.

Dr. JJ's family and community equipped her with the skills and information necessary for college. While in college, Dr. JJ had an opportunity to attend a graduate and professional school visitation day at the University of Cardinal—a predominately White, Research I institution in the Bird State in the Midwest. As the state's flagship institution,

the University of Cardinal was trying to increase diversity in their graduate schools. Hence, they created a visitation day program that was mainly advertised on HBCU campuses. Dr. JJ applied and was selected to visit the University of Cardinal. She explained:

> I was selected to represent my department on this visitation day. And so that's when the graduate school thing really hit me . . . and I said, "Oh, this would be cool. Wow!" You know, nobody in my family at that time had a master's degree, so I need to get this master's degree. But I didn't go there [University of Cardinal] because it was just too overwhelming. . . . It was just too big!

Even though graduate education was not expected from her parents, Dr. JJ's experiences at the University of Cardinal and her quest to obtain higher degrees were consistent with the high expectations she had set for herself. She served as a substitute teacher for a year after graduating from college and then enrolled as a graduate student at Brown Bear University—a public, land-grant, Research I university and the largest in the Midwestern state of Bison, where she received her master's in Counseling Education. After earning her master's degree, it took more than two decades for Dr. JJ to return to her undergraduate alma mater—Tigers University—to receive her Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education. Over approximately two decades, she occupied student affairs and senior administrative positions within higher education. She described her career journey in higher education this way:

> I have been in higher education since 1984. I started as a counselor in the counseling center at the [University of Coyote, a public, historically Black university in the Southeastern region of the United States]. . . . I was a counselor for 5 years, and I moved to work with the vice president as a special assistant for about a year, doing special projects for him. The [vice president] saw my work and wanted me to take over the [student] housing and operations. So, he appointed me as an associate dean. Because whatever I do, I do my very best, I learned the operations job. I surrounded myself with mentors from other institutions and learned how to implement best practices. Also, I joined student housing organizations, and I got the big boys from other prominent universities. And so, I learned from them and turned the residential life program at the

> university [University of Coyote] around. I think most of that model is still in use today.

Dr. JJ's self-expectation was evident in her attitude towards work and as results, she was valued and promoted for her competence. She stayed in the associate dean position for 10 years until the opportunity opened for the Dean of Students position. She believes that her appointment as the Dean of Students was because of her earlier work as an associate dean. After a year serving as the Dean of Students, Dr. JJ left the University of Coyote to join Green Mamba University as the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. Green Mamba University is a public, historically Black university in Donkey State in the Southeast. The Donkey State legislature established Green Mamba University with the hope that it would attract African American students away from the state's White-only institutions, thus reducing the pressure to integrate the White-only universities.

Four years into her role as the assistant vice president, additional responsibility was added to Dr. JJ's role, and her title changed to Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. She narrated:

> As I moved up, you know, I enjoyed leading organizations and transforming organizations. And so, I just kept going to the next spot. When I became the interim vice president and the vice presidency came open, I still didn't necessarily think about it. I just wanted that job because I was doing it anyway. And I knew I could do it, but I didn't have the degree.

Dr. JJ further stated that even though she was an interim vice president, she was discouraged from applying for the vice president's position because they required a Ph.D. "This is not going to happen to me again," she said. Indeed, this unfortunate circumstance motivated her to pursue a Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education, and with self-determination,

Dr. JJ enrolled as a full-time doctoral student while serving as a full-time employee at Green Mamba University.

After receiving her doctorate, she was appointed to the vice president position and served in that capacity for 4 years before accepting a similar position—Chief Diversity Officer and the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management—at the University of Red Squirrels—a predominately White university in one of the largest public university systems in the country. It is located in the Northeastern region of the United States. Dr. JJ explained how she navigated a major racial issue that "hit" her campus in her first few months as a new vice president and chief diversity officer, describing the programs she created to address the institution's diversity concerns:

> I had been there [University of Red Squirrels] a few months, and there was a big issue with blackface. And so, immediately, I met with students, particularly students of color, African American students, to say, "How can we educate the campus?" And so, we started developing programs. One of them was a diversity speaker series where we brought in African American and White speakers. We celebrated Martin Luther King's birthday with nationally known speakers, including his daughter, Bakari Sellers, and others. We also started celebrating all of the federal heritage months, such as Asian Americans, LGBTQ, and Women's History Month. We did a poster campaign where we would feature people on the campus. Our purpose was to identify the diversity around campus. . . . So, we weren't just looking at ethnic diversity; we were looking at gender diversity, sexual orientation, and etc. And so that became [a] really huge program, and it still exists today.

Similar to Dr. Asantewaa motive of taking initiative, developing programs and using her skills and talents to make things better for others, under Dr. JJ's leadership, the entire university system developed several programs that propelled each university to engage in conversations with students, faculty, and staff. "We looked at our course content to see how diverse it was. We made an effort to diversify the faculty and the staff as well and not just color and sexual orientation, but also diverse ideology," Dr. JJ said. She further celebrated the success of all the programs she developed, the increase of

students from underrepresented backgrounds, and the recognition she received from the university system: “As a matter of fact, I feel good about this. In 2018, our school received the first-ever system-wide diversity award, and I received an individual diversity award.”

Even though Dr. JJ did not have an explicit goal of becoming a university president, her career trajectory and experiences seem to have prepared her for that apex position. In 2018, Dr. JJ was appointed as the president of Falcons University—one of the public HBCUs in the state of Turkey. Turkey is a predominantly White, farming state in the Midwest with more than five major professional sports teams. When asked to describe how she decided that the presidency was a position she would pursue, Dr. JJ responded with the following explanation:

> I was enjoying my work in counseling. I didn’t aspire necessarily to doing anything else. But I think maybe the administrative bullet may have hit me when I went over to the vice president’s office to be a special assistant for various projects. That is where I knew from an administrative point of view about how I can impact students’ success because you have to be the driver of the people who are providing the services. So, the first time I ever even thought about being the president was in 2006, the same year I went back to get my doctorate. Somebody just said, “What are you going to do with this degree?” And out of my mouth just came, “I’m going to be a president.” I didn’t even know where it came from. I had never said that to anyone, not even myself. . . . And so, I stayed on that developmental road from 2006. So, you see how long it took?

Dr. JJ spoke the presidency into her life, but her career trajectory seemed to have been heading towards the apex office in higher education. In over 150 years, Dr. JJ is the second African American woman to have occupied the office of president at Falcons University. She believes that she is a successful woman, stating that, if not, she would not have been working in higher education for 35 years. Her measure of success is seeing “students come in, graduate, and go on to prosper. So, every time I see a student cross the

stage, that's success for me." While Dr. JJ relishes her position, she has described it as "tough":

> Being a president is tough because the president is responsible for everything. Even though the president may not have anything to do with it [a specific issue], at the end of the day, if it goes bad, it's the president. At the end of the day, if it goes good, it's somebody else. The president gets all the bad . . . that old president. If everything goes great, you know, those people over there did that. But I enjoy it. It's a tough job. It's a tough job. And particularly when you come into a situation where there are challenges, people can be adverse to change. But I'm going to do it. I think I've always been a change agent. I know higher education administration; I know what the organizational structure has to be like in order for the institution to be successful.

Dr. JJ is a leader who takes responsibility and understands the politics of higher education leadership, especially as a Black woman. I appreciated Dr. JJ's honesty about the presidency being tough, and I wanted to know the leadership characteristics she possesses that are helping her navigating those tough moments in her career journey. She continued:

> You have to be transparent with your constituents, you know; do not make decisions in isolation. The decision is the president's decision. But if the president makes a decision, and the people don't understand, a lot of times, you get massive pushback. But I think presidents have to have a moral compass and know what's right and know what's wrong and stay on the high ground. So, my strategy is making sure that I'm meeting with the constituencies a couple of times a semester, meet with the faculty, tell them where we are, what challenges we're facing, what our plans are to do about it.

In addition to being transparent and having a moral compass, Dr. JJ relies on "close confidants, who some are former presidents and current presidents" for advice and guidance. She believes that she would not be where she is without her "faith and prayers." Dr. JJ considers herself a spiritual person who has regular conversations with God. In times of difficulties, her faith and prayers provide her comfort, encouragement, and inspiration.

Dr. Asantewaa and Dr. JJ referenced high expectations from their families, communities, and, in particular, schools when defining what impacted their own expectations. In the case of Ms. BB, whom we will meet next, high expectations were common in her journey. However, family expectations were low because of her parents' educational backgrounds.

Ms. Brown Bomber's Journey: Low Family Expectations, High Teacher Expectations

Ms. Brown Bomber, hereafter referred to as Ms. BB, was born in the inner city of Lake City—the city with the largest percentage of Blacks in the Bird State. Ms. BB identifies herself as an African American woman, a Christian, and a social justice advocate. Ms. BB's parents were married for 44 years, but she came along after they had been married for 10 years. She grew up in a very poor neighborhood and is the only child of her parents. In describing her parents, Ms. BB said:

> My father is one of the smartest men I've ever known—brilliant, intelligent, engaging, good with numbers, but only went to ninth grade because he grew up in the segregated South. For my mother, she went up to 12th-grade high school. She wanted to be a nurse, but that didn't happen. She became a domestic. After several years in distant relationships, my parents got married, and my mother moved to join my father at Lake City.

Ms. BB stressed that she was "always a very good student" and enjoyed school. But her parents did not encourage her and were not engaged in her schooling. Like Drs. Asatewaa and JJ, Ms. BB attended a segregated school system during her elementary school years and had a "great experience." She stated that she was in a gifted program and felt a sense of connection with her peers and teachers. The librarian lived on her street and knew her mother. They went to church together with their teachers. When it was time for Ms. BB to transition to junior high school, desegregation started in Lake

City. So, she was bussed across the city to an integrated junior high school. Ms. BB recounts her mother's concern about her attending school on an unfamiliar side of the city. She said her mother was not sure if the teachers were good or were concerned about her daughter. Ms. BB narrated her experience in her junior high school:

> I felt disconnected. . . . They [teachers] weren't encouraging me, and I knew they didn't fully understand my culture. They weren't looking at encouraging me to read outside of the things that were in the textbook. They didn't know who I was, and they didn't know my parents. I just couldn't find my space. It was just horrible!

Ms. BB experienced an unwelcoming integrated middle school environment with teachers who lacked cultural knowledge in educating Black students. During her eighth-grade year, a new public high school opened in Ms. BB's neighborhood, and her eighth-grade English teacher, who knew she "was a good student," recommended that she go to the brand-new high school. She continued:

> I didn't even know about my eighth-grade teacher's recommendation. She was rooting for me and said that they should accept my application for the brand new high school. That was the best decision ever. I'm glad I got into my neighborhood high school because it solidified me. I got to meet the very first African American high school principal. She was very instrumental in my college selections. . . . [Also], my eighth-grade English teacher wanted me to go to an HBCU. I had a great experience in K-12, except for that little period of time, seventh and eighth grades, when I went to the desegregated school across the tracks, if you will. My segregated school teachers were mentors and expected us to do well and go to college.

Ms. BB attended Crusaders—a very small private Christian university in a neighboring city. She thinks that there were less than 50 students of color who attended Crusaders. While she was careful not to speak for the experience of "all the students of color" in her year, she stated that they received "some odd stares" as they walked across campus. Sometimes, people would ask her strange questions about her hair texture or the

kind of food she eats. “These people were not familiar with students of color,”’ she stressed. Ms. BB shared a racist incident:

> I remember we had one student who had a swastika marked on her door. . . . [I] never thought that I would see anything like that as a student on [a Christian] campus. I’ll tell you, the college was tough, especially as a Black person coming from [a Black] neighborhood, a school where everybody looked like me, great teachers, and a nurturing environment. I graduated from my class with 75 students . . . to that type of [college] environment where I didn’t feel like I had very strong supporters and allies, it was a difficult transition.

Like Dr. Asantewaa’s “survive and get out,” Ms. BB did not lose focus on her academics, even when the school environment was not welcoming to students of color. She had high expectations for herself and was determined to be successful. Ms. BB was full of smiles while sharing that her inner-city school “teachers were the best.” She stated, “My teachers pushed me, so I had proper time management and study skills, and those were beneficial and helped me through my undergraduate program.” When asked to describe other experiences that helped her to thrive in such a college environment, Ms. BB recounted:

> My roommate, who is also the only child to her parents, was a gift to me. Our parents were really worried if we were [going to] get along. . . . She had a strong sense of faith, and her mother took me as her other daughter. On the weekends, her mother would come and pick up both of us for grocery [shopping]. [My roommate’s mother] made sure that we understood the importance of what we were trying to accomplish and that we wouldn’t give up. She went to college, and I think she was two semesters shy from getting her degree. And she made sure that [dropping out of school] didn’t happen to the two of us. She pushed, and she prayed until she got us through, and that’s how I survived and thrived. Actually, my former roommate and I are still the best of friends.

Ms. BB graduated with a degree in Business Administration and worked at a bank as a collector for a short period and transitioned to work in the bank’s human resources (HR) department. The HR experience—hiring and training people—inspired her to pursue a master’s degree in Adult Education and Training. Ms. BB’s capstone project

was about curriculum development and training adult learners at a community college. She shared an enthralling story about a student she worked with:

> Getting the opportunity to work with [adult] students who didn't think that they could be successful was fascinating to me. Probably they have never been successful in an academic environment. Some of my students had 2 years of technical school and were very analytical but could not read, and that was kind of fascinating. One of the things that still brings me to tears, I had a student Tommy, who was in his late 50s and a wizard at math. He could add but could not read or write. All he wanted to do was to read from the Bible and to write the names of his children and his spouse. I got Tommy to that level, and that was a huge success for him.

Being able to change lives in such a small but profound manner, and seeing students thrive, became Ms. BB's new passion. After graduating with her master's degree, she was hired as a Career Development Coordinator for a newly established school-to-career program for over 20,000 K-12 students and about 3,000 adult learners in eight school districts in Bird State. After a few years, Ms. BB left her position to become the chief administrator at the satellite campus of Hawks Community College—a small public community college in Wren State in the Southwest of the United States. While serving in this capacity, Ms. BB's mother took ill, and as the only child, she felt compelled to relocate back home to take care of her mother rather than joining her husband, who had been deployed to Hawaii. Ms. BB considered returning home as an opportunity to pursue a Juris Doctor degree and possibly become the mayor of Lake City. She enrolled in Lake City Law School, and in the process, family life became unbearable. She narrated:

> I had just been accepted into law school. I was a nontraditional law school student. I worked full time. Again, I just started this wonderful new career working with students. I didn't want to give that up . . . and I still wanted to go to law school. I wanted to have it all. He [my husband] was very traditional. So, the point came that he wanted to have a family [children]. I was like, this isn't the right time. Even my mother, she said I can just have the baby, and they [Ms. BB's mother, father, and husband] will take care of the child. I said, no, that's not the

> kind of parent that I want to be. I don't want this child not to know that I'm his/her mother . . . and that really shattered our relationship. That was probably the toughest part of my entire life. . . . At that point, my dad had just recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia. My mother had just had open-heart surgery. I struggled to juggle and navigate all of those things.

Navigating challenging life circumstances amidst academic and career advancement was daunting for Ms. BB. She eventually "collapsed one day" under the pressure that came from a growing sense that she could not handle life as she was living it anymore. Hence, she "stopped law school for a semester." During the semester break from law school, she and her husband found themselves in "different places" regarding their values about marriage and career growth. Ms. BB believes that her career advancement became a threat to the survival of her marriage and eventually led to the end of the marriage. In the midst of the difficulties, Ms. BB revealed that she "activated" her faith in God, and that kept her "grounded." When asked about how she activates her faith, she said, "Through prayer, through meditation, through walking around the parking lot. I need to just get away!"

When Ms. BB graduated from law school, she returned to Wren State to take the position of Dean of Academic Administration at the Nighthawk Community College—a public community college composed of six campuses and four centers. Nighthawk Community College is one of the largest multicampus community colleges in the nation. In her role, Ms. BB oversaw strategic planning, enrollment management, space utilization, specialized degree programs, campus outreach, dual enrollment, evening administration, the adjunct office, and the Center for Academic Assistance. Additionally, she served in various interim positions, including as a provost, the Dean of Learning and Technology Resources, and the Dean of Students. While she was excelling in all her responsibilities, Ms. BB shared an experience that angered her:

> While serving as the interim provost, I remember the president [of the university] asking about having a [permanent] person instead of interim provost. . . . And I asked him, "What do you expect of this person? Do you expect this person to just continue with the status quo? Or do you really want this person to do an assessment and make changes if needed?" His response was, "I want you to really assess and build this [job description] as if you were [the permanent provost]." That was the positive note. But the bad thing he said to me was . . . "Well, you know, because you don't have that doctorate, then you can't apply for the full-time position." I was very angry, very bitter. I did the job for 11 months; under my leadership, we were able to increase enrollment. We transitioned into the new building. . . . What really angered me about this [why he considered me unqualified] was the provost at the medical education campus, who did not have a doctorate, was a White, male, had the same background in the field as me, was allowed to be permanent [provost].

Similar to Dr. JJ, Ms. BB was denied an opportunity for career growth even though she is highly competent but didn't have the credential. As an African American woman and someone who describes herself as a "social justice advocate," she was hurt but not surprised by her experience. She asked, "Why not me?" Ms. BB continued, "These challenges are real. You have those people who challenge your authority. You'll make a suggestion, and your White male colleague will come right behind you and make a very similar comment, and he will be credited. Sometimes that's hurtful." These experiences did not deter her from challenging the status quo. She submitted her grievance and suggested some changes in the hiring process for all positions within the college system. Even though she was happy to see a policy change that "all senior administrators would have to have a full-fledged doctorate," Ms. BB said, "it still didn't work in my favor, but at least it was consistent across the system."

Due to her leadership qualities and "great utility player" characteristics, Ms. BB was allowed to participate in the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship program—the premier program in the country for developing senior leaders within higher education. This comprehensive leadership development program provides emerging

leaders in higher education the opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture, policies, and decision-making process at another university. Fellows spend an academic year on another ACE member campus, where they work directly with presidents, chancellors, and other senior leaders. They observe how instructional leaders address strategic planning, resource allocation, development, and policy implementation. For the fellowship year, Ms. BB was hosted by the University of Eagle—a public, research-intensive university and the flagship of the four-campus university system located in the Midwestern state of Eagle. The institution is strategically situated in White Flag City, which is 2 hours apart from the state's most populous cities. The city is predominately White and the state's fourth most populous city.

Throughout the fellowship year, Ms. BB acquired new knowledge and leadership skills critical to the sustainability of colleges and universities in the 21st century. After the successful completion of her fellowship, Ms. BB was hired as an associate provost at the University of Eagle. Her portfolio encompassed strategic planning, accreditation, targeted faculty hiring, employment discrimination, Title IX, residency appeals, space utilization, and planning. One year into the associate provost position, Ms. BB was recruited to work with the new university president as his chief of staff. She believes that her educational and career experiences opened up this possibility. She stated that the president was "always 12 paces ahead of everybody" because he was trying to gain institutional knowledge while bringing a new perspective to his team to build a strong university system structure.

Even though she said that she relishes her role and the opportunity to impact broader university constituents, a reflective Ms. BB was still concerned that a similar

experience to the one at Nighthawk Community College might repeat itself. She may be barred from applying for a permanent leadership position because she does not have a terminal degree. Similar to the actions Dr. JJ took after proclaiming that “this is not going to happen to me again,” Ms. BB enrolled in an executive Ph.D. program and is currently a year shy from graduation. A year-and-a-half into the chief of staff role, Ms. BB was appointed as the Interim Vice President of Diversity. Apart from her academic, professional, and career experiences, Ms. BB believes that she possesses some of the characteristics of a good leader— namely, ethical, attentive, collaborative, thoughtful, inquisitive, and respectful—that have contributed to her career success.

Theoretical and Literature Connections

In all, the African American women in this chapter have lived diverse experiences, yet they have many compelling similarities that highlight how parental, community, and teacher expectations have influenced their education as they have navigated U.S. educational systems as young women. These similarities illustrate the *expectations* theme identified in this study. Indeed, each Black woman, through the high expectations that were directly or indirectly set for her, internalized these expectations, which laid the grounds for the development of her personal identity and pursuit of educational goals. Particularly, the goal of going to college was largely constructed by the high expectations from childhood that were articulated at home, within the community, and in school. Whereas the overarching theme of *expectations* matters, the various ways that specific expectations were experienced, as highlighted through each participant’s narratives, are equally important as they represent the intricacies embedded in the lives and educational journeys of African Americans.

In Chapter 2, I acknowledged scholarship that has suggested that families who have high educational expectations inspire their children to develop high expectations for themselves, which results in high academic achievement (Rhea & Otto, 2001; Trusty & Niles, 2004). Specifically, educational expectations are found to be positively correlated with parents' socioeconomic status since "educated families tend to have timely information regarding educational opportunities through their social capital" (Andres, Adamuti-Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon, & Thomsen, 2007. p137). In terms of family expectations for Dr. Asantewaa (from a middle class and well educated family) and Dr. JJ (from a working class family with some college experience), their parents were highly involved in the schooling and unambiguously communicated to them that they were expected to do well in school and go to college. Drs. Asantewaa and JJ then internalized these expectations and achieved higher academic credentials. Their narratives harken back to Flowers and Flowers' (2008) finding that African American parents positively influence their children's future educational attainment by having high expectations for them. This finding was Dr. Asantewaa's lived experience, as her parents expected her to excel in school and go on to graduate with a bachelor's degree. These were high expectations that Dr. Asantewaa reached and even exceeded, much like Dr. JJ, whose parents had an explicit "college-going" expectation for her—go to school, graduate, and go the college—and were actively engaged in her academics and extracurricular activities. This finding is consistent with Lareau (2003) findings that families who engage in formal school related activities tend to inspire their children to pursue better educational opportunities.

For both Drs. Asantewaa and JJ, the high expectations from their parents significantly impacted their educational success. This theme—*expectations*—suggests that Black parents who believe in their children's ability to succeed motivate the children to attain educational credentials beyond the high school diploma. This finding is consistent with the research of Jeynes (2007) and Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan (2001), which suggested that parental involvement and expectations positively influence their children's expectations and academic achievements.

Ms. BB, on the other hand, did not experience the same expectations from her parents, who were educated up to high school but did not graduate. In fact, Ms. BB's parents did not encourage nor engage in her education. However, similar to Drs. Asatewaa and JJ, Ms. BB called her educators at her segregated high school "great teachers." They had high expectations for her. Ms. BB's Black teachers were role models, especially an eighth grade English teacher who encouraged her to attend an HBCU after high school. Even though she did not enroll in an HBCU, Ms. BB's Black teachers created a "nurturing school environment" and served as great examples that "solidified" her sense of self and beliefs about the returns from a college education. This finding confirms the conclusions of Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, and Papageorge (2018) and Wood et al. (2007), namely that Black students who have Black teachers are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college because Black teachers usually have high expectations that are critical for their students' success, even when parental expectations are low.

Gershenson et al. (2018) described the *role model effect* in relation to Black students. Black teachers serving as role models provide positive *signals* that increase

students' efforts and update students' beliefs if they are holding incorrect beliefs or underestimating the returns of their educational investments. Gershenson et al. (2018) suggested that role model effects help to explain why Black teachers increase the educational attainment of Black students. Ms. BB had Black women teachers and school leaders who were her role models. Specifically, Ms. BB's first African American woman principal had a law degree and a Ph.D., and this inspired Ms. BB's quest to obtain a law degree.

Multiple scholars (Barksdale, 2007; Bartman, 2015; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Mainah, & Perkins, 2015; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Turner, 2002; Watson, 2001) have asserted that, in higher education administration, African American women experience exclusion, condescension, isolation, discrimination, a lack of validation or appreciation, and a failure to receive due credit. Consistent with this assertion, Ms. BB explained her experience with career advancement discrimination at the hands of the most powerful person in her previous university—a White male president. Ms. BB, who was serving as the interim provost at the time, was excited for the opportunity to develop and update "the job description" for the permanent provost position until she was told that "because you don't have that doctorate . . . you can't apply for the full-time position." She became angry and bitter. Recall that Ms. BB stated, "I did the job for 11 months, and under my leadership, we were able to increase enrollment." What ultimately hurt Ms. BB about her disqualification was that her colleague, the provost at the medical education campus (a White male without a doctorate and with the same level of experience in the field as her), was promoted to be a permanent provost. Indeed, Ms. BB had the right to be angry and bitter, but how she

chose to respond to the situation is inconsistent with the caricature of the “angry Black woman” (Ashley, 2014; Tyree, 2011) in sitcoms.

In this respect, African American women in higher education administration—as well as those who are faculty, to a larger extent—have continuously been impacted by typical pejorative stereotypes, gendered expectations, and attitudinal and organizational biases that compromise fundamental principles of equal opportunity and social justice (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Dr. JJ’s and Ms. BB’s experiences underscore this fact. What appears to be the major denominators in the stories of Dr. JJ and Ms. BB are that they are both Black and women, which Crenshaw (1989) argued is a recipe for “double discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex” (p. 149). Also, Black women’s narratives help us to understand the role of power that contributes to the dearth of African American women at the executive level (Cho et al., 2013; Hancock, 2016; Stanley, 2009).

Consistent with the research that has explored how African American women faculty feel isolated on university campuses (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), Dr. Asantewaa described her time at Pit bull University as “very good but challenging to some degree because it’s not a social environment.” Because of her identity as a Black woman with an urban education background and life goals about social justice, Dr. Asantewaa felt isolated in her department, as faculty relationships were based on scholarship and theoretical paradigms. She shared that some nationally respected White faculty colleagues devalued her scholarship, resisted her presence, and would not even look her in the eye; these experiences were difficult for Dr. Asantewaa. Additionally, Dr.

Asantewaa was the only African American woman faculty member in her department, and that exacerbated her struggles in navigating insensitive social signals.

Finally, research participants talked about some of the leadership characteristics they possess that are consistent with reports highlighting competencies that are necessary for senior university leaders to meet strategic higher education goals (Rupp et. al, 2016). Dr. Asantewaa and Dr. JJ talked about their ability to develop and maintain relationships throughout their universities and among local constituents to advance their institutional missions. This includes working with internal and external stakeholders (e.g., faculty, staff, students, and community leaders) in both collaborative and supportive capacities

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter's stories of these high-achieving Black women, one significant through-line runs across all the narratives: these women all had great educational experiences in their predominately Black schools. Their narratives reveal how exposure to varying school and social expectations significantly impacted their educational journeys. The data revealed that participants' experiences with expectations during their educational journeys ranged from high to low and were usually initiated by their parents. Even though participants' parents did not voice expectations for graduate school, their overall educational aspirations influenced the women's decisions to pursue graduate education.

The theme of *expectations* also illuminates the high expectation the participants had for themselves as well as the role faith played in their lives. Faith has encouraged the participants to not only persevere but to believe there is something greater than man's inhumanity to man, even while living in a complex, oppressive environment. As Dr.

Asantewaa said, “I probably would not even want to wake up if I don’t believe and have faith in something greater than man, because I’ve seen so much from man that if I only believed in man, I wouldn’t want to live.” Indeed, the research participants frequently cited their strong faith, which support what King and Ferguson (2011) and Morrison (1997) advanced in their research—that Black women’s faith and spirituality serves as a foundation to provide balance, actualization, and drive that stimulate productivity. Morrison (1997) explained that what experts call “emotional intelligence, Black people call soul—and we have always had soul” (p. 193). Finally, the data also revealed that, even though the participants’ families came from a variety of socioeconomic levels, they were all raised in two-parent homes. And education was a primary value in the homes regardless of their parents’ levels of educational achievement.

CHAPTER 5

Nonlinear Path(s) to Higher Education Leadership Opportunities and Family-Life Balance

To gain a greater understanding of the various career pathways that African American women navigate to reach senior leadership positions in higher education, I drew on the narratives of three participants' educational and career trajectories. Also, I examined the family support these women have received and how they balance their family and professional lives. The results of this study revealed that the majority of the Black female study participants have pursued various nonacademic career opportunities within and outside of higher education, ranging from Foreign Service work to admissions. Findings from the data also suggest that all the participants diversified their academic training, choosing to pursue higher education leadership programs at the graduate level rather than master's degrees in the same fields in which they completed their bachelor's degrees. These decisions impacted not only the women's trajectories but also the subsequent stories and illustrations they shared with me as they framed their educational and career pathways. I provide in this chapter their narratives of their educational and career journeys. In other words, one of this study's themes that is addressed in this chapter is *nonlinear paths to higher education leadership opportunities and family-life balance*.

While Chapter 4 highlighted the impact of family members' and teachers' expectations on the academic success of the African American women featured in this study, the data in this chapter suggest that the participants were unintentional in their pursuit of senior leadership positions in higher education. Instead, they excelled in their

respective administrative responsibilities and were consequently encouraged by mentors and supervisors to apply for advanced positions. Below, we meet Dr. Janice, who painted a colorful picture of how her great educational experiences enhanced her dream of becoming a Foreign Service Officer and facilitated a smooth transition to higher education leadership. In addition, I introduce Dr. Anthony and Dr. Dixon, who went to school with the hope of becoming a medical doctor and an anthropology professor, respectively. Their college and graduate school experiences changed those dreams. The three Black women's stories also highlight their family support system, the strategies they employ to balance their professional and family lives, and their associated struggles.

Dr. Janice's Career Journey: From Foreign Service to Vice Provost

Dr. Janice is a proud native of Urban City—a very vibrant community and one of the nation's largest cities. Located in the Midwestern state of Cougar, Urban City is the home of three major professional teams and has a majority White population of over 450,000. In her 40s, Dr. Janice identifies herself as a Black woman, a mother of a smart young man, and a leader who grew up in a very strict working-class home with her parents and younger brother. She described her mother as the most "authoritative figure" at home, who laid down the laws and was the day-to-day disciplinarian. However, whenever "something terrible happen[ed]," her father would step in to discipline the culprit—her or younger brother. She described her fun-filled girlhood life:

> Growing up for me was fun. I spent my childhood surrounded by my aunts, my uncles, and my cousins, and we had family reunions every year and every holiday. . . . I was always engaged in doing fun things. I felt loved and had many opportunities. . . . I grew up in a nice house, good neighborhood, great parents, and I had fun. I had a fun childhood. I didn't go out a lot and wasn't in the streets. . . . I didn't have a lot of siblings, so I didn't go places by myself. If my dad or my mom wasn't taking me, my aunt or uncle was taking me, or one of my older

> cousins was taking us. We just weren't out on the streets but were mostly with family. That's just how we were raised.

Dr. Janice's parents, both of whom have some college experience but not a degree, ensured that their children received the best education. Dr. Janice stated, "I was in Christian schools for pretty much all of my K-12 education." She had a unique schooling experience, attending a predominantly Black, Catholic private school from first grade to middle school and then transferring to a predominantly White private Catholic high school, even though she was not a member of the Catholic Church. Dr. Janice noted that during her K-12 era, the stronger inner city or primarily Black schools were Catholic. They had excellent curricula, structure, discipline, and lots of rules, and they required their students to wear uniforms. She explained:

> I was always in the honors, gifted, and talented space in school when I was in junior high. I had blown through all of the math courses, so one of my teachers introduced me to logic. I used to sit in the back of the classroom with a college-level book that she [teacher] gave me . . . because she felt that I was well beyond my mates. I got the opportunity to skip a grade but didn't take it. I was already young in my class grade, and I literally would have been almost a year and a half younger than my counterparts. So, I chose not to, and that was around middle school. When I got to high school—coming out of inner-city, predominately Black Catholic schools to a predominantly White Catholic high school—I was at the top of the pack, leading the pack in AP and honors classes, and I graduated second in my class. My Catholic school was over 20 years old, had never had a Black valedictorian and salutatorian. I was the first in its history. On Saturdays, while my friends were going to the mall, I was out competing against other teams in the state's Academic Scholarly Book Competition and bringing trophies back. I was the captain of my team, and I graduated second in my class.

She was not only academically smart, but she was actively involved in extracurricular activities as well. She was a member of the school's cheerleading team, sung in the choir, served on the student council of the National Honor Society, and participated in Youth in Leadership—a prestigious program that inspires young people to become change agents in their schools and communities. Through this program, Dr.

Janice learned a lot about leadership and was exposed to brilliant students and highly ranked research universities. In the midst of all the great experiences, Dr. Janice was struggling with her strong sense of Black identity. Moving from a predominantly Black, working-class neighborhood to a more affluent, White neighborhood and attending a White private Catholic high school appeared to have affected her sense of identity. She shared:

> My name is Janice. Instead of going by Janice, which I felt was a little more ethnic, I went by Jan in high school. So instead of being Janice Carter, I was Jan Carter, because Jan worked [for me]. [One day] my dad gets pissed off. . . . We went to a program that I was involved [in], and my name [in the brochure] was Jan Carter, and my dad was like, "Is this your name?" He was pissed! So, I struggled with that [identity] in my White high school.

Although she struggled to forge her Black identity in high school, Dr. Janice knew where she wanted to attend college. She began putting together a list of colleges during her sophomore year. As a self-motivated student who had high expectations for herself, Dr. Janice believed she could find more rigorous educational opportunities outside of her city and state that would challenge her curiosity, and she did not feel she fit in her neighborhood. She narrated:

> I always felt like I didn't fit. I love my family, I love my city, and I love my state. But I always said I don't fit here. The things that I think about, other people don't think about. The things I want to do, other people don't want to do. Like, this drive or motivation, other people didn't have, and I didn't understand it. . . . So, my motivation was that I'm going to work hard and get out of here to someplace that I actually do fit. That was my motivation.

When Dr. Janice started applying to colleges, her goal was to attend Cross University—a highly ranked private Catholic University in the U.S. Midwest. "I was at a Catholic school, so that made sense," she said. But her dad wanted her to attend the University of Cougar—the state's largest and research-intensive university. To satisfy her father, Dr. Janice applied to the University of Cougar but said to herself, "I ain't trying to

go there." Her desire to get out of her city and state encouraged her to apply to Ivy League schools on the East and West Coasts. She explained why she ended up choosing Moose University. Located in Grizzly State in the Western United States, Moose University is one of the most highly ranked research-intensive private universities in the world. It has produced several U.S. presidents and members of the U.S. Congress. Also, the university has produced world-champion athletes and participates in NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics, the highest division of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Dr. Janice explained:

> In my college application, I wrote an essay about standing on the shoulders of my family. My parents didn't have college degrees. Both of my parents are from rural areas. . . . They worked two and three jobs so I can afford to apply to places like Moose and Ivy League schools. So, I was standing on their shoulders. When my acceptance letters started to roll in, each one was a big envelope and not the little ones. Part of the reason I chose to go to Moose was that, at the bottom of my acceptance letter, there was a handwritten note that said, "We are so excited to have you, and we know that those shoulders you were standing on would be proud." That's why I went to Moose.

As a first-generation student, Dr. Janice described her college experience as "phenomenal, amazing" and was glad for all the opportunities Moose University afforded her. She started college with International Relations as her major because she wanted to travel, see, and understand the world. However, after being introduced to African American literature and African American history, she was better able to see, understand, and appreciate herself. She stated, "African American/African Studies (AAAS) opened up this world for me that I didn't know. I didn't know what it meant to be a Black intellectual, and it [the AAAS major] showed me that. It was powerful!" Dr. Janice continued with International Relations as her major, and the university was able to incorporate AAAS into her program. Dr. Janice explained:

> I stayed with my International Relations, and along the way, the university and I figured out how to marry them [International Relations and AAAS]. So, I started to focus on U.S. foreign policy in Africa and also colonial policies in Africa. In my junior year, I studied abroad in Paris, and I looked at how French foreign policy played out in French media in relation to francophone Africa. It was phenomenal! And I spent most of my time on my research project when I was in Paris at the Lomo [Lomography Gallery]. . . . I knew how U.S. foreign policy talked about its relationship with Africa, and so, I wanted to compare how the French foreign policy was displayed in its local media in terms of the francophone countries that they still have direct relationships. . . . And so, my senior honors thesis at [Moose], I married my two majors and looked at how African Americans influence U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. I took the case of TransAfrica [an advocacy organization] and their influence in the sanctions against South Africa. I spent the whole summer between my junior and senior years on a research grant in the bowels of TransAfrica going through all their archives in undergrad.

She highlighted that Moose was transformative in teaching her how to be a Black intellectual, conduct research at age 19, and to be unashamed of majoring in AAAS. While in her sophomore year, Dr. Janice was selected to participate in a prominent fellowship program funded by the U.S. Department of State that prepares outstanding young students of color for Foreign Service careers. This program pays for the last 2 undergraduate years in full, and a 2-year master's degree in Public Policy. Fellows become Foreign Service Officers and have the opportunity to work in Washington, DC, a U.S. embassy, or a diplomatic mission overseas. During the 2 years of the fellowship, Dr. Janice was introduced to ambassadors and Foreign Service Officers of color, who served as mentors to prepare the fellows as they entered the Foreign Service workforce. Dr. Janice noted, "I did internships in Washington, DC, and overseas. During my internships, I worked under President Clinton's administration with seven cabinet-level members."

Dr. Janice explained that she graduated with two bachelor's degrees and transitioned to graduate school at Royals University to study Public Policy. Royals is one of the oldest private Ivy League universities in the United States, and it is located in the Northeastern region of the United States. According to the Carnegie Classification of

Institutions of Higher Education, Royals University is categorized as a Research I school. It has produced several U.S. presidents, chief justices, congressmen, computer scientists, famous academics, and owners of worldwide businesses.

Dr. Janice spent 10 years serving as a Foreign Service Officer after receiving a master's degree in Public Policy. In her first few years, she was selected to be a member of a special task force tasked with creating a 5-year plan of diversifying Foreign Service Officers. Dr. Janice was deployed to China for several years as a management and consulate officer, as well as a visa officer. Dr. Janice highlighted that, prior to her posting, the State Department trained her in Mandarin, the official language of China, to enable her to communicate effectively. She went on to serve as a press attaché in South Africa. Dr. Janice narrated her unfortunate experience with the events of 9/11 while in DC, preparing for her post in South Africa:

> I got married on August 4th, and my new husband and I went to DC on September 1st to get my orders and our paperwork. We had our tickets to fly from DC to Pretoria on September 13th, 2001. Two days before we got on that plane, 9/11 happened. I was in the State Department building doing my exit interviews that morning, and we felt the plane hit the Pentagon. . . . You know, the distance between the State Department and the Pentagon is not far. We felt it. It felt like an earthquake. The building moved. . . . The next thing that happened was a series of emergencies, and it took probably an hour to figure out what was happening.

Dr. Janice became emotional while narrating the 9/11 experience. She vividly remembers how long she and her husband had to walk from the State Department back to their hotel in Alexandria, Virginia. "We have to walk from DC through Georgetown and across the bridge. And traffic wasn't moving, because everybody was trying to get out of DC," she stated. Dr. Janice and her husband safely flew to South Africa and spent 2 years there. She served as the Public Affairs Advisor to the Ambassador and U.S. Missions and as the Public Affairs Deputy Spokesperson at the U.S. Embassy in South Africa. In these

capacities, Dr. Janice coordinated information dissemination, press guidance, and media releases to further U.S. government goals; wrote speeches and remarks for the ambassador and deputy chief of mission; and coordinated press outreach events for presidential, secretarial, and other cabinet-level visits. She briefly described a precarious position she found herself in when, in the second year of her stay in South Africa, the United States invaded Iraq:

> As a press attaché, I was supposed to give a statement about the realities of what was happening in Iraq. Just about that same time, President Mandela had called us [America] a warmonger, and people were throwing Molotov cocktails in a country that used to be an ally 5 minutes before. The world was changing. What we were doing in the world and our role in the world and as a Foreign Service Officer, particularly one of color, some of those changes I agreed with, and some of them I didn't agree with.

Dr. Janice's disapproved of some of the U.S. governments' actions related to foreign policies, which was undergirded by her educational and professional background. Indeed, she has become acutely aware of the geopolitical influence of the United States on the world. Dr. Janice was deployed back to Washington, DC, where she worked under the U.S. Secretary of State as a special assistant for legislative affairs. She spent a few years in this role, writing testimonies and liaising with Congress. Even though Dr. Janice seemed to have reached her career goal to serve as a Foreign Service Officer, she decided to take "leave without pay for a year" to explore other career opportunities.

During her break from the State Department, Dr. Janice received a call from a mentor at Moose University who said to her, "What do you think about coming back to Moose to do some of the work that you are really excited about in terms of diversification and opening up pipelines here for students of color?" Dr. Janice considered the state of Grizzly State to be her home. She said it was "exciting" to have an opportunity to create and direct a program to bring more students of color, first-generation students, women,

and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to Moose University. She said to her mentor, “Yes, I can do this!”

Dr. Janice spent 6 years at Moose University as Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Admissions. In this role, Dr. Janice was responsible for managing a highly selective admissions process with over 32,000 applications yearly. She provided strategic leadership to programs to ensure continuous improvement of the academic profile and geographic diversity of first-year and transfer students. Also, she developed and implemented a diversity outreach and recruitment strategy for admissions officers at all levels within the university, with an annual budget of about one million dollars. Dr. Janice briefly described her affection for higher education:

> During those 6 years at [Moose], in charge of admissions, I figured out that I love higher education, and I don’t think I’m going back to where I came from [State Department]. . . . In this new career, I still get to travel internationally. . . . That’s what I needed. However, the new places I was moving into, I needed to be called “a doctor.” So, I began to poke around, and I found a doctoral program.

Dr. Janice enrolled in the Executive Doctor of Education program at the University of Dolphin. The University of Dolphin is one of the oldest private Ivy League universities and is located in one of the most populous cities in the Northeastern state of Reindeer. Dolphin is classified as a school with very high research activity, and it is known for producing world leaders, including several U.S. presidents and a very famous African president who advocated for Pan-Africanism and led the formation of the Organization of African Unity. Dr. Janice alluded to the following reasons for enrolling in the program at the University of Dolphin: One, the program was in Higher Education Management and not Policy and Leadership. Two, the institution takes pride in the saying, “We make presidents.” Since it was an in-person program and she was working

as an assistant dean, Dr. Janice would spend approximately two-and-a-half years flying from Grizzly State to Reindeer State once every month to complete the doctoral program. She described her experience:

> In the middle of that doctorate, I got pregnant and gave birth to the 10-year-old that I mentioned earlier. I don't do things easy, unfortunately. I gave birth in October to the child and gave birth in March to the dissertation. It was a traumatic academic year, but I did that. I completed my doctorate, and then I left my institution [Moose University] because, at that time, I realized I needed a different challenge and [family] support.

Dr. Janice saw a career opportunity and a new challenge and pursued it. She accepted the Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management position at the University of Cougar, and she and her son relocated to her home state. The University of Cougar is about two-and-a-half hours away from Urban City, Dr. Janice's hometown. The institution is classified as a research-intensive university, and it is one of the few universities in the United States that has medical, veterinary, law, and business schools on the same campus. Additionally, the university's journalism school is one of the best in the world. As the Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, Dr. Janice was responsible for coordinating, implementing, and evaluating the university's strategic access, recruitment, and retention initiatives. Also, she advised the Provost and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies about how to build and support student diversity, including strategies on access, persistence, and success.

At this point, Dr. Janice needed support due to personal and family issues. She stated, "my marriage was deteriorating at that point." Also, she underscored that her base was at Cougar, and since she "travels all over the world for career-related conferences," her parents could drive from Urban City to stay with their grandchild or vice versa. She narrated:

> When I took the job [Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management] and moved back home [Cougar], my child was a year old. . . . I was divorced before my child was 2. Once I got back here and had family support and could really take a moment and breathe and look around, I realized this [dealing with a deteriorating marriage] wasn't the life I [wanted to live]. . . . I grew up in a house where my dad worked all the time. I grew up in a house where Black men took care of their family.

The support Dr. Janice received from her parents was significant for her career growth and development. She could attend national and international conferences and undertake some speaking engagements. While at the University of Cougar, Dr. Janice was selected as an ACE Fellow. She was hosted by the University of Bison, which is an ACE member institution. When Dr. Janice completed her ACE fellowship, she transitioned to become the Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies at the University of Cougar. She was responsible for developing and managing a comprehensive undergraduate student success plan, which interfaces across all academic divisions on the campus.

In her desire to get a little closer to her family, Dr. Janice took the position of Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies at the University of Bison—a place she was familiar with as a result of the ACE fellowship program. Located in the sixth-largest city in the state of Bison, the University of Bison is the state's flagship institution and is classified as a very high research university per the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The university has several satellite campuses, research and educational centers, and medical centers across the state. It is worth mentioning here that the state of Bison and the state of Cougar are neighboring states and their flagship universities—the University of Bison and the University of Cougar—have been engaging in a collegiate athletic rivalry since the late 1800s. Even though Dr. Janice liked her role

at the University of Bison, she reminisced about her experiences and the positive impact of her mentor at the University of Cougar:

> The chancellor that was here happened to be a Black woman, and I got the pleasure of working for her when I was an ACE Fellow. She just had an air of grace and importance. . . . She became one of my mentors over time. But the VP [vice provost] that I worked under at my last institution as his AVP [assistant vice provost] was just a phenomenal mentor. He helped create a role for me on the undergraduate education side, which did open the door for me to compete for a VP of undergraduate studies here [University of Bison]. He was one of my biggest supporters, both when I was in that role and when I moved to this current position. He was the first to celebrate me, even though he knew he was losing me to a rival institution. He was genuinely happy for me and played an integral role in my application process. He usually introduces himself as . . . "I am the VP for Undergraduate Studies, and I work for her. Whatever she tells me to do, that's what I do." And people would say, "Oh, so you are the real provost." And I will respond . . . "I'm the AVP for Undergraduate Studies." . . . In all, he is such an influential mentor to this day. . . . Even more powerful was how he treated people—the respect that he gave to every person—and that was something I loved observing about him. So, what I would say is mentors were a huge part of my success. They play different roles in different things, and you can't move through this [career journey] without them.

While at the University of Bison, Dr. Janice also held a courtesy associate professor appointment in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department, as well as the African and African American Studies Department. In Dr. Janice's career journey, not only was her experience in the State Department and transition to higher education leadership remarkable, but her narrative suggests that she intentionally pursued opportunities. She has developed into a higher education senior leader who considers the impact she has made on students as her measure of success. Dr. Janice believes she is walking in the blessings God has prepared for her and what He—God—has asked her to do for His glory. Dr. Janice's profile is a compelling reminder that given the right exposures and opportunities, African American women are fully capable of leading higher education institutions. Similarly, Dr. Anthony, the next participant, has had an

incredible journey in higher education administration, even though she did not fulfill her childhood dream of becoming a medical doctor.

Dr. Anthony's Nonlinear Journey: From Admissions Specialist to Vice Chancellor

Dr. Anthony identifies as a Black woman and a first-generation college graduate who grew up in a very strict religious household. She described her upbringing this way: "We were raised from a very religious background. We had religious instruction 6 days a week, very strict, very respectful, pay attention to your elders, be seen and not heard, go to school, and be obedient." Dr. Anthony is one of five children born and raised in a close-knit Black neighborhood in Capybara City—a densely populated city in the Northeast with one of the world's largest financial and cultural centers.

Dr. Anthony's parents have some postsecondary education but no college degrees, yet they ensured that their children would receive the best education. Dr. Anthony attended one of the specialized K-12 schools in Capybara City—middle and high schools that serve the needs of academically and artistically gifted students. Dr. Anthony's parents expected her to do well in school, read her books, and do a good job. When asked to describe her K-12 school experience, Dr. Anthony shared:

> I had a great K-12 experience. I was marked very early on as an academically advanced student in K-9, so I skipped a grade when I was in elementary school. Then I went to one of the specialized middle schools and one of the selective high schools in the city with a very competitive environment. . . . I had a group of best friends from middle school—six boys and I, and we lived in the same Black neighborhood—and we'd travel together to academic programs. You know, I love being known as the smart girl with the boys. [We] had good teachers, and really, most of them were White. . . . [Even though] our school was mostly Black and Latino, I felt like these teachers cared and paid attention to us. . . . I feel like I had a pretty good time.

Dr. Anthony expected no less for herself because she was exposed to a "very competitive" high school environment where it was anticipated that about 98% of the

student population would continue to college. For Dr. Anthony, her parents made it clear that "not going to college wasn't a choice." Most importantly, there was a family expectation that Dr. Anthony would work toward becoming a medical doctor. With the help of her school counselor, Dr. Anthony selected and matriculated from the University of Dove—a private, Research I university in the Northeastern state of Weasel. She described how she was recruited to the University of Dove:

> During my junior year of high school, a Black woman who was an admission counselor at the [University of Dove] came to [speak to us]. . . . And my guidance counselor said to her, "I have the student that I think would be great at your university." She came and spoke to me, and I just liked her immediately. And it is because of her that I went to the [University of Dove].

At the University of Dove, Dr. Anthony enrolled in biology and other science courses and "did not do well." However, she did well in humanity courses, such as English. Also, she became interested in working with people, especially young children. So, she took a few classes at the Child Study Department, had an "excellent experience," and ended up majoring in Child Studies. In describing her experience as a young Black woman college student, Dr. Anthony mentioned that there were about 250 Black students out of approximately 5,000 students at the University of Dove. Thus, they were very close and had their world within the university. She narrated:

> We [the Black students] spent a lot of time at the African American Cultural Center. It was both a cultural center and a residence hall. And we spent a lot of time in the hall. We had parties and meetings in the hall. You know, it was the central meeting place on campus for us, and we all knew and supported each other. The director and the assistant director of the center [who were also Black] were the major administrative supporters of us on campus. I felt like they looked after us and took good care of us. Academically, I did the best that I could.

The African American Cultural Center served as a "safe space" for the Black students at the University of Dove. They felt supported, less isolated, and developed stronger connections among themselves, the two directors, and other Black university

staff members. Dr. Anthony was a work-study student for all 4 years, so she was able to establish a close relationship with the deans at the university. “I had to go to work every day, and so, they knew who I was,” she stressed. Before Dr. Anthony graduated from the University of Dove, the Black woman admissions officer who recruited her encouraged her to pursue a career in college admissions because of her relationship-building skills and her engaging personality. Prior to this, Dr. Anthony had planned to return home and find a job, but she decided to take an admissions specialist’s position at the University of Dove, influenced by the Black woman who saw something in her that Dr. Anthony did not see in herself. This opportunity became her “official introduction” to the field of Student Affairs.

After 3 years in admissions, Dr. Anthony realized that she did not want to spend her entire career traveling from state to state recruiting students. Instead, she wanted to be on campus helping students, like the two directors of the African American Center. By this time, Dr. Anthony had developed the career aspiration of wanting to be a Dean of Students and was acutely aware of the various degrees and experiences that would enhance her chances. Hence, she went to graduate school to get her master’s degree in Higher Education Student Affairs. Like all the participants in this study, Dr. Anthony’s family did not expect her to attend graduate school. She shared:

> No. No. No! In fact, my parents did not have any expectations for graduate school. But especially my mother was the one who said, “Go far! You can do it. Go far.” But there was no expectation you must go to graduate school. No, no. Nothing like that.

Dr. Anthony returned to Capybara City to pursue graduate education in student personnel administration at the University of Leopard—a private, Ivy League, Research I university, and one of the largest graduate universities in the country. She cited two

reasons for choosing to attend the University of Leopard. One, the university provided her with a minority scholarship that paid part of her tuition. Two, it was an opportunity to return home and be closer to her family after living in Weasel for 7 years. Indeed, while living in Weasel, Dr. Anthony's mother passed, so she wanted to be able to support her family.

Dr. Anthony spoke highly about her "incredible scholar and wonderful" female advisor who also saw "lots of potential" in her. Dr. Anthony appreciates her advisor for nurturing her and being instrumental in her securing the position of Assistant Dean of Student Development at the College of Bishops—a private Roman Catholic University in Capybara City. While at Bishops, Dr. Anthony was responsible for coordinating all student services, including admissions, advising, career services, counseling, job placement, multicultural programs, and student orientation. Dr. Anthony appeared to have landed her dream job of working directly with students and helping them navigate college while developing their careers.

After 4 years of serving as the assistant dean at the College of Bishops, Dr. Anthony returned to the University of Leopard to serve as the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, where her responsibilities included the development and supervision of the Scholars and Fellowship Office. Dr. Anthony stated that, after years at the university, students staged a series of protests concerning the campus' racial climate, and the students demanded, among other things, a multicultural affairs office and more faculty of color. As a response to the demands, Dr. Anthony was appointed as the first Dean and Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Her task was to spearhead the enhancement of intercultural community programs, provide diversity education, advise

undergraduate cultural student organizations, and strengthen culturally-based mentoring programs to create a greater sense of community and improve students' quality of life. While thriving in her role, Dr. Anthony began to plan for her next role, possibly a higher position. She realized that she needed a terminal degree. Consequently, she enrolled in a Doctor of Education in Higher Education program at her university. Dr. Anthony briefly shared how her support system helped her in the doctoral program:

> [The program] was run by two African American women scholars. I can't overemphasize how encouraging and supportive they were of me coming into the program as a doctoral student. They set an incredible example of what scholarship among or from Black women looks like and still do to this day. Very powerful Black women. They didn't stay because neither of them received tenure from the institution. But they saw me through to the end of my degree, and both are now thriving scholars in other institutions. They were really my role models.

Shortly after earning her doctorate, Dr. Anthony accepted the position of Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Blue Bird—a public urban university in Capybara City. She was responsible for academic advisement, career development, student conduct, student crisis intervention, counseling, disability services, athletics, and recreation. Additionally, Dr. Anthony provided leadership to the university's Early Learning Center, a center dedicated to providing childcare services to student-mothers who would otherwise not be able to attend college.

Dr. Anthony had many opportunities to learn and grow as a leader in the field of higher education. However, there was a striking note of disappointment in her voice when I asked her to describe some of the challenges she encountered as an assistant vice president:

> I was fairly young when I became an assistant vice president, and in many cases, younger than the staff that I was supervising. I think that that proved to be a very challenging thing in most instances. . . . The vice president made it clear to me when I accepted the offer that he was bringing me here to improve life for students and that I was to improve the [current] situation. What I observed was

> that many of my staff members were quite good and content in their respective areas and didn't want a change. So, I had to [find a] balance between respecting the expertise that my staff brought to the table [while] establishing a vision for the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management to move forward. . . . It was quite challenging in terms of establishing trust with the staff, convincing them that the changes we were trying to make were good for the students and staff, and convincing them that the person leading the change is younger than them and, in many cases, has not worked in their functional area. . . . [For example,] I had never worked in disability services, so my staff found it difficult to trust someone who had never worked in such an area to lead them. So, I would say that that was a major challenge. Also, it was a challenge being the only Black woman in many of these circumstances and many senior leadership meetings at a predominantly White institution.

Data suggest that Dr. Anthony was able to bring her "staff members on deck" to work toward improving the quality of every student's life at the university. Through those challenging experiences, she learned "great deal about what it means to be a young Black woman senior leader in a predominantly White university" and was elevated enough in the [institution] to have great supervisory experiences. Dr. Anthony chose to stay as an assistant vice president for 10 years. During those years, she got married and had children. Dr. Anthony's proclivity to seek career advancement led her to examine her experiences as an assistant vice president. She realized that she needed to be making the decisions. She stated, "Once you've attended thousands of meetings and realize how things are done in a certain way that means you should be the person to be making the decision." Dr. Anthony began to explore vice presidency opportunities across the country, and fortunately, she found the position she currently occupies. Dr. Anthony described how she finally landed the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Scarlet—a public, Research II university located in the Northeastern state of Chipmunk.

> [When] I saw this position come available, I knew that one of my mentors is a friend of the executive vice chancellor here at the university. So, I had my mentor introduce me to her. She was new here at the university. . . . We had a

> conversation, and she told me about her vision, what she was trying to create, and what she was looking for. I wasn't really sure [about the position], but I was quite happy because vice chancellorships don't come around often. . . . So, I applied and did my research. I went through the search process. . . . I met with the executive vice chancellor, met with her staff, and met with the chancellor. Our chancellor is quite amazing, and it was her reputation and the reputation of the executive vice chancellor that convinced me to feel like this would be a good move if I were offered the role. So, after the interview, then discussions, etc., they offered me the position, and I accepted it!

As the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Dr. Anthony oversees Student Life and Leadership, the Office of International Student and Scholar Services, Health Services, the Counseling Center, the Career Development Center, the Department of Athletics and Recreation, Diversity and Inclusion, and the Office of Housing and Residence Life. She recognizes the size of her portfolio and the high level of expectations from university constituents, and she said, "I am always ready for a new challenge." As someone who has spent her entire professional career in higher education administration, Dr. Anthony underscored that she is not a stranger to developing and integrating relevant innovative programs to enhance the college experience of every student. She emphasized that relationship building, ability to listen, and the "willingness to cross lines to meet people where they are to understand their world" are some of her traits that have contributed to her career advancement and success. Dr. Anthony stated that "one of my greatest successes when I was an assistant vice president was from getting out of student affairs and spending some time with the associated provost to think about how to improve our students' academic lives on campus."

Dr. Anthony acknowledged that her busy professional life puts her family time at a significant disadvantage. She shared the following response to my question on the kind of support she receives from her family and how she balances her family and professional life:

> The most important thing in the world to me are my children and my family. I have an aging father whom I take care of, and my husband has a very challenging job. He travels quite a bit, and so, I try to keep front and center. . . . I don't know how important it will mean to me if someone says I am a great vice chancellor. But what's important to me is if somebody says I'm a great mother. My family knows my job and that, at the beginning and the end of each [academic] year, I am very busy, and life becomes difficult. . . . I have orientations, commencements, and evening student events. Anybody in student affairs has lots of nights and weekends. . . . And so, my family has gotten used to that. I'm used to the fact that a lot of times I have to work at night, or I have to work on the weekends, as well. Sometimes, I bring them [my children] with me here, especially because I want them to be on a college campus anyway. And so, I say to them, come with me to the basketball game, or come with me to the talent show, or come with me just so that, partially, I get to spend more time with them. But also so that they are used to being in the college environment. As I said, my husband travels quite a bit, and so, there's not a lot that he can do. In fact, most of the time, I'm doing his part because he's away.

Similar to the other participants' stories, Dr. Anthony's narrative reveals how challenging it is for women to juggle the balancing act between their professional aspirations and family lives. Indeed, the majority of the participants in this study have partners, children, parents, and others who depend on them. They were open in sharing their struggles and the strategies they have utilized in balancing their career and family life.

Dr. Dixon's Journey: Family Support and Balancing Career and Family Life

Dr. Dixon, born to a Black mother and White father, grew up in an interracial household in a predominantly middle-class community that she described as a "fairly non-diverse neighborhood." She grew up in Butterfly City, a small community in the Midwestern state of Seagull. Dr. Dixon stated that although she is not a member of the Catholic Church, she attended a Catholic elementary school where she and her sister "pretty much were the only people of color in the whole school." Even though her neighborhood and elementary school were not diverse, she spent much time with members of both her mother's and father's sides of the family because they lived within a

30-mile radius. She attended a predominantly Black Baptist church on most Sundays. Dr. Dixon shared that she rode a bike, went roller skating sometimes, and loved "watching television in the '80s like everyone else." She described her K-12 experience this way:

> I had a great education. . . . My [elementary] school totally prepared me. I got to be in science fairs, was exposed to a lot of things, and had lots of friends. I went to a really large public high school. I was in honors and college prep classes and played sports. So, I was able to have a diverse group of people around me who were from all different walks of life . . . and from various socioeconomic backgrounds. . . . In my immediate family, the expectation was always that we would go to college. And so, my grandparents saved money for us to go to college, and my parents were willing to sacrifice to send me to whatever college I wanted to go to. That wasn't even a question that I was going to college or not.

Dr. Dixon, whose parents hold college degrees, emphasized that her family's high educational expectations were also her expectations, and she was self-motivated to achieve her ambition of becoming a college professor. While in high school, Dr. Dixon was involved in archeological research, which inspired her to want to be an "archaeologist like Indiana Jones" and a college professor—hence her choice of anthropology as an undergraduate major. Also, Dr. Dixon was a student-athlete who played on the women's basketball team. She attended the University of Zebra—a public, Research I, land-grant university, and the premier university of the Midwest farming state of Zebra. The university is located in the center of the state, hence the name Center City. The university has over 25,000 students and prides itself on having produced several Nobel Prize winners, U.S. congressmen, and women astronauts. Dr. Dixon described her college experience as "insular":

> My college experience was very insular . . . got up early in the morning, worked out, went to class, went to practice, ate dinner, studied, and then went to sleep. The next day, we repeat the routine. So, I didn't get to do a lot of things on campus. I wasn't in any clubs, and I wasn't in any [organizations'] leadership because basketball took up my life all the time. So, in that respect, what people think of as a typical college experience wasn't my typical college experience. That being said, I had lots of friends. I stayed and worked here during summers,

> so I knew a lot of professional people who lived in [Center City]. . . . [They became] my friends and my support network.

Dr. Dixon further described that she struggled in her "freshman year", trying to adjust to the basketball schedule and college life. Throughout her difficult early college journey, Dr. Dixon's family supported her. She regularly spoke with her parents, who were very conversant with college life. She continued:

> They [parents] and grandparents came down to watch my games sometimes. . . . I remember my first semester going in the finals, and I called my mom crying. I was like, there's no way I'm going to pass. I'm not going to get these papers done. And she [my mother] said, "Oh, my gosh, you would totally get this done." . . . Just that positive affirmation that you're going to get it [final papers] done, and everything is going to be fine, was key for me. That support infrastructure along with good mentorship, and the fact that I had a really good support structure from athletics. . . . [Everything] worked together for me.

Dr. Dixon emphasized that she only enrolled in classes that she was required to take and courses that would help her get to graduate school. Also, she avoided any course that she thought would mess with her grade point average. As an honors student, Dr. Dixon received many scholarships and awards, including being accepted into the McNair Scholars Program—a prestigious program that encourages undergraduate students to conduct research and engage in other scholarly activities with faculty mentors from areas in which they hope to pursue graduate study. Through the McNair program, Dr. Dixon completed two undergraduate research projects with her faculty mentor and published her first two journal articles in the *McNair Journal*. Also, the McNair program exposed her to various scholarship opportunities, paid for her to take the GRE, and paid for her to visit schools to explore graduate education. She explained:

> [McNair] was really amazing. As an athlete, you don't have free time, and you can't work except in the summer. . . . Then I started researching in the summer, which didn't pay a lot of money either. So, there was no way I could afford to go visit graduate schools in other places. They [McNair] negotiated the cost of the

> GRE [for me]. . . . McNair was a huge help for me. I would not have gotten where I was without help from them.

In her senior year at the University of Zebra, Dr. Dixon took some graduate-level classes to prepare for her master's degree. She graduated with honors and transitioned to pursuing a Master of Art in Anthropology with an emphasis in Archaeology at the University of Zebra. In her first semester of the master's program, Dr. Dixon was awarded two fellowships—the Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral Fellowship and the Thurgood Marshall Fellowship. These awards, which aim at increasing the ethnic and racial diversity among the nation's college and university faculty, provided Dr. Dixon with 3 years of financial support. She graduated with her master's degree to follow her dream of becoming a college professor and working at a university. Dr. Dixon was accepted into a Ph.D. program at the University of Fox—a public, Research I university in the Western region of the United States. The University of Fox is a member of the Association of American Universities and has over 10 national research centers. Dr. Dixon explained why she applied to only the University of Fox for her Ph.D. and how she distributed her fellowships:

> When I applied to go to [University of Fox], it was the only graduate school I applied for. I didn't apply anywhere else because it was the best anthropology school in the country. I had more than two publications on my record coming out of undergrad, and I also had [a] Ford Foundation Fellowship, and [I was a] Thurgood Marshall Fellow. So, I was really fortunate. . . . I used my Marshall one year at [University of Zebra] and my Ford another year at [University of Zebra]. So, I still had 2 years of Ford left when I went to [University of Fox].

Dr. Dixon was appreciative of the financial support she received from the two foundations, which enabled her to pursue her dream. However, she shared a story about her transitioning from the master's to the Ph.D. program:

> I went there [University of Fox] to get my Ph.D. in anthropology. There were four of us in my cohort. Two of us already had a master's degree, and the first thing

> they basically said was, "We're not really going to take that master's degree [you received from the University of Zebra]. You have to get another one [master's degree]." And so, I had to take several classes over again. I did it because, again, it [University of Fox] had the best anthropology program in the country at that time. . . . But something interesting happened to me the summer before I graduated with a master's in Anthropology. I did my first real academic archaeological dig that summer, and I realized that I got more excited when people came to visit the site and I talked to them about what we did. I explained archaeology and the processes involved, and I got more excited doing that than actually doing archaeology. . . . So, I started doing public outreach and figured out that I was so much more interested in how we communicate science and how we bring people into the culture of science.

Dr. Dixon's newly discovered interest made her think about how to communicate archaeological concepts to people who have misconceptions about the field. She had a conversation with one of her professors about her new passion and was advised to look into the Science Education program at the University of Fox since the program has an ethnographic approach. She continued:

> [Science Education] sees classrooms as cultures and ethnography. And so, for me, coming from an anthropological background, that was a really easy switch for me because I think of cultures, and I think of people as coming into the culture. [I] paid attention to the questions [science educators] were asking about science, and I realized that they were asking questions about physics, biology, chemistry, and engineering. They were asking the questions I was wanting to ask about archaeology. And so, even though they've never had an archaeologist in the science education department and I didn't know anything about education, they were willing to take a chance on me because they were interested in things I was interested in.

As Dr. Dixon was exploring a switch from anthropology to science education, she found herself at a crossroads where she had to make two very "tough philosophical or personal, and a financial" decisions. The first was forgoing her childhood dream of becoming an archaeologist. The second was giving up her fellowship because the Ford Foundation did not support students in education. While struggling to make this "hard choice," Dr. Dixon consulted her mentor, who encouraged her to pursue her interest and find a new challenge. She ended up switching to science education and earned both a

Ph.D. and a master's degree. Dr. Dixon briefly shared, "I had student loans for the first time in my life, ever, to pay for my last 2 years of graduate school because I didn't have the fellowship anymore, and my parents didn't even know until much later."

The year Dr. Dixon graduated with her Ph.D., the job market was not very good. She argued that people in anthropology did not know what to do with someone with a degree in science education, and science education people did not know what to do with somebody who studied archaeology. Dr. Dixon was frustrated and "couldn't get over the hump" because she "didn't look like a traditional academic" in terms of her credentials. Besides, she was relocating to Center City to join her college sweetheart to prepare for their impending nuptials, which further narrowed her job options.

At this point, the relationships Dr. Dixon established while in college became vital. She reconnected with the director of the McNair Scholars Program at the University of Zebra, who recommended her for the position of Assistant Director of Undergraduate Research. While in this role, Dr. Dixon learned how to write grants—she said it was an experience that "I didn't have during my graduate school." She also learned how to run programs. After giving birth to her third child, she decided to take a break from work to care for and homeschool them while her husband worked to provide for the family.

Dr. Dixon described herself as a "stay-at-home mom" until her third child turned 6. At this point, she felt ready to return to work. She explained that, at the same time she was wanting a job, her former boss at the research office and the University of Zebra leaders were exploring plans to build a new research center that would advance knowledge and benefit society at large. Dr. Dixon communicated with her former boss and was offered a part-time position with university leaders to establish the research

office. Shortly after it was officially opened, Dr. Dixon was named the director. She rose to become the executive director of the research center, and in 2018, she accepted the position of Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research. Dr. Dixon is currently managing numerous projects, including over five million dollars in projects funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). She reflected on her educational and career journey thus far:

> I went straight from undergrad to grad school and straight from grad school to the job market. And then the decision to stop working so I can take care of my children put me on the path to where I am now. . . . My story is that I went from a path that was so narrow and focused to a path that was [meandering]. So, I became more open to understanding that. . . . it's not about a straight trajectory. It's about following the path as it opens up and that, when some doors open, others close, but if you're open to going through them, it opens up more opportunities. If you're willing to take those opportunities, good things will happen.

Dr. Dixon is very cognizant of her journey and acknowledges that even though she did not specifically go to school to train for her current position, life experiences as a student, a mother, and an administrator prepared her for the job she does today. She continuously thinks about how the research she does can impact humanity. She stated:

> I work extremely hard at my job, and I love it. I look at the incredible research that we do on our campus, and I get to support such innovation and technology and new cures for cancer. . . . Those are the things that make me excited about my job. The fact that NSF has trusted our team and me with a lot of money to do the kind of work we do means that they believe we can get that done.

Dr. Dixon is humbled by her ability to build a research team. But she is mindful that she cannot accomplish anything by herself. She explained that every leader should have some essential leadership skills and "the ability to honor and value the contribution of every team member." She further noted:

> I have various strengths, but we need other strengths to make our team successful, and not being threatened by the skill set and the strengths of the people on my team, who balance out what I don't have, is one of the critical characteristics a leader must possess.

Dr. Dixon believes that she possess team building skills which has helped her excel in her leadership position. She loves her work but elucidated that “work-life balance is a struggle.” She tries to prioritize her family as much as she can. There are times when her family takes precedence over her job and vice versa, but in the end, “everything balances out,” she concluded.

Theoretical and Literature Connections

Each participant’s narrative in this chapter confirmed findings from the literature that African American women often do not orchestrate their careers from the beginning to their current senior leadership positions in higher education (Thacker & Freeman, 2020). The participants described multiple career opportunities within and outside of higher education, which eventually landed them in their current position. As discussed in Chapter 2, to become a dean, provost, vice chancellor, chancellor, vice president, or president of a higher education institution, individuals must earn a doctoral degree and have successfully served through the faculty ranks (Thacker & Freeman, 2020; Turner, 2007). The fundamental assumption of these administrative career conditions is that every senior leader in higher education must be an academic, which creates a narrow path for African American women in particular. A cursory look at Black women’s upward mobility in the faculty hierarchy reveals that this study supports other research. Namely, research has shown that Black women’s numerical representation at the highest levels almost disappears, precisely at the full professor and senior administration ranks (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018; Johnson 2016; Snyder et al., 2016, 2018).

Indeed, the career journeys of research participants do not reflect the assertions from Thacker and Freeman (2020) and Turner (2007) that individuals must come from

the faculty ranks. For example, Dr. Janice's career trajectory has spanned across two unrelated fields—the U.S. Foreign Service and higher education. After receiving her master's degree in Public Policy, Dr. Janice was deployed to China, where she served as a consulate and visa officer for several years. She also served as a press attaché for several years in South Africa and a legislative affairs special assistant for the U.S. Secretary of State in Washington, DC. Dr. Janice transitioned to her first higher education position as an Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, and through doctoral and mentoring programs, she rose to become an assistant provost. This finding underscores the value of nonlinear career paths for Black women in higher education senior leadership positions. Additionally, this finding is supported by other scholars who have advanced that women leaders do not purposely look for leadership positions; they perform to their utmost and are usually encouraged by other senior leaders and mentors to apply for new positions (Thacker & Freeman, 2020; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003; Waring, 2003). Furthermore, this finding supports the view that several career paths could lead to apex leadership positions in higher education (Madsen, 2006).

Through intersectional data analysis, this study's narratives of the Black women leaders' career pathways have exposed the systemic power structure and privilege that benefit White people (Bilge, 2014) and the pervasive nature of racism, genderism, and sexism within higher education that ultimately most negatively impacts the opportunities of Black women. Of course, a closer look at the demography of individuals who have successfully pursued the linear path—faculty member, chair, dean, academic vice president and/or provost, chancellor, and president—shows that most are White heterosexual males from the middle to upper socioeconomic backgrounds (Gagliardi et

al., 2017; Johnson, 2016). Thus, this study's participants have had to navigate from the margins of feminism and antiracism at the intersection of the linear pathways defined by White masculine higher education leadership (Crenshaw, 1991). As Byrd (2009) postulated, "for African American women in predominantly White organizations, race, gender and social class may restrict the process of leadership" (p. 1). Hence, the women in this study had to improvise and pursue nonlinear career paths to higher education leadership because the system was never created for them.

Though the women have earned ample academic qualifications and are highly accomplished with advanced professional and leadership experiences, their race and gender continue to marginalize and define their career growth. Analyzing participants' career experiences through intersectional lenses revealed the several ways race, and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of their employment experiences (Crenshaw 1991; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The employment experiences of Dr. JJ and Ms. BB, who we met in chapter four, are particularly illustrative. Both were discouraged by White men in positions of power from applying for the permanent positions that they were already filling as interim administrators. Intersectionality helps us understand that Black women university administrators will always find it difficult to navigate the hegemonic power structure within higher education leadership relative to White men and women and Black men. Exclusionary policies, procedures, and practices are reinforced by academic cultural standards (e.g., the linear path) that stereotypically position Black women's experiences at the margins (Hooks, 2000). This exclusionary edifice leaves them on their own to figure out how to be effective leaders in a workplace that does not recognize them as such (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Nonetheless, the African American

women in this study are tactfully navigating and challenging institutional powers, cultures, politics, and structures in efforts to claim the center stage.

The data confirms what numerous studies have revealed about the importance of family stability and support to the educational and career success of African American women university administrators (Caldwell & Watkins, 2007; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2015; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Smith & Crawford, 2007). All the African American women in this study hail from two-parent families with traditions that made nuclear and extended family members extremely influential in their lives; these family members provided support that profoundly impacted their educational and career journeys (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Dr. Dixon, for example, spoke highly about her grandparents who "saved money" for her to go to college and, together with her parents, would frequently travel for approximately 8 hours to watch her basketball games. Additionally, when she gave birth to her third child, Dr. Dixon received the support of her husband to stop working and become a stay-at-home mom, taking care of the home and homeschooling their children. Dr. Dixon's decision to take a break from her outside-the-home employment and devote time to raising her children is consistent with the findings of Zheng and Surgevil (2016). The researchers found that female leaders are usually expected to display the characteristics of a nurturer and caregiver and provide more attention to their family when they become mothers.

Similar to Dr. Dixon, Dr. Asantewaa received a lot of emotional and research support from her husband and stated that she is "blessed" to have a husband who is a "highly conscious Black man." Dr. Asantewaa shared:

> A lot of my research and my work, my husband is constantly clipping articles and reading and feeding in. He fills the fuel, and I have to balance what I hear from him with what I actually experience on the job. . . . He is a courageous, outspoken person, and that's the support I receive from him.

Research on women of color in higher education has documented that balancing family and professional responsibilities is a struggle (Sandberg, 2013; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 1999). This finding is pertinent to this study as *all* the Black women leaders, including those who did not have children, expressed difficulties in juggling these two important aspects of their lives. As Parks (2018) stated, handling a demanding career as a woman requires an individual to make some personal sacrifices and decisions. Dr. Mari, who we will see in the next chapter, shared stories about her struggles and how she has been navigating her family and professional life. Her narrative supports Parks' statement. Specifically, Dr. Mari shared:

> As a single mom, I feel like I'm always going back and forth about—Am I doing the right thing as it relates to my kids? Am I spending enough time with my kids? When should I say no to something at work and yes to my kids? Okay, am I going to lose some ground at work? Is somebody going to use this against me? When I say no to my kids and say yes to my work, will my kids look back on this time and say I didn't spend enough time with them, and I was too focused on work? So, I have just decided that I'm going to say yes to both. . . . So, I bring the kids to work with me sometimes. I try to include them in my work so that I spend quality time with them together and individually. I certainly don't believe that I'm a poster child for balance. I work a lot because I enjoy working, but I've had to make sacrifices [with my children].

Even though African American women have a long history of managing career and family responsibilities, as suggested by Moses (1997), their balancing acts sometimes take an emotional, physical, and psychological toll. As Marshall (2004) argued, "in spite of increased numbers of women in administration, little attention has been paid to how women manage the complexity of a career in higher education and a family" (p. 91). This

research suggests that Black women senior leaders in higher education need a clear support system.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an in-depth analysis of the nonlinear career trajectories of African American women in higher education senior leadership positions. Also, I have described how the family support they receive enhances their professional lives. While some of the research participants received support from their spouses, the dataset revealed that the women possess some traits that have proven to be effective in their leadership success. For example, Dr. Dixon talked about her ability to put together a cohesive team that works to achieve the institutional research goals. Likewise, Dr. Anthony highlighted her relationship building and listening skills to promote collaborative stewardship. Together, all the Black women who participated in this study emphasized the challenges of finding a balance for their family and professional lives. This chapter also highlighted that participants earned their doctorates in education-related programs. In the next chapter, I introduce the final three participants within the context of the theme *mentoring.* Specifically, I highlight the positive impact mentors have had on the Black women's career pathways toward higher education administration.

CHAPTER 6

Mentoring

In this chapter, the final three narrative portraits are situated within the third theme: *mentoring*. The chapter explores how participants talk about who and what programs greatly impacted their academic and career journeys. All the Black women in this study said that they have benefitted from other Black women who nurtured them and gave them opportunities in their educational and career pursuits. Significantly, several of the study's participants alluded to the benefits of having mentors who were not African American or female. This finding is especially compelling because few Black female university leaders are available to serve as mentors.

While each participant experienced mentorship differently, their stories emphasized the importance of mentors as they progressed through their educational and professional journeys. Also, some participants said that, as a Black woman, it can be difficult to find another Black woman to serve as a mentor since, historically, and there have not been many African American women who have occupied similar positions. Still, every participant in this study explained that a mentor or colleague encouraged them to consider leadership positions. For example, Dr. Mari, who I introduce next, described how her mentor, who was a dean at a different university, encouraged her to apply for an associate dean's position while she was a tenure-track assistant professor. Later in this chapter, I introduce Drs. Happy and PG, who both came from what they defined as "poor" backgrounds and attributed their "staying in college" to mentors and mentoring programs.

Finally, in this chapter, I talk about an additional finding that emerged: *career success definition*. My data analysis revealed each of the Black women leaders' constructions of success and how these constructions were shaped by the intersections of race, gender, and class in the participants' unique contexts. The nine women leaders' definitions of success are student-centered with an essential focus on students' achievement.

Dr. Mari's Journey: The Significance of Mentoring

Dr. Mari grew up in a small town with an ocean view in the Southeastern state of Manatee—one of the most populous states. Even though Dr. Mari has an elder sister, she grew up as the oldest child at home since her sister did not live with the family. Dr. Mari was called on to babysit her younger siblings, as her mother was always working. "I watched my mother work very hard. In fact, sometimes I resented that she worked so much because, as the oldest, then I had to take care of my younger sister and brother," she said. Neither of Dr. Mari's parents attended college, and she believes that their education levels impacted how they prioritized their children's education. She explained:

> I grew up just knowing that Black women work hard, so I have to work hard. I believe my parents prioritized work even over education because they weren't educated. My stepfather got to third or fourth grade, and my mother up to high school. . . . So, it wasn't like I grew up in a house that emphasized going to college or even getting good grades. I think my mother particularly wanted me to do well in school, but she never explicitly said it. I just knew I had to. So, I grew up knowing that I had to do well in school to get out of my small town, and I had to work hard.

While there were no clear expectations from her parents, Dr. Mari's teachers had high expectations for her because they knew that she was a "smart student," so they nurtured her. Dr. Mari looked up to her Black women teachers as role models. She described these experiences:

> I knew that I did well in school because my Black women teachers told me. They told me that I was smart and also told me when I wasn't doing well. I used to stay after [school] with one of my Black female teachers, and she would help me with schoolwork [because my parents would not help me]. One of [the Black female teachers] recommended that I should be tested for gifted. I remember them pushing and affirming me, and that made me want to be in school . . . and to do better. . . . [As a young girl,] I really looked up to my teachers. . . . I remember the way they dressed up for school, and I remember myself thinking I want to be like them. And I think that made an impact on me more than I knew. I didn't realize it actually until recently how much of an impact those women made on my life. They just were professionals, and I remember thinking, "I can't wait until I'm able to wear a suit and dress up and look like them."

Dr. Mari's narrative is consistent with the stories of the other participants discussed in earlier chapters. Black teachers played significant roles in these women's K-12 educational journeys. Dr. Mari stated that her teachers prepared her very well and had high expectations for her to go to college. In her senior year, Dr. Mari was voted as the "most likely student to succeed" and was one of the "only" three Black students in the National Honors Society. She initiated the college application process with help from school counselors and teachers. Dr. Mari was thrilled about receiving college admission letters from all over the country and the possibility of leaving her small hometown. Nonetheless, she lamented that her family did not encourage her to pursue a college degree. But when she started receiving admission letters, they encouraged her to stay in the small town, go to community college, and work at a phone company.

When selecting a college, Dr. Mari stated that she desired to move, but she did not want to move too far away from family. This preference led her to attend the University of Turtle—a public Research I university and the fourth-largest in the state of Manatee. She started as a Business major but switched to Special Education after taking one elective course in the field of education. The class exposed Dr. Mari to the fact that a disproportionate number of Black students were placed in special education categories in

their K-12 careers, especially in the mentally handicapped category—terminology used during Dr. Mari's time as a student. She felt that the system was unfair to Black students and decided to become a special education teacher so she could help change Black students' experiences in school.

More importantly for Dr. Mari, college was an opportunity to explore and better understand herself as a Black woman. Born and raised in a "sheltered and very religious household," Dr. Mari asserted that she did not know much about "her body, sex, and what it means to be a woman" because her parents did not discuss those topics with their children. She only knew what her friends told her and always "felt ashamed of wanting to know more about herself." During her self-exploration, Dr. Mari connected with other young Black women pledged to a sorority and became a student leader. Dr. Mari graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree with an emphasis in teaching individuals with specific learning disabilities.

Dr. Mari could not wait to practice what she had learned in school. She was eager to be a special education teacher. Dr. Mari admitted that, during her first year of teaching, she did not know what she was getting into and felt like she did not know enough. This new realization influenced her to pursue a master's degree at her alma mater. When asked if there were any family expectations for her to attend graduate school, Dr. Mari responded emphatically: "No! Because I had already exceeded my family's expectation by graduating from college [undergraduate program]." She further highlighted that she did not do well on the GRE and was glad that it was not a barrier to her academic progress. Dr. Mari enrolled in a 1-year intensive Master of Arts in Varying Exceptionalities program, where she attended classes every evening and on weekends

while working full-time as a teacher. She described her graduate school experience this way:

> [My master's program] was fun and wasn't that difficult for me because I was single. I lived alone and had the support of my colleagues and the cohort. . . . Grad school was fun. I [always] looked forward to the weekends when I could get together with [my] cohort members. I [also] had two African American female professors who made me looked forward to their classes because they were so nurturing and supportive, and I just loved to be in that atmosphere. I'm still close to them. . . . Yeah, there was a time commitment, and I was still working full time, but I really enjoyed the graduate school experience.

After earning her master's degree, Dr. Mari got married, took a teaching position at a predominantly White high school, and enrolled in a degree program to become an education specialist with an emphasis in reading and learning disabilities. Dr. Mari recounted that she did not enjoy her experience at the high school and felt frustrated with the way the students, especially Black boys, were treated:

> I was so frustrated with what I was seeing [at my] high school. [My frustration was] never about the kids but the way they were being treated. I was at a predominantly White high school, and my [learning disability class] was full of Black boys. Again, I'd been at two other school districts, and it was always the same thing: class full of Black boys. And I was just like, I can't change this. It's getting old, I'm frustrated. . . . I honestly felt like I wasn't able to change the systems. [But] at some point, I thought, if I got a doctorate and became a principal, I may be able to affect some changes.

Since Dr. Mari and her husband were "deeply rooted" in the state of Manatee, they were not ready to relocate. So, Dr. Mari explored doctoral opportunities—Ed.D and Ph.D. programs—with some in-state universities other than the University of Turtle. She was accepted into a Doctor of Philosophy in Education program at the University of Seals that offered a specialization in Exceptional Student Education. The University of Seals is a public research-intensive university that has over 50,000 students on campus. Dr. Mari's preference for the Ph.D. program was based on the fact that a student had to be full-time to access the numerous fellowship opportunities. She was also ready to leave the

classroom. Dr. Mari shared how she got her "life-changing" fellowship and how she was socialized and mentored into the academy:

> [During our orientation] a faculty member presented her work about providing professional development throughout the state to teachers in special education, and that her work is state-funded. . . . After her presentation, I ran up to her, and I was like, "I want to work on your project." And she said, "That's great. You have a fellowship." That was my $20,000 fellowship for working with her and providing professional development to teachers. We traveled throughout the state during my entire program. The fellowship changed my life. I learned and grew so much. I had [many opportunities] to present to teachers. . . . I remember the first time I had to present, and I was so nervous because the room was full of teachers from all over the state. But I watched how [my professor] and mentor would go up, shake [teachers] hands, and introduce herself. She was a connector. So, I just followed her and did what she did. I'd go up to people, introduce myself, and share my card. . . . I felt like she socialized me into the academy in so many different ways that, now, as a leader, I rely on those skills I learned during my doctoral program. So, that's how I got my fellowship and was able to get through [my Ph.D.] program with such a great mentor.

Dr. Mari's mentor and advisor exposed her to ways of conducting research and other skills that are necessary for the professoriate. Her pursuit of "principalship" changed to wanting to influence special education policy through scholarship and to preparing teachers at the university level. After earning her Ph.D., Dr. Mari said that she pursued "faculty opportunities that seemed to be everywhere in the country" but her home state of Manatee. Her faculty mentor assisted her through the job search process and advised her to accept an offer from the University of Badger—a public research-intensive university in the Midwestern state of Spaniel. The offer was for a position as an assistant professor of special education. Dr. Mari taught at the University of Badger for 2 years and frequently flew from Spaniel to Manatee to be with her husband. She indicated that her husband—an attorney who was "called to the bar" in the state of Manatee—did not want to relocate to another state. Fortunately for Dr. Mari, she latched onto an

opportunity and returned to her home state to take a position as an assistant professor at Yellow Panther International University—a public Research I university.

She described the opportunity at Yellow Panther International University as "amazing" because she got to go back home to be with her husband, whose law firm was growing. While at Yellow Panther International University, Dr. Mari gave birth to her two children. When asked to describe how she transitioned from a faculty to an administrative career, Dr. Mari shared:

> [I] got a call from a dean—a Black woman that I describe as a mentor, a friend, and a sorority sister—while I was on maternity leave with my second son. She was the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Bullfrog [a Research II university in the Midwestern state of Rabbit]. . . . We had worked together at University of [Badger]. She said, "I'm going to be the Dean of the College of Education at University of Bullfrog, and we're looking for an associate professor in special education and an associate dean for the teacher education program." . . . She encouraged me to apply for both . . . and I was like, "No, because I'm going up for tenure next year when I get off leave. I want to stay at [Yellow Panther International University]." And I said, associate dean? Who wants to be an associate dean? That does not sound like a job that I wanted to do. So, I told her no. But then she kept asking me, and my husband said I should just go—just go on an interview, see what happens, and try it out. What are you going to lose?

Dr. Mari was initially hesitant to apply since she was comfortable as an assistant professor. However, she heeded the advice of her husband, as well as the advice of the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Bullfrog, who was her mentor. She applied and attended a 4-day job interview process for the two positions. Eventually, she was offered both positions but had to decide her preference. She continued:

> [I pondered] for a while and decided that, if I'm going to move again, then I need to move for something other than the position I have now. . . . Also, if I can help her [the dean] and learn some things about administration from her, that would be great. So, I decided to try the associate dean's job. . . . An intriguing part of the process was that I had to go up for tenure at [University of Bullfrog]. So, I sent my information to them, went through their review, got tenure, and started the job as Associate Dean for Teacher Education. And that was how I got into administration.

Dr. Mari loved her new role as she was primarily responsible for facilitating faculty members' work in the Teacher Education program and strengthening the collaborative efforts with K-12 schools. However, she mentioned that the move to the University of Bullfrog came with some "sacrifices" that were detrimental to her family. Specifically, Dr. Mari spoke of the deterioration of her marriage as she was advancing in her career.

> [My] biggest challenge . . . [has been] just watching or being a part of the disintegration of my marriage. It was very difficult because, on the outside, everybody thinks I am so brave, I have all these [career] successes, I have two kids, and my husband is a professional. [My ex-husband and I] are still very good friends. . . . During one of our recent conversations, he said he just didn't think that the Ph.D. would lead to all of the things that happened. He's like, honestly, I thought you could get the Ph.D. and even go back to the school district and teach. He had no idea that all of these opportunities would come, and it's not what he signed up for. That wasn't the idea he had for his wife.

Three years into her associate deanship, Dr. Mari received a "target-recruitment" email for the dean of the College of Education from the provost at the University of Beaver—a Research II university located in the Northeastern state of Chipmunk. Prior to the provost's email, Dr. Mari had been receiving inquiries from search firms about her availability for a dean's position, and she was intrigued. Her further conversation with the provost at the University of Beaver revealed that the president of a national association for teacher education had recommended Dr. Mari as the "best fit" for the position. Dr. Mari consulted with her mentor, the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Bullfrog, who advised her to take the position since she (the dean) was pursuing a higher position at a Research I university. Her mentor dedicated time to prepare her for the job and interview process. "I applied, interviewed, and got the job," Dr. Mari said.

As a person of faith, Dr. Mari considers her quick rise in her career as "divine" and views her work as not just a job but a "calling." She emphasized that she sometimes

cannot believe that God prepared and provided her with all her opportunities to positively impact the field of education and be successful. Most importantly, Dr. Mari highlighted Men of Color in Teaching, a program she birthed that focuses on increasing the representation of males from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds in the teaching profession:

> [That program] is my baby. . . . That was my idea. I remember everything about it. I remember sitting at home just dreaming it up, putting it on paper, looking at other models that are being implemented, and looking at the research. So, to see that program now in its fourth year and to see those young men on campus and when I'm around them, it just makes me feel good. It makes me feel like no matter what failures I've had, no matter what I do after this, I will [cherish the opportunity] to develop a program and support young men to go out into classrooms and teach and make a difference. So, that is my greatest success professionally.

Additionally, under Dr. Mari's leadership, the College of Education developed a doctoral program with an emphasis on addressing access, success, and equity across the educational spectrum for students of color. Also, Dr. Mari created a center for access, success, and equity—a resource center that provides support for research, professional development, and community engagement. Six years into her deanship, Dr. Mari was appointed as a vice president at the University of Beaver. Overall, Dr. Mari explained that building relationships with colleagues and students, her ability to create opportunities for students, and approaching her work with "achieving excellence" mentality are important characteristics that have contributed to her career success as a Black woman.

Dr. Happy's Journey: The Impact of a Lifelong Mentor

Dr. Happy identifies as a Black woman who was born and raised in Armadillos City—a very warm metropolitan area in the Southwestern state of Elk. She is one of five children who grew up in a very religious home with a father who worked on a cotton farm and a sickly mother who could only work as a domestic. Dr. Happy's mother

attended community college for a few months, and her father went up to sixth grade. Despite their relatively limited education, they valued education and had expectations for their children to "do well in school." She described her parents' attitudes this way:

> My parents had an appreciation for education, and we were always expected to do well in school. I just loved school from a very early age and always did well in school. I was a gifted student in high school, and I believe that my parents' expectations inspired me to excel in school and also got into my head that I was going to go to college.

Dr. Happy seems to have had a good experience in high school. She started exploring colleges in her junior year and wanted to attend an HBCU because one of her Black teachers who had attended an HBCU shared his experience with her. Also, Dr. Happy was aspiring to study theater and performing art in college. In her senior year, she started receiving acceptance letters from universities across the country and was considering places such as New York, Atlanta, and California. Dr. Happy's father was not pleased, but it was her mother who eventually squashed her dreams and said, "Nope." They wanted their daughter to attend any of the colleges in Armadillo City so she could live at home. Dr. Happy believes that her parents' apprehension over letting her leave their home city and state to attend college was due to the frequent disappearances in the 1980s of young Black kids who were later found murdered, especially in the South. As Dr. Happy stated, "my parents wanted me to be close to home." Dr. Happy negotiated a compromise with her parents. They allowed her to go to college in their home state but about two-and-a-half hours away:

> [It took] two of my high school teachers—one Black man and one White woman—to convince my parents to allow me to go to college away from our home. But both of them, on different occasions, came to my house in the evening and talked to my parents about allowing me to go to college [not far away from home]. These two teachers were really investing in me. They went and talked to my dad because my dad just wasn't having it.

Dr. Happy's parents agreed to let her attend Lumberjack University—a Research II university located in Mountain City in the state of Elk. It was the furthest they would let her go. She believes that one of her teachers, the Black man, spoke well about Lumberjack and convinced her dad that she would be safe. Dr. Happy recounted an emotional first day of college:

> I was a poor, smart kid going to college. . . . Other kids' parents were at orientation, but my parents had to work. My father was functionally illiterate anyway; he only went to sixth grade, and then he went out and worked in the field. So, he wasn't going to go to university with me, and he didn't feel comfortable. So, I took the Greyhound bus to orientation and navigated by myself to figure it out. When it was time to move in, [my parents] didn't have reliable transportation, so one of my friend's parents from high school [who] was also going to [Lumberjack University] said I could ride with them. . . . [When] we got to the dorm, her dad helped me get my stuff out of the car, and her mom helped me set up. It was very isolating.

As a first-year student, Dr. Happy's parents never visited her. She yearned to see them whenever she saw other parents come to visit their children and take them out to dinner. Dr. Happy struggled in college as a student with a lower-class background and little preparation for college life until she met a university administrator who eventually became her mentor. She mentioned that the administrator invested, mentored, and supported her, and that was why she stayed in college. This mentor turned out to be the Dean of Students at the university. She explained how the dean helped her to navigate her college life:

> He helped me figure out how to get signed up for a promissory note. He was just always the person that was constant in my life. And so, there were times when, after my first year, he told me where to go to find a job, sent me to the multicultural student resource center, and I got hired. And then there were times in my first semester when I was so depressed, and I just wanted to quit. I was like, "I'm leaving. I don't like this." He would call and say . . . "Get your books and come to my office." So, I'd go to his office, and I pretty much sat in his office almost every day for an entire semester until I got over myself. It was just the safety net that I needed. I needed to get over that trepidation of unsureness. He

> endorsed me enough that, after a while, I was able to just do things on my own. But that's how I survived in college. Primarily it was him.

Dr. Happy started college with a major in Theater major and a minor in Political Science, but she ended up switching to a Criminal Justice major and a Theater minor. She explained her rationale for the switch:

> In my 18-year-old rationalization, I had a plan to go to law school. But I also learned that you didn't need to get a degree in criminal justice to go to law school. So, I just switched just to get the exposure. There wasn't a lot of strategy behind what I did.

Dr. Happy still intended to go to law school. Hence, she took the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), but her score was not good. She then decided to prepare to retake the LSAT. While in her senior year, Dr. Happy's mentor encouraged her to explore a career in college student affairs. After graduating, she applied for a minority recruiter position at the university and got the offer. Her responsibility was to travel around the state to recruit other students of color for the university. Dr. Happy's "game plan" was to do the job for 2 years and then leave for law school. Shortly after starting her job, Dr. Happy realized that the university had a tuition remission for its employees. Thus, she took advantage of it and earned a master's degree in Counseling and Human Relations.

After receiving her master's degree, Dr. Happy still had the plan of going to law school until she read in the newsmagazine *Black Issues in Higher Education* about the number of Blacks that had earned terminal degrees by discipline. (The newsmagazine has since been renamed *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*.) In that specific issue, Dr. Happy compared the number of Blacks that had earned Juris Doctor degrees and the number of Blacks that had earned other degrees. She recalled that there were more Black attorneys, hence her decision to continue working to make an impact in higher education.

Dr. Happy wanted to be in a position where she could influence policy to help students in general but also to impact students on an individual level, like the dean of students did for her. In a nutshell, she wanted to be a dean of students. Dr. Happy consulted with her mentor, who advised her to pursue a doctorate in Higher Education Leadership. She enrolled in the educational leadership program while working full time as the Assistant Director and Coordinator of Student Activities at Lumberjack University. Dr. Happy reflected on how she thrived in her doctoral program while working as full-time staff:

> [My classes] were in the evenings and during weekends. So, I could work full time during the day and weekends and still get a doctorate relatively for free. . . . I have a striver's mentality like my father who chopped cotton, you know? But most importantly, I think what inspired me was knowing that I was doing something that I was the first in my family to do it. What I figured out a long time ago is that it's not always about having the greatest intellects, but it's having the strongest persistence. So, I just decided I wasn't going to quit. I wanted to quit daily, but I decided I wasn't going to quit. And so, that's really kind of what got me through. And also having mentors, having that one person who cares, the Dean of Students whom I talked about earlier from my undergrad years. He ended up being on my committee. At one point, my committee chair passed away from an unfortunate illness, and he stepped in and served as my committee chair to get me through. So, I had a connection with somebody that I knew was deeply invested in my success. And that's how I went through.

Dr. Happy is a three-degree alumnus, earning her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from Lumberjack University. After earning her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, she was promoted to Assistant Director of Student Services at the same institution. Even though she accepted the promotion and served in that capacity for 3 years, she felt it was time to seek new opportunities and challenges at a different institution. She consulted with her now lifelong mentor, the Dean of Students, about her desire to explore new challenges. He gave Dr. Happy some guidance and his blessings.

She applied, interviewed, and accepted the position of Director of New Student Experience at the University of Mink—a public Research II university in the

Northeastern state of Chipmunk. Dr. Happy was responsible for designing and implementing a comprehensive retention program to enhance the first-year undergraduate student experience, coordinate and direct first-year orientation for over 2,000 students, provide leadership to curriculum development for first-years' courses, and lead an academic advisement team for "undecided" first-year students. Dr. Happy stated that moving from the Southwest to the Northeast was an excellent but interesting adventure. She explained:

> [This] job provided me with the opportunity to explore [the Northeastern region]. . . . The job itself was challenging but a great learning opportunity. Things were going well there [at the University of Mink], but it was just a different environment—very unionized, so they deal with a lot of collective bargaining issues. It was a good learning opportunity, but getting things done was so hard.

Dr. Happy would spend the next 6 years at the University of Mink. But in her fourth year, she began looking for the next opportunity to further her career goal of becoming a dean of students. She interviewed at a couple of institutions but was not successful in securing a deanship. Dr. Happy felt that there was something wrong with her and became very depressed because she was stymied in her career goal. Fortunately, an Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs position became available at Capital State University—a public Research II university in the Southeastern state of Terrapin. She did not see herself as a viable candidate for the position, but after speaking with her lifelong mentor, she became confident. She applied and was offered the position. Dr. Happy beamed while sharing her excitement:

> I was very excited when I got the job, and I think my mentor just made me believe in myself again. . . . I ended up having the responsibilities that are typically within the portfolio of the Dean of Students. I had the Office of Student Conduct. I had the Office of Counseling, Health Services, and Career Services . . . all those things that typically the Dean of Students has oversight of. It was a great opportunity, and I loved it. I also got to work with a very generous VP for student affairs and with a very dynamic university president. [The president] was an

> amazing Black man. Just amazing! This was my favorite job ever, and I didn't want to leave.

After 3 years of "amazing experiences" at Capital State University, Dr. Happy was recruited to be the Associate Vice President for Student Engagement at Grouse State University—a public, Research I, land-grant university in the Northeastern state of Grouse. Grouse State University is the state's flagship institution and has more than 90,000 students. Prior to accepting the offer, Dr. Happy consulted with her lifelong mentor and the president of Capital State University. They both encouraged her to seriously consider the opportunity as she "will be able to write her ticket up" to a presidency in higher education. While negotiating the offer and visiting the Grouse State University campus, Dr. Happy received a devastating phone call from her mother. She narrated:

> [They] flew me in for a campus visit. And the morning I got there, my mother called me and said that my father's breathing was beginning to change [as a result of his recent pancreatic cancer diagnosis]. And he was starting to make his transition. I was devastated. So, I said to the [vice president] that I have to go [see my father]. Well, before I could leave, my father died. That was just tragic. I knew [his death] was coming, but that was tragic. So, as I was getting ready to leave, the VP tells me, "I'm really sorry about your dad, and I want you to take whatever time you need. And when you're ready, I would like for you to come back for your visit."

Dr. Happy went back home to "funeralize" her father. She returned to Capital State University to get "back in the groove" and live her life. She was not even thinking about accepting Grouse State University's offer. She continued:

> [A few days later], the VP called me, and she said, "Just wanted to reach out. How are you doing? Would you consider coming back?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll think about it." And a couple of weeks later, the chairperson of the [hiring] committee called me. So, I finally went back. And I thought sometimes when you're at a place and you get that kind of bad news, it's hard to go back.

Dr. Happy did go back, finally accepted the position as Associate Vice President for Student Engagement, and worked at the university for 2 years. Although she liked her job, her father's passing and the desire to be closer to her mother guided her decision to relocate to the West Coast for a Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs position at the University of Whale—a public Research I university. Dr. Happy was responsible for managing the student affairs division with an annual budget of $145 million. Dr. Happy was glad to be closer to home, but this position was not ideal for her. She posited:

> The [job] was probably the least fit for me. Sometimes, [institutions] want things from you that aren't in alignment with your personal values. And that job was the problem. So, I stayed there for 4 years and then was back out on the market looking for opportunities.

Dr. Happy seems not to have had a great experience at the University of Whale. Fortunately, an Executive Vice Chancellor of Administration position became available at the University of Knights—a public Research I university located in the Northeastern state of Chipmunk. Dr. Happy stated, "I have had a great experience in the 5 years I have been here." She explained:

> I love my job. . . . [I] have the opportunity to lead and direct day-to-day, nonacademic operations of the [University of Whale], including space management, infrastructure development, policy implementation, and other critical functions that support our students' experiences and advance the university's academic, research, and service mission. . . . So, you know, when God brings you these opportunities, you need to be open to looking seriously at them.

With over 30 years' experience in higher education administration, Dr. Happy proclaimed that she is a "child of God," and she has been blessed with a wonderful career. Dr. Happy further stated that she "knows her job is a calling from God" and that she is doing exactly what He has called her to do. Dr. Happy identifies as a *servant leader* who goes out to serve with love. Also, she said she aspires to be Christ-like.

Hence, she is usually concerned about people, especially students and the community in which she lives. Dr. Happy concluded by emphasizing that, although she is a Christian, she is careful not to appear at her workplace as a proselytizer trying to make people believe what she believes. Instead, she wants to model what her lifelong mentor did for her so that those attributes continue into the next generation of higher education leaders, specifically among Black women.

Dr. PG's Journey: The Importance of a College Peer Mentoring Program

Dr. PG identifies as a Black woman who grew up on a tobacco farm with her mother, grandmother, and grandfather in the state of Cheetah—a U.S. state located in the Southeast, and one of the 10 most populous states in the country. Importantly, the state is one of the few that have more than seven HBCUs. Both of Dr. PG's parents attended HBCUs in the state of Cheetah, but neither of them graduated. She believes her father dropped out of college because of financial difficulties, and her mother did not finish as a result of having a child. Nevertheless, these experiences did not deter them from encouraging Dr. PG to do well in school. She narrated:

> So, my parents didn't get to finish college, and that's okay. But they always pushed me to do my best in school, and once they expected me to do well, they became lenient on me. So, I felt like I had to do my best, and that was kind of inherent that I wanted to get to do the best I can because I like getting the recognition. That was a way of validating who I was because I still didn't know who I was, but I was paying attention to whatever my parents say to me. I think my parents felt it was right to inspire me, and I did my best.

Dr. PG's mother became a telephone operator after quitting college. Her grandmother worked in a manufacturing mill, and her grandfather was a tobacco farmer, who she described as the "smartest man in the world" even though he didn't finish high school. Dr. PG explained:

> My grandfather was a farmer, and I learned that he did not finish high school, but I felt like he was the smartest man in the world. I felt like he was a scientist because he [grew] tobacco and had to build barns, so he was an architect. He understood architecture, and you also had to make sure to heat the barn so it cures the tobacco. He was an engineer because he had to fix the tractors and everything mechanical. And this man did not go to college, and he didn't finish high school.

Dr. PG further explained that her parents just expected her to go to college but never voiced that expectation. She believes that these unvoiced communications grounded her academic pursuits. Also, she thinks that watching her grandfather fixing tractors, building barns, and heating the barns to the right temperature made her learn how to "tinker around and figure out stuff" by herself. She was always encouraged by her mother and grandfather to "go figure it out," which is why she chose the field of computer science when she went to college. Dr. PG noted that even though her high school was good, her teachers did not teach her how to learn properly, so she was not "well prepared for college." She explained:

> So, you talk about somebody who is a top-10 high school student struggling in their first year in college. I don't know how I survived. It was tough! I obviously knew how to memorize things, but I didn't know how to figure out things. Even though I had [a figure-it-out] mindset, there were still some basic learning principles I didn't understand. So, I struggled in college as a Black woman in a Computer Science program that was very competitive, . . . and they were trying to weed people out. . . . The thing was, the [university] had the top students in the state, so you're competing against the best and against the other students who were probably better prepared than [I was]. I just didn't know how to learn, and I thought I was the dumbest person in the world. And then I found out that they [other Computer Science students] had notes and tests from previous classes. A lot of times, professors, especially in those kinds of programs, would just do the same test, the same materials, and I didn't have any of that. I didn't understand the process of how to be a student. . . . I didn't know how to learn, and I didn't know how to get into the network [peer study groups]. So, I was staying up late and barely getting a C while they're getting A. . . . That first year, I was struggling so badly.

Dr. PG attended the University of Wolfs—a highly ranked, public, Research I, land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant engineering science university that is

predominantly White and in the Southeastern state of Cheetah. Dr. PG vividly reminisced about how her best friend, who she had known since middle school and also attended the University of Wolfs, switched from the Computer Science program to Business.

> My friend and I started Computer Science together. We were taking the same classes, and after the first 2 weeks, [my friend] says, "I'm out." I was like, "You're leaving?" She says, "I am switching to Business." She was just as smart as me. The reason why I stayed was because of financial aid. If I went below a certain number of courses, I won't get the aid, so I had stayed in there. I think there might be one other Black girl in [the Computer Science program] and maybe two other Black guys, . . . and that was scary, and a lot of times I was doubting myself. Oh, my God! That first year was rough.

Dr. PG attributed her "surviving" the first year of college to a good mentor who provided critical support systems. Also, through a peer mentoring program that was specifically geared to improving the academic experience, retention, and graduation rate of African American students in the physical science department, Dr. PG was able to navigate college as a first-year student. She attended weekly academic tutorials that improved her grades in mathematics and physics. Dr. PG emphasized that if she had not connected with mentors in the peer mentoring program and other Black people, all of whom instilled the feeling that she "could be more successful," she would not have made it through college. Dr. PG noted:

> During my time, Computer Science was in the Physical and Mathematics Science Department, and they had a minority organization just for Black students. And so, I got involved, and part of that was mentoring Black students in the department. So, I had a good mentor who pretty much helps me get out that first semester. Once I got past my hump, then I made sure I was there to help mentor others. . . . So, when I talk about my success, it is because it was a community effort. Right? Which is important. When I always talk about communities with marginalized groups, especially Black people, mentoring is so critical to our success at a predominately White institution.

With her involvement in the peer mentoring program, Dr. PG started to establish and expand her network. She met other African American women on campus who

introduced her to a sorority—an association of college-educated Black women with a dedication to public service in African American communities—which pushed her to understand her core values while developing leadership skills. Dr. PG graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science degree with a minor in Management Information Systems. She went on to work for a large multinational information technology company for a few years, leaving to pursue a master of science degree in Management and a minor in Management Information Systems. It was her hope to manage a business. Dr. PG stated that, during her time working in the industry, "programing was very kind of static and wasn't innovative" and was not challenging enough for her, especially as a person who likes to "figure things out."

While in the master's program, Dr. PG's advisor, an African American woman, encouraged her to pursue a Ph.D. in Business, but Dr. PG was not sure of her career path at that time. After earning her master's degree, Dr. PG was recruited to teach computer classes on a part-time basis at a small private Christian liberal arts college in the state of Cheetah. In the middle of her first semester of teaching, Dr. PG developed a "love for the field," so she continued for 3 years. She shared an inspiring story which made a significant difference in her decision to pursue a Ph.D.:

> I had a McDonald's manager in one of my courses. . . . He was a good person but was struggling to figure out himself. So, I was like, let me try if I can help him do well in this course. I had a project in information systems. I said I want you to think about your job as a manager and how you would modify the workflow at McDonald's. . . . All I did was to relate the project to what he was already doing. . . . He gave the best report in where I think I almost cried and he almost cried because he felt so good about what he did. I said, "You did the best work." He did better than some of the top students, and he wasn't my top student. And I felt like I can do this forever. The feeling I felt after that! I made a little difference in this person's life, and I said, I think I want to go and get my Ph.D. now.

At this stage in her professional journey, Dr. PG had decided that she wanted a career in teaching technology. She wanted to understand how people learn so she could create tools to help them. So, she applied to the top Computer Science programs in the country and decided to attend the University of Camel for her Ph.D. in Instructional Technology. The University of Camel is a public Research I university, and one of the oldest public universities in the country. Located in the Southeastern state of Camel, the university is the state's flagship, a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant institution. Dr. PG underscored that her main reason for choosing to attend the University of Camel was to be close to her mother since she lived 3 hours away in Cheetah. When Dr. PG informed her employers that she was leaving for further studies, they offered to pay her tuition so that she would return. She declined the offer so that she would have no limitation in choosing a place that would advance her career after completing her Ph.D. Dr. PG described how she navigated the experiences in her doctoral program to ensure that she was thriving:

> [My] first semester in the Ph.D. program was like déjà vu. I didn't know the words [my professors] were saying in my [first semester] courses. So, I carried a dictionary with me because they were words that I didn't use in my natural vocabulary. Back then, the internet was just starting to get prevalent, so we weren't on it as much. We were just six in my cohort, with one Black guy and me as the only people of color. So, I asked him about the words the professors were using, and he said he doesn't know either. And I asked [the only White girl], and she said no. Then I said, "I'm good." . . . But there was an extra level of anxiety because I am a minority and a woman, and I didn't want to come across as dumb. [The] good thing about [University of Camel] is that they had [a] quarter system, so I didn't have to suffer for long. . . . Also, I started building my network of people there. [My cohort] relied on each other, so that helped a lot. And so, I felt better after I got past that first semester. The best part was, I had a Black woman advisor who was very instrumental to my survival and growth. Unfortunately, she passed before I could graduate.

Dr. PG also expressed that her assistantship helped her a lot, but she struggled financially. She made sure not to have a car payment, and all she wanted was to be able

to pay for her rent and food because the assistantship was very small. Also, her financial status served as a motivation to graduate in 3 years because “I was tired of being broke.” Since her career aspiration was to be a professor, Dr. PG sought to become a graduate instructor where she taught basic Instructional Media and Introduction to Computing courses. These courses introduced preservice teachers to incorporating technology into their instructional activities. Two weeks after defending her dissertation, Dr. PG received two offers but struggled to decide which institution was the best fit. One of the institutions was located in a beach city with warmer temperatures all year round but had fewer career opportunities. The other was located in the “middle of nowhere” in the Midwest and had lots of great opportunities, including a salary $15,000 higher than the other offer. Dr. PG stated that she “struggled with the decision for months.” Finally, she had to choose the institution with the most money as “I had been broke for [a] long time.”

Dr. PG began her career as an assistant professor in the Department of Learning Technology at the University of Mule—a public, Research I, land-grant, and space-grant university. The university is the flagship institution of the Midwestern state of Mule. Being cognizant of the expectations for tenure, Dr. PG worked diligently and was promoted to associate professor with tenure. Eight years later, Dr. PG became the first Black woman chair of the Department of Learning Technology. She believes that her sorority exposed her to many leadership opportunities, as she held many local, regional, and national positions. She stated, “If you can prove your leadership skills before talented and very educated Black women, you could lead any organization because smart Black women are usually hard on you.” In her role as the department chair, Dr. PG was responsible for advancing the academic program with a special focus on research,

teaching, and technology support. Additionally, she was in charge of managing the department's budget and working with and leading over 24 faculty and staff members.

Dr. PG enjoyed her leadership role in the department; however, in the beginning, she had to learn the job while working with faculty and staff and giving them some leeway. She stated that her toughest challenge was navigating the expectations of close friends while ensuring fairness in the decision-making process. Over the years, she has made tough decisions that caused friction sometimes, but she has stood by her choices because they were in the best interest of the department. Due to her excellent academic accomplishments and consistency in "feeding the field," Dr. PG was promoted to full professor.

During Dr. PG's sixth year as the department chair, the School of Education at the University of Mule created an Associate Dean of Research position. Her colleagues encouraged her to apply. However, Dr. PG felt that she was in a rhythm, was comfortable, and life was good. She was uninterested in taking on a new role that would require her to establish herself again. She declined to apply for the position, but her colleagues kept pushing her to reconsider. Dr. PG finally reviewed the responsibilities and expectations of the job description, applied, and was awarded the position. Though Dr. PG likes learning so "many things in this new position," she feels that being in administration makes her miss opportunities to connect with students. Dr. PG has been at the University Mule for over 20 years and, when I asked her about her experiences, she paused, took a deep breath, and shared the following:

> I have had challenges at every level of promotion and [had to] defend myself because how [the university] perceives me is different from White faculty members. I wasn't playing the game . . . of hanging out with the people that make decisions because that's not me, it's not authentic, and I shouldn't have to do that.

> I understand the game, but it just takes so much energy, and [it impacts] my mental stability, and it is the heavy load to bear. Gosh!! When I think about the complexities of my experience at [University of Mule] as single, from the South, Black woman. . . . Oh, my God! I'll be honest, I've gone to a counselor a couple times just to talk through things because the things I experience make me have self-doubt. Black faculty here are not many, especially full professors. I think there are five of us—two women and three men. That's it. So, we are bearing the [diversity] load right now, and we don't have the structure to support our efforts, and we are already burnt out. That invisible labor is real, and if they don't understand how to put that into the merit system, they're going to continue to lose us as they keep talking about . . . "We keep recruiting, but we keep losing." You keep losing us because you're not making it worthwhile for us to stay and be valued for the work that we're doing to create the community because, when you have the community, then you can see indicators of success. They don't understand that. It ain't even about the money, sometimes. I can make more money from lot of different places. I want peace of mind, and then I want to be valued. You are making me reflect. I'm actually getting a little emotional as I think about it. . . . I know we have to go through things, but I don't want someone to have to go through the trials and tribulations I went through.

As a faculty and now a leader, Dr. PG's over two decades career experiences at the University of Mule are compelling. She has witnessed many Black faculty members "come and go" due to the lack of infrastructural support, and since African American faculty and staff are very few in the institution, they become overwhelmed and feel tokenized. For Dr. PG, she persevered and have developed leadership characteristics that seek to create an institutional environment that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful and values the work of minoritized faculty, staff and students.

Dr. PG has a way of managing unpleasant life circumstances. Specifically, she prays and cries to God because He knows she needs help. Sometimes, she will sit still and read the Bible to find a passage that will encourage her. Also, she watches or listens to some of the powerful female preachers and motivational speakers on TV who talk about their journeys through self-doubt, which gives her inspiration. Or she may go to a quiet place, be by herself, reflect, and find her inner peace. "If I cannot figure it [out], I'll reach out to my friends or mentors. That's what I do." Indeed, the narratives of Drs. Mari,

Happy, and PG have highlighted the significance of mentorship in Black women's educational and career advancement.

Theoretical and Literature Connections

As discussed in Chapter 2, race and gender interact simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991) to impact the educational and career experiences of African American women within higher education. The intersection of race and gender is of particular importance to Black women in the United States due to the complex political and social contexts in which they live (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). Whereas Black women embody other identities beyond social class, age, and sexual orientation, which may impact their daily lives, their unique experiences in the United States often makes them very conscious of their racial and gender identities. Hence, intersectionality, as a theoretical and ideological imperative for African American women, is a key framework that undergirded my approach to this study. I considered intersectionality as an approach to understanding the relationships between identities, power, and privilege within school systems and educational leadership, specifically considering how these variables have shaped African American women's leadership experiences. Indeed, the narrative portraits in this chapter have revealed how the intersections between race, gender, and socioeconomic status are specifically relevant to the educational and career journeys of the African American women senior university leaders.

Crenshaw (1989) described social, economic, and political ways in which race, gender, and socioeconomic status overlap and influence one another. The data in this chapter showed a salient commonality among the three Black women leaders: they all came from working-class families. As college students, the three participants'

socioeconomic status and academic capital significantly impacted their access to financial and social capital, as well as to social networks, especially in their first year of college. For instance, Dr. Happy, a “poor smart kid” who came from a working-class family, lacked financial support and social capital skills to navigate her first year of college. She felt “very isolated and frustrated” as she realized her classmates had parents who had college experience and would come around to support them, helping them settle into their dorms, communicating with their academic advisors, and visiting during the weekends. But Dr. Happy’s parents “never visited,” and she had to “figure out” how to navigate college on her own. She would cry after waiting in a line for a long time to turn in her paperwork to enroll in classes only to be told that she was “in the wrong line” when she got to the front. Dr. Happy was considering dropping out until she met her “lifelong mentor,” who ultimately guided her throughout her entire higher education journey. Dr. Happy’s experience confirms what research has shown: students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to persist in college (Walpole, 2003). Dr. Happy noted that she certainly would have dropped out of college if it were not for her mentor.

As evidenced in Dr. Happy’s narrative, mentoring is a significant tool for developing social capital (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Through mentorship, individuals develop the necessary skills by interacting with colleagues. Mentors offer encouragement, guidance, and friendship, which are key to achieving success (Davis, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007). According to the three Black women senior leaders in this chapter, and more broadly, all the participants in this study, mentoring functioned as a college-retention and career-advancement imperative that prevented them from encountering some negative experiences as Black women journeying in predominantly

White institutions. Specifically, the mentoring experiences of this study's research participants contributed to reducing their feelings of social isolation and helped them to manage their various responsibilities (Bova, 2000; Holmes et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2013).

For example, Dr. PG—one of the only two Black women in her Computer Science cohort in college—shared experiences of peer mentoring that are consistent with the literature: a careful integration of race and gender as critical factors when mentoring African American women (Benishek, Bieschke, Park, & Slattery, 2004). Dr. PG's story indicates that collegiate peer mentors, particularly within the STEM programs (Chang et al., 2014; Charleston, 2012; Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2011), provide support systems that are critical to the "survival," retention, and persistence of African American women. This finding is consistent with the suggestion by Henderson, Hunter, and Hildreth (2010) that Black women depend on networks and relationships with each other to adapt and survive the material conditions associated with race, gender, and class oppression.

Data from this chapter also confirmed Tillman's (2001) finding that mentoring provides graduate students of color with structured interactions that enhance the probability of degree program completion and career success. Dr. Mari's narrative revealed how appreciative she was for the mentoring support she received as a graduate student and as a faculty member from other Black women in senior leadership positions. As a doctoral student, Dr. Mari's advisor—a Black woman—provided her with many academic socialization opportunities where she got to conduct, present, and publish research. Her experience exemplifies Tillman's (2001) assertion that same-sex, same-race mentoring enhances the protégé's success. Prior to obtaining tenure as a faculty member,

Dr. Marie transitioned confidently to administration with her mentor's guidance and encouragement. Dr. Mari's story and the stories of all the participants are consistent with literature that has emphasized the importance of mentoring as a vehicle for upward mobility in higher education and for the retention of African American women leaders (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Jackson & Flowers, 2003).

Research has revealed the difficulties that African American women face in finding mentors because of the disparity of women of color in leadership roles (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Evans, 2007b; Mainah & Perkins, 2015). In this chapter, data showed that the study's participating African American women recognized the critical role mentoring and mentors played in their journeys. Moreover, they understood that there are not enough Black women at the senior levels of higher education that could serve as mentors. For example, Dr. Janice emphasized the following:

> Mostly, mentors are peers. Particularly for us as women of color, there's not always somebody who's in front of us. There are many of us that are pulling or rising up together right now. . . . I have a whole cadre of peers that are at the VP and provost role level right now. We are all in that same cohort together, and we are mentoring each other because there's not as many that are in front of us. There's a whole bunch behind us, which takes a lot of energy from us, but we got to do it anyway. But there's not as many in front of us.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the structural power relations within higher education depict or determine who ascends the career ladder. Frequently, Black women are discouraged from stepping onto the ladder in the first place (Davis, 2016). Crenshaw (1989) posited that the "problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure" (p. 140). Analyzing this study's data with an intersectional lens revealed how power, identity, privilege, and opportunity work against Black women. As a result, there is a paucity of Black women in

senior leadership positions who can serve as mentors (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2008).

Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004) suggested that cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring relationships should be explored since there are not many individuals of color in leadership positions. Truly, data from this chapter revealed that African American women could benefit from White and Black male mentors. Although Johnson-Bailey and Cervero' suggestion is well-intentioned, the findings from this study suggest that cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring should be undertaken with greater caution, as this complex mentoring process could come with its own set of issues. Specifically, Dr. Asantewaa experienced formal and informal mentoring from a White female and White male who she described as "very sensitive to race and gender issues." She said they were individuals she could have a social justice-filled conversation with. Dr. Asantewaa appreciated their support, encouragement, and trust in her abilities. Nonetheless, she hesitated to share many of her race-related encounters and found it challenging to ask for advice about the negative racial messages that were directed toward her and that she perceived as a faculty member

Concluding Thought on Mentoring

In all, the data in this chapter revealed the significant role mentoring plays in the educational and career journeys of the Black women participants. Generally, the women in this study had multiple mentors. While I did not intentionally collect demographic information on the participants' mentors, it is evident in the data that some of the women in this study benefitted from other Black women as mentors. Other participants engaged in cross-gender, cross-cultural, and cross-race mentoring. However, all the mentors

encouraged the participants and gave them opportunities to thrive in their educational and career journeys. In many instances, the mentors saw potential in their protégés, encouraged them to pursue leadership, and helped them navigate various transitions, including the job interview process.

Applying intersectionality, I revealed from the data how systemic power structures, privilege, and gendered power relations (Bilge, 2014) within higher education have consistently contributed to the dearth of Black women as full professors and senior leaders in colleges and universities. Dr. Asantewaa's narrative exemplifies this reality; she did not have the opportunity to experience an African American female mentor. Nonetheless, research participants in this chapter confirmed how mentoring is essential for African American women entering into higher education leadership. By using a research method that made visible the lived experiences of individuals typically rendered invisible—and by placing their voices at the center of my analytical framework—these nine African American women could be heard, and their journeys could be shared. In the next section, I introduce an additional finding, *career success definition.*

Additional Finding: Individualized Definitions of Success

Through the data analysis and identification of themes, an additional finding emerged. Although not selected as one of the central themes, *defining career success* became significant to the study as the women shared their stories. Specifically, research participants described success and why they think they are successful.

Considering how African American women define success is critical to understanding their educational and career journeys, especially within the unique context of higher education leadership. Some of the women university leaders in this study

defined success with words such as “feel” and “see,” indicating they consider themselves successful when they feel and see the impact they have made on their students. Each participant provided examples of situations in which they felt they were successful. There were many times during the interviews that participants conveyed their desires to help others, and these sentiments showed up in their definitions of success. Also, some of the participants attributed their success to God. For example, Dr. Happy posited that success is personal for every individual, and as a servant leader, she defined success this way:

> Seeing my students be successful and reach their goals. My successes are in seeing my staff thrive. My success is in implementing policies and procedures that support the student and the employee, etc., etc. My success is less about titles and more about respect and value among colleagues.

When asked if she would describe herself as successful, Dr. Happy continued:

> Oh yeah! I would describe myself as successful. I am doing the work that God has called me to do . . . and I love it. So, yes, I think I would describe myself as very successful. I have had bad experiences, I have made poor choices, and I am an imperfect person. But for the grace of God, I have a wonderful career. It has not always been rainbows and unicorns. So, I feel I’m successful, but I haven’t arrived or done all that I can do. I feel like there’s so much more that we can do.

Likewise, Dr. Janice thinks that she is successful and that her success is not based on her current position or title. She argued that, sometimes, women shy away from taking credit for the things they do, “but if we are not taking that credit for impacting lives, then what are we doing this work for?” Dr. Janice posed that rhetorical question before explaining why she is successful:

> I’m successful because I know and can see the impact I am having in the lives around me, especially students, and I don’t say that arrogantly. I need to know that the work I’m doing is impacting lives, and that’s personally and professionally. I am all about supporting students. I have a student that I’m going to talk to about applying to graduate school. I need to help and make sure she’s on track. So, I’m successful not because of the titles, it’s because I am walking in what He [God] has given me.

Dr. Anthony applies a holistic approach to defining success, which includes both professional and personal aspects of her life. Dr. Anthony thinks that success has a different meaning to every individual, and she described success as

> the feeling that I've made a difference. That's success to me. I want to impact students' lives. I'm going to make sure that students have excellent experiences and that they're ready for the future. And if I can do something that will make that possible, then I have been successful. So that's professional success to me. Personally, success to me is having happy children, lower stress, and having a good network. Things happen every day, and sometimes they're difficult and they're shocking and they're sad and tragic, and so to be happy with my family is a measure of success.

When asked about some specific things that make her feel successful in her career, Dr. Anthony used "we" to describe the collective effort of her team and, to a broader extent, university leaders to improve students' lives. She continued:

> Since I've been here over the 4 years, we have made an incredible number of changes for the betterment of our students. . . . We created new offices, we increased budget, we increased care for students, we changed rules, we opened doors, and we increased resources for students. To be able to look back and catalog the number of things that we have done to really improve student life as a team, that makes me feel successful. Yet, there's still a lot to do. But so far, okay. I'll give myself a passing grade.

Similar to Dr. Anthony's explanation, Dr. Dixon described herself as successful based on the three personal and professional goals that she had when she was a young woman, though she did not achieve her dream of becoming a tenure-track professor. Also, Dr. Dixon used "we" to describe and credit her team in relation to success. She narrated:

> I wanted to be on a tenure track by 30, I wanted to be married, and I wanted to have a family. I'm not on a tenure track [faculty] and will never be on a tenure track. But in terms of being successful, I have three wonderful children and a husband who loves me, and I think that I'm doing right by them. So, for me, that's success. In terms of my job, I'm successful when we make things happen. So, we have a really great opportunity to start a new research center, and the fact that NSF has trusted me and my team with a lot of money to do this work means that

> they believe we can get that done. And I think that's success. I have a long way to go, though. Ask me that in 10 more years.

Dr. JJ, calmly and in a soft tone, defined what success means to her while emphasizing students' accomplishments as a way to measure success:

> For me, being successful is doing what you love to do. What I love to do is to see these students come in, graduate, and go on to prosper. So, every time I see a student cross the stage, that's a success for me.

Dr. JJ thinks that, if she had not considered herself successful, she would not have worked in higher education for more than 35 years. She shared that, at every institution she has worked for, she has established long-lasting relationships with the students. For example, when she was in Chicago for a conference, some of her former students from a school that she worked at over 20 years ago found out that she was in town. They wanted to have dinner with her. To Dr. JJ, this type of rapport is another way she measures success.

For Dr. Mari, success is being able to see the evidence of her work coming to fruition, point at it, and see the impact. Dr. Mari stated that, when people appreciate her work, "that makes me feel I've been successful." Dr. Mari provided an example of something significant she did that makes her feel successful:

> [That program] is my baby. . . . That was my idea. I remember everything about it. I remember sitting at home just dreaming it up, putting it on paper, looking at other models that are being implemented, and looking at the research. So, to see that program now in its fourth year and to see those young men on campus and when I'm around them, it just makes me feel good. It makes me feel like no matter what failures I've had, no matter what I do after this, I will [cherish the opportunity] to develop a program and support young men to go out into classrooms and teach and make a difference. So, that is my greatest success professionally.

The Black women university leaders in this study used words such as "feel" and "see" in their descriptions of success. These expositions indicate that the participants

have reached a point where their views of success have moved beyond personal gain and current position. Instead, these African American women leaders find fulfillment in their ability to contribute to the future of the next generation.

CHAPTER 7

Final Analysis, Implications, and Conclusion

In the previous three chapters, I highlighted the themes that emerged during this study and shared some poignant information regarding the educational and career journeys and experiences of nine Black women occupying senior leadership positions at U.S. universities. The study participants provided narratives that highlight their journeys of *becoming* rather than *being* senior leaders in higher education. Narrating their stories, the women provided insight into their navigation of educational and professional careers as young girls and as women within homes, communities, schools, and workspaces, demonstrating the diversity of the experiences. All these successful Black women shared that they enjoyed the reflective process of telling their educational and professional stories. Dr. PG, for example, expressed her emotion during the interview by saying, “You are making me reflect. I’m actually getting a little emotional.” Using intersectionality theory, I offer a new perspective for understanding the multidimensional tensions that impact how Black women are educated and socialized in various educational spaces across the United States. Specifically, I set out to learn how African American women persevere and navigate the complex educational landscapes and the power structures and privilege within higher education. I explored how they developed the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required for successful leadership.

Data affirmed that participants experienced and embraced differently the themes that emerged from their narratives: (a) expectations, (b) nonlinear paths to higher education leadership opportunities, and family-life balance, and (c) mentorship.Their families instigated their initial expectations. Initially, expectations were instigated by

their families. The data revealed that some women encountered high expectations during their educational journeys, while others were presented with low expectations. The participants internalized the high expectations that they were exposed to as children, which served as a strong foundation for the development of their identities and the pursuit of their educational goals (Jeynes, 2007; Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan, 2001). In other words, parental expectations have a positive influence on children educational trajectories and outcomes (Andres, Adamuti-Trache, Yoon, Pidgeon, & Thomsen, 2007). Indeed, the participants' narratives revealed the complexities of their lived experiences, recognizing race, gender, and class as markers of power that create intersecting axes used to reinforce power relations (Cho et al., 2013; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). For example, as we saw in the case of Dr. JJ and Ms. BB, they believe that their racial and gender identities were the key factors that impeded their ascension to the vice presidency and provost respectively. The participants described their educational and career experiences from discrete perspectives based on their social positions, their current leadership positions, and the confines of the bigger social constructions of race, gender, and class (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

This study is significant for educators, higher education leaders, and hiring committees seeking to understand and create educational and career opportunities for Black women. Also, this research will inform young Black women as they aspire to leadership in the academy or any professional field. I believe that these unique stories and insights that have emerged from this research will facilitate the intentional development of programs that can benefit Black women who continue to experience systemic marginalization within higher education leadership. Providing an additional outlet to

share the voices of African American women who are higher education senior leaders, as this dissertation has done, could lead to a greater understanding of the experiences that frame and lead to Black women's success.

In this chapter, as I transition to discuss the implications of my study, I draw on the insights presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 to discuss how intersectionality informs my understanding of what participants shared across the dataset and also to answer the research questions. I highlight Crenshaw's (1989) traffic intersection metaphor, which I think is vital to make sense of the findings in the data. Notably, traffic intersections are complex and challenging to navigate because, many a time, they cause uncertainties about how to proceed and who has the right of way, an apt metaphor for the intersectionality of African American women's identities.

As a reminder, this study sought to answer an overarching research question with two subquestions. The overarching question was this: How do African American women describe their educational and career pathways to senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States? The following are the two subquestions:

1. What educational and career experiences do African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities say enhanced their journey?
2. What are the characteristics of African American women that they describe as contributing to their career advancement and success in senior leadership positions?

Following this discussion, I share the implications for practice and future research, and I offer concluding thoughts.

Importance of Race, Gender, and Religious Identities to Black Women

The participants' narratives demonstrated that African American women can disrupt the problematic tendencies that treat race and gender as mutually exclusive identities for Black women. Data in this study revealed that race and gender are salient and intermingled markers of identities for African American women. In the context of this study, the race and gender identities of participants pervade the various spaces, roles, and experiences they have had to navigate. In describing their demographic backgrounds, all the participants used terms such as "African American" and "Black," except one, who described herself as "mixed." Scholars have explained that racial identity expression is the extent to which a person exudes specific beliefs and ideas concerning their understanding of connections with a particular racial group (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Marsh, 2013; Stewart, 2015). Nasir, McLaughlin, and Jones (2009) argued that when people identify as Black, it is an indication that they embrace the power of their skin and their uniqueness as a people. Indeed, the study's participants have embraced and are conscious of their Black identity. Also, they are cognizant of and have experienced some of the trials and tribulations associated with their race in the United States, such as Jim Crow laws, segregation, and the overrepresentation of Black students in special education.

Participants included their race while describing their gender. They interchangeably used the terms "African American woman" or "Black woman." Thus, the research participants have a sense of self that integrates these two seemingly distinct identities of who they are. Data analysis indicated that the intersection of race and gender

was more important than the individual identities of woman and Black person. Crenshaw (1989) suggested that the "single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group" (p. 140). In relation to this study, participants' conceptualization of their identities emphasized their combined Black-woman identity, which researchers have said often takes precedence in one's self-image over the distinct identities of Black person and woman (Levin, Sinclair, Veniegas, & Taylor, 2002; Settles, 2006). For example, when I asked participants about how they identified themselves, Dr. Asatewaa responded, "My identity is beyond race. . . . I identify as a Black woman." Dr. JJ said, "Of course I am a female. But more importantly, I'm an African American woman." Additionally, Dr. Mari identified herself as a Black woman and as an African American woman. Although African American women embody other identities (e.g., based on social class, age, sexual orientation) that may impact their everyday lives, their unique experiences in the United States have made them very conscious of the intermingling of their racial and gender identities.

Additionally, data from this study suggested that Black women have an acute understanding of their racial and gender identities, which influences the way they interact with others, especially professional colleagues in leadership scenarios, such as during institutional leadership decision-making meetings. African American women serving in senior leadership roles are rare in higher education. Therefore, when they interact with their colleagues who identify with different cultures, they are navigating potential identity constraints. For example, when asked if their identity shapes their interactions with

colleagues and students, Dr. Happy emphatically said, “Yes, it does! I can never not be a Black woman. It is my identity, and I’m inextricably connected to it. And so that shows up in how I do my work, how I lead, and how I problem-solve.” Dr. Happy further explained that, when she is participating in a board meeting, her identity influences how she advocates for policies that positively impact students, faculty, and staff.

Similarly, Dr. Mari stated that she is usually the only woman of color during senior leadership meetings, and as a person who can identify with marginalized people, she uses those opportunities to be the voice for those [students] who can’t be in the room. She emphasized that her advocacy “comes absolutely from me being a Black woman.” Furthermore, Dr. PG accentuated that her identity as a Black woman provides her with the opportunity to “vouch” for students, faculty, and staff members of color. Without fundamentally knowing who they are as African American women university leaders, the participants might end up contributing to systemic discriminatory policies and practices common in higher education. Hence, their advocacy attitude does not just illustrate their willingness to be agents of change in higher education but also exemplifies their commitment to the fight for civil rights.

While participants highlighted how their identities influence their interactions and advocacy, data also suggested that complexities abound as to how some Black women fully express their identities and how they feel within the African American community. Studies have shown that colorism impacts racial identity development and the understanding of oneself (Cunningham, 1997; Hill, 2002; Mathews & Johnson, 2015). For instance, in exploring the experiences of light-skinned African American women, Cunningham (1997) found that light-skinned women experience feelings of invisibility,

otherness, and color discrimination from other African Americans. Some of the research participants' stories were consistent with the studies cited above. In particular, Dr. PG shared how the "extra layer" of her identity as a light-skinned Black woman makes her "feel not belonged," especially within Black communities. She described that, as a light-skinned Black woman, "it is tough to prove in my Black community that I belong. I got the Black woman, I got the woman, and I got the light-skinned Black women. . . . Somebody even told me I got the administrative position because I'm light-skinned." As seen in Dr. PG's experience, some would say her 'privilege' as a light-skinned Black allowed her to get the position, but what Dr. PG is saying is, it is offensive for someone to insinuate that she got the position because she was light-skinned. Even though Drs. JJ, Dixon, and Happy are all light-skinned Black women; they did not explicitly share such challenges. Nonetheless, this study revealed that some light-skinned African American women are required to navigate their extra layer of identity as they seek to make sense of their acceptance with the Black community and the U.S. society at large.

As highlighted in their narratives, the participants described their religious identity as important and influential in their everyday life. All the women self-identified as Christian and described prayer, going to church, and reading the Bible as their religious practices. Study participants' religious and spiritual foundation and the activation of their faith through prayer and Bible-reading were consistent with the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (Agosto & Karanxha, 2011; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Tisdell, 2003, 2007; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010). It is quite evident in the data that spirituality serves as a coping mechanism during challenging times. In keeping with the research, the data revealed that participants use

their religious identity to orient their lives while navigating their educational and career paths.

Educational Journeys

The first subquestion posed for this study is: What educational and career experiences do African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities say enhanced their journey? This section hones in on the educational part of the subquestion. In the research data, home and school strongly emerged as spaces where expectations were clearly communicated through participants' exposure to various educational pathways. The repetition of messages conveying these expectations by parents, teachers, and community members influenced the Black women's academic aspirations to attend college and further their education. Notably, parents with college degrees or some college experience were more explicit and influential in shaping their children's expectations and academic achievements. As discussed in Chapter 2, parents' expectations for their children's academic success positively influence children's self-expectations and high achievement scores. Indeed, participants who found uniformity among the values expressed in their homes, schools, and communities were motivated to embrace the expectations espoused and reinforced. For example, across Chapters 4 through 6, participants like Dr. Asantewaa, Dr. JJ, Dr. Janice, Dr. Dixon, and Dr. Anthony noted their parents' influence in establishing high expectations, which were then reinforced in schools and communities. Conversely, there were no explicit parental expectations set for Ms. BB, Dr. Mari, Dr. PG, and Dr. Happy; however, their teachers communicated high expectations. High, low, or not clearly stated, the home was the most

impactful place in deciding the participants' early educational journeys and self-expectations.

In light of the identities of the research participants, I used intersectionality to make sense of why their educational journeys required high expectations from parents, teachers, community, and self. It is useful to harken back to Crenshaw's (1989) use of a traffic intersection as a metaphor, in which she described that

> discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens at an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 149)

Connecting research participants' identities with Crenshaw's metaphor, the roads are the Black women's identities—race, gender, class, sexuality. Other cars on the roads represent the several oppressive and discriminatory policies and practices that impact Black women's identities, including racism, sexism, classism, dress codes, zero-tolerance policies, school discipline policies, the old boy network, etc. (Crocco & Waite, 2007; Linehan, 2001; Searby & Tripses, 2006; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Watson, 2018). And the intersection represents the systems and structures within the larger society. The metaphor can be made even more compelling by imagining multiple car collisions at the traffic intersection and the risks of Black women being injured. These metaphorical collisions enhance my understanding of the discriminatory experiences Black women encounter within higher education that are beyond "single-axis" analyses (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139).

So, as the Black women journey on the roads (identities) and through the intersection (educational system and structures), they encounter competing cars (policies and practices) around them, and they could be hit by those cars from all the directions at the intersection. In the event of this metaphorical accident, when an ambulance gets to the intersection to offer help, the paramedics (school leaders) might be unable to render effective care and fully make sense of the cause of the accident because they cannot understand all the impacts that injured the Black woman—they are not even aware of all the different injuries. Instead, they might focus on only one aspect of the collision (one identity that is salient to the Black woman), such as which side of the road she was traveling on. Likewise, as Black women embark on their educational journeys, they encounter multiple discriminations. When that happens, it is not the race side or the gender side or the class side or the sexuality side of their body that gets hurt. Instead, their entire being—their entire humanity—gets injured. Crenshaw's (1989) metaphor suggested that the merging of all identities leaves Black women unprotected at the intersection, and vulnerable to injury by the system. Hence, clear and high expectations and all the characteristics they possess are necessary in their journeys because they serve as directions for the young Black women who are navigating a pernicious American society and, in particular, the hegemonic educational spaces that have been set up to serve White middle-class people.

The study data suggest that all the participants had different educational experiences; even as they have many compelling similarities. In their narratives, there was evidence of historical and contextual factors that framed the participants' schooling experiences. Data revealed that some of the women (Dr. Asantewaa, Dr. JJ, and Ms. BB)

attended school during segregation—a period when laws were made to enforce the idea that Black and White people were incapable of coexisting. In their segregated schools, participants felt protected, affirmed, inspired to achieve higher educational goals, and loved by their Black teachers. All the participants described their schooling using phrases such as “wonderful experience,” “most wonderful experience,” “great education,” and “great K-12 experience.” Their illustrative accounts highlighted the importance of education in the Black community (Anderson, 1988; Lincoln, 1969) and how their Black teachers were intentional in providing quality education despite the lack of resources. It is helpful to utilize the traffic intersection metaphor once again to unpack participants’ K-12 experiences. Before the women could arrive at the intersection (educational system and structures), they had to be driving on the roads (identities). Participants’ Black teachers provided them with the necessary academic knowledge and skills to navigate their educational journeys. At the intersection, where the women had to transition or change direction toward college, they were confronted with challenging vehicles (policies and practices) that hampered their journeys.

As the Black women transitioned to college in their late teens and early twenties, they shared how their pursuits of higher education were arduous. The women attended a variety of undergraduate schools that included institutions that were public and private, large and small, Research I and Research II, HBCU and predominantly White, and Christian. All the institutions were located in all the regions comprising the United States—Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West. Actually, participants’ educational stories provided a glimpse of the history of education for Black people during the segregation era (Anderson, 1988), while also shedding light on the challenges

associated with integrated schools after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. For instance, Dr. Asantewaa summarized her experience in a predominantly White university as "survive and get out." She shared that, at Mustang State University, the expectations for Black students were low and

> [O]f all of my degrees and schooling, my lowest grades came from [Mustang]. There was never any explanation for the two derogatory grades on my transcript. . . . They seem to have just believed that Blacks were not capable. There was nothing as a Black person I could do at [Mustang] that could prove my excellence. Nothing!

Like navigating the traffic intersection, Dr. Asantewa had to wrestle with information coming from different directions that caused a collision of identities. She had to either believe that the low grades she received from her White professor were accurate reflections of her abilities, or she had to believe that the high grades she received from her Black teachers were a confirmation that *yes, she can.* And mixed in this collision was her identity as a Black woman. Nonetheless, Dr. Asantewaa had already internalized the high expectations set for her by her family, teachers, and other community members. Her own expectations served as a strong foundation for her self-determination; therefore, she persisted and graduated with honors. That is, Dr. Asantewaa determined her educational outcomes despite the challenges she encountered. Her narrative demonstrated that encouragement from parents and teachers play a significant role as young Black women develop resilience and apply it to their pursuits of higher educational goals (Joseph, Hailu, & Boston, 2017).

Similarly, Dr. Happy, who came from a low socioeconomic background and had high expectations from her parents, experienced the brunt and complexities of navigating U.S. higher education. Coming from a low socioeconomic background, Dr. Happy did not know how to sign up for a student loan; she was isolated and depressed, and wanted

to drop out of college until she met a Black male university administrator who helped her navigate the university system. She had less social capital than some of her peers, yet she persevered. Also, Dr. PG struggled “badly” in her first year of college because she did not know how to learn and how to join study groups. Though she was staying up late to study, Dr. PG was barely getting a C while her White classmates were getting As. “Oh, my God! That first year was rough,” Dr. PG asserted. It was mentorship that enabled Dr. PG to persevere during her first year and, ultimately, succeeded at school and in her career. The aforementioned Black male administrator was an essential mentor. Dr. PG also joined a peer mentoring program that built her network and skills. She had a similar experience in her Ph.D. program, where she struggled early in the program but overcame the challenges as she “started building my network of people there.”

Collins (2000) described the interpersonal (political) domain of power functions through everyday discriminatory practices aimed at marginalized individuals. Collins (2000) further explained that, because discriminatory behavior is normalized, it typically goes unnoticed. In colleges and universities, interpersonal power manifests through the everyday interactions between students and their peers, faculty, and staff. One of the ways interpersonal power becomes visible is through racial microaggressions, which strongly influence individual perceptions of others’ social identities. Sue et al. (2007) defined racial microaggressions as the “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). Some of this study’s participants shared their experiences of blatant racism. For example, Ms. BB and her who were Black women colleagues were frequently asked

about their hair texture or the kind of food they ate, and they received odd stares as they walked across their White Christian campus. Also, other Black students had swastikas marked drawn on their doors. Though Ms. BB did not share how she and her friends dealt with these microaggression incidents, I believe that they were negatively impacted. Likewise, Dr. Asantewaa felt powerless when she received uncharacteristically low grades at a predominantly White institution. She said that "there was nothing as a Black person I could do at [Mustang] that could prove my excellence." These experiences are consistent with Sue et al.'s (2009) study about how microaggressions committed by faculty suppress the intellectual growth of students of color and make them feel less intelligent compared to their White peers. Indeed, the women's experiences cited above, are a few examples of the legacies of racism in the United States that make schooling difficult for students of color, most especially students attending predominately White institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Though my purpose in conducting this study was not to generalize the experiences of all the participants, intersectionality helped me to identify colonial legacies and deep-seated biases based on race, class, and gender that permeate every aspect of Black women's human dignity and personhood. Also, through intersectionality, I came to understand the ways oppression and privilege work as structural forces against Black women as they journey through the power structure within the entire U.S. educational spectrum. Participants' stories are consistent with the intersection of race, gender, and class that, as Crenshaw (1989) explained, are particular challenges that only Black women encounter by virtue of their identity as Black and woman.

Nonetheless, through various institutional research and mentorship programs, and via multicultural spaces, the Black women who participated in my study persevered, navigating successfully through the college structures that have historically attempted to erase their visibility (Crenshaw, 1989). For instance, a tenacious Dr. Dixon, who was an athlete and an honors student, was exposed to how to conduct research through the McNair Program. As a result, she had two publications before graduating with her bachelor's degree. Like Dr. Dixon, Dr. PG's exposure to a peer mentoring program for Black students helped her to navigate college. She later became a mentor to some of her junior colleagues. All the participants described that, because of the high expectations they had for themselves, they were determined to succeed. Altogether, the participants' narratives have demonstrated that access and exposure to institutional programs help young Black women to develop the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies required to be successful in college.

While studies have highlighted the experiences of African American college women (Morton, & Parsons, 2018; Patton, & McClure, 2009), when the Black women senior university leaders were asked to share a few words that describe their higher educational journey and experiences, they used phrases and words such as "phenomenally amazing," "insular," "fine," "it was tough," "excellent experience," and "opportunity to explore." Three of the participants had education-related bachelor's degrees, and the other participants received their degrees in programs such as Anthropology, Business, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Human Development, and International Relations. Except for Dr. Dixon, who did not take a break in her educational journey, all the participants worked for several years after receiving their bachelor's

degrees before they pursued graduate degrees. Three of the participants obtained doctorates in Educational Leadership, while five earned theirs in various education programs. Two received an Ed.D. degree, six received a Ph.D. degrees, and as stated earlier, one has a J.D. and is a doctoral candidate at the time her interview was conducted.

Through the data analysis, the narratives of these high-achieving Black women indicated that their graduate school journeys were shaped by their access to fiscal resources, academic advisors or mentors, and research opportunities. For some who were working full-time while studying, their pursuit of a doctoral degree was inspired by their "love for higher education." For others, they were motivated by the racist and sexist career promotion experiences that made them say, "This is not going to happen to me again." These narratives demonstrated how power shapes individuals' experiences in interlocking systems of domination (Crenshaw, 1991; May, 2015), particularly in higher education. Also, due to their experiences with racial and gender discrimination, the women had to be resilient in an effort to overcome challenges, barriers, and other ostracizing factors (Mullings, 2014). Finally, but most importantly, all the Black women possessed strong self-images, unflappable confidence in their abilities, and a clear cultural understanding of their collective and personal histories that guide them as they navigate unwelcoming climates in their career journeys.

Career Pathways and Success

In this section, I strive to answer the second part of the first subquestion, which focuses on career pathways. Each participant had a unique story about how they entered higher education administration. The strategic decisions they made at every career juncture, and their job titles throughout their professional journeys have already been

highlighted in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Data revealed that the majority of the Black women's career paths followed nonacademic routes. Also, all but one of the participants followed a nonlinear career path to senior leadership positions in higher education, which is consistent with previous studies (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The exception is Dr. PG, who has been on the linear path from faculty member to chair to associate dean and, perhaps, may proceed onward to academic vice president and/or provost, chancellor, and president. Drs. Asantewaa, JJ, and Mari began their careers in a K-12 setting. Dr. PG is the only participant who started her career as a tenure-track faculty member, while Drs. Anthony and Happy commenced their career journeys as student affairs professionals. Ms. BB, Dr. Janice, and Dr. Dixon went through career paths related to banking, government, and research, respectively.

Some of the Black women became university administrators when they were encouraged to pursue administrative positions or were recruited by senior colleagues and mentors who recognized their leadership potentials. Also, some were interested in improving educational opportunities for students, especially minority students; therefore, they pursued higher administrative positions to impact student outcomes and experiences. Notably, there was evidence of the intersection of race, gender, and social class (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) in the women's lives as they navigated their schooling and career journeys. The intersection of identities is not simply additive. The identities also work together to produce a distinct experience for Black women leaders (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The study participants' narratives made these intersections clearer for us. For example Ms. BB was not allowed to apply for the position she was already serving as an interim, but a White man colleague with similar background was endorsed

for his position. Granted, the women have circumvented their families' social class status, are currently occupying various senior leadership positions within higher education, and are leading middle-class lifestyles as professionals. Still, their journeys to apex positions of authority were fraught with sexism, discrimination, and marginalization, all of which seek to limit opportunities (Jean-Marie et al., 2009) and threaten to continue the reproduction of their marginalization as Black women.

Intersectionality has exposed the uneven power dynamics that circumscribe career opportunities for Black women and shape structural manifestation of racism, sexism, and heterosexism (Agosto, & Roland, 2018). Following an intersectionality perspective that systems of power and oppression can be interlocking, the dataset revealed that social identities of race and class are compounded by the gendered and sexist career circumstances and the negative institutional barriers, structures, and cultures that impede Black women's advancement. For example, Dr. JJ occupied various administrative positions, including the vice presidency, for 10 years at several universities. She gained many valuable experiences, yet these experiences were still seen as insufficient to qualify her for president because the position required a doctorate. Regardless of the number of years of experience under her belt, Dr. JJ had to overcome this exclusionary institutional requirement by earning a Ph.D. before becoming a president. However, according to an ACE report, some university presidents have just an associate degree (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Even though the vast majority of presidents hold advanced degrees, women presidents are more likely to have earned a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. than their male peers (Gagliardi et al., 2017), confirming a high standard for women relative to men.

Similarly, Ms. BB raised concerns about how the lack of a terminal degree, as well as racial and gender biases, overlapped to deny her a career promotion. She talked about being discouraged from seeking the provost position and perceived that being both African American and a female impeded her success even though she was already serving as an interim in the same capacity. The experiences of Dr. JJ and Ms. BB show the realities of how the interlocking effects of race and gender prevent Black women from achieving career growth. These are political realities of higher education that many African American women have yet to enter but would do well to understand if they are interested in being leaders in higher education or other career fields. As discussed in Chapter 2, the power structure within higher education determines who ascends to leadership positions, and Dr. JJ and Ms. BB's stories confirmed Davis' (2016) assertion that Black women are often discouraged from stepping onto the leadership ladder in the first place. Also, it is accurate to say that gender and racial discrimination have caused African American women to be passed over for leadership development opportunities (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). What is even more intriguing is that the experiences of Dr. JJ and Ms. BB are examples of coded practice that manifest as policy to obstruct the career advancement of Black women.

Dr. Janice's narrative in Chapter 5 offered a compelling reminder that, given the right exposure and opportunities, African American women are fully capable of leading higher education institutions. Dr. Janice's career spans from federal government to Vice Provost. She spent 10 years serving as a Foreign Service Officer in China, South Africa, and Washington DC. Dr. Janice's entrance into higher education administration was through one of her college mentors. But most importantly, she took the position of

Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Admissions at Moose University for the opportunity to create and direct a program that seeks to increase the population of first-generation and female students as well as students of color and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Similar to Dr. JJ and Ms. BB, a terminal degree was a requirement for Dr. Janice's new career. After earning her doctoral degree, Dr. Janice filled an Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management position. She had the opportunity to participate in a higher education senior leadership mentoring program which opened the door for her to become a vice provost.

Evidenced in this study's nine narratives is the value of nonlinear career pathways for African American women in senior leadership positions in U.S. higher education. Prior to their current positions, all the participants occupied positions that provided them many opportunities to develop skills and abilities necessary to work well with people, solve problems, and provide leadership. This study supports findings from other research that women senior university leaders usually do not purposely work toward leadership positions. Instead, they work diligently to the best of their abilities and are consequently encouraged by senior colleagues to apply for leadership positions or receive a promotion (Madsen, 2006; Waring, 2003).

Career Success

The data analysis brings to light participants' construction of success and how their achievements are shaped by their intersectional identities and their educational and career journeys within the context of higher education leadership. The women considered success as being able to positively impact their students and others. Success is defined along the lines of student achievement and staff members' professional growth.

Additionally, some of the women defined success from the perspective of familial relationships. They articulated their concepts using phrases such as “making a difference,” “impacting students,” “supporting students,” “having happy children, lower stress,” “I’m successful because I’m happy,” and “seeing students come in, graduate, and go on to prosper.”

For instance, Dr. Happy said that success is personal to every individual, and for her, it is not based on her current position but on students’ achievement. She further explained that, when she can implement policies and procedure that helps students and staff thrive, then she feels successful. Dr. Happy’s definition is strongly influenced by her college experiences, particularly her connection with an institutional leader who “deeply invested” in her. She explained that, as a “servant and accessible leader,” she intentionally makes time to talk to and inspire students because “somebody did that for me.” Even though she described herself as a successful Black woman in higher education leadership, Dr. Happy said that she has not yet accomplished her “God-given purpose” and hopes to continue to model leadership to the next generation of women leaders.

Though there were some similarities within the participants’ definitions of success, the most significant similarities were in what they omitted from their definitions. They all rejected money and material possessions as markers of success (e.g., wealth, houses, cars, investments). As Dr. Asantewaa puts it, “material things are not a measure of success for me.” Also, the women’s descriptions of success were separate from their professional titles or positions. They all emphasized the value of “team success” and living a happy, peaceful life.

All the participants believe that they are successful and underscored aspects of their life that exemplify success. However, most were hesitant to take full credit for their academic and career successes. They often focused on this notion of team success and recognized the significant contributions of people who helped them, especially mentors. Some of them attributed their success to God. The acknowledgment of God provided a clearer understanding of how essential religious identity is to the participants (Arnold, 2014). Interestingly, though the women avoided taking full credit for their success, Dr. Janice encourages Black women to take credit and be proud of their accomplishments. She rhetorically asked, "If we are not taking that credit to say, 'I am impacting lives,' then what are we doing this for?"

Finally, data analysis revealed two additional and significant similarities in the women's stories. First, most are the first Black African American women to occupy their current positions in their respective institutions. Second, the majority of them are the only woman of color in their institution holding a senior leadership position.

Family-Life Balance

Most participants in this study shared stories related to parental and spousal relationships that provided social and emotional support during difficult times. While sharing these stories, I noticed that their voices changed and they smiled more, which I interpreted as the participants trying to emphasize the importance of family to their career success. Participants like Dr. Dixon described how her husband supported her and worked to provide for their family when she decided to be a stay-at-home mom to raise their children. Similarly, Dr. Asantewaa noted the emotional support she received from her husband and how he constantly helps her in her research endeavors by clipping

journal articles with her. Also, Dr. Janice emphasized that she decided to return to her home state because of the support system she needed at the time her marriage was "deteriorating." Indeed, her parents provided the needed support as she developed in her career.

While some of the research participants shared the support they received, the majority of the participants struggled to find a balance between their family and professional lives. For example, Dr. Anthony whose "husband travels quite a bit, and there's not a lot that he can do" leaves her to fulfill all the parental responsibilities. Also, some of the participants shared that they have had to make sacrifices that negatively affected their families and marriages. For example, Ms. BB shared how her marriage ended because of her quest to advance academically and professionally and because she did not want to have children at that particular time in her career. Utilizing the traffic intersection metaphor (Crenshaw, 1989), helps make sense of how Ms. BB navigated her family's expectation that she would have children at the intersection where this expectation met her marriage values and those of her family as well as her contemporary vision of a Black professional woman (Banks, 2011; Beamon, 2009; Hurt, McElroy, Sheats, Landor, & Bryant, 2014; Marks et al., 2008). The marriage values Ms. BB had to navigate were not just those of her former husband but also the expectations that bearing children is traditionally expected of women (Rogers, & Amato, 2000); additionally, she was raised by both parents and, in particular, by a mother who was very concerned and protective of her only child. Ms. BB's husband would not budge on his demand for children, and her parents even offered to take care of the children once she had them so she could focus on her career. But Ms. BB insisted that she was not going to have a child

who would not know her as their mother. She struggled with that tension and chose not to have a child while in law school. Her inability to conform to the norms in her family, which are rooted in patriarchal values, ended her marriage.

Similar to Ms. BB's marriage breakup, Drs. Mari and Janice lost their marriages as a result of career advancements. For instance, Dr. Mari shared that her ex-husband thought that she could return to the school district as a teacher after she earned her Ph.D. He had no clue that the Ph.D. would open up so many opportunities that he did not sign up for. To him, a high-level leader was not the idea he had for his wife. I argue that the idea that her ex-husband had for Dr. Mari would have limited her career advancement and professional growth had she remained in the marriage.

While my intention is not to generalize the experiences of participants who experienced marriage dissolution, the data seemed to point to family or marriage expectations as contributing factors. Some scholars have argued that Black men do not always celebrate Black women's upward mobility because they may view themselves as competing with Black women (Hurt et al., 2014). There are evidence to the reality that many Black men have a patriarchal mentality of what a family should look like and what a wife's responsibilities are—homemaker, caretaker, and nurturer (Jardine & Dallalfar, 2012). It is evident from the participants' narratives that some Black women's pursuit of professional success and growth often comes with a cost to their marriages.

Mentorship

While mentoring could be indispensable to every individual, analysis of this research dataset revealed that mentoring was particularly important for the retention and career growth and development of the African American women who served as the

study's participants. Collins' (2000) domains of power (structural, disciplinary), which align with Crenshaw's (1991) forms of intersectionality (structural), help us to understand why mentoring at the university level serves as a cultural and opportunity broker, connecting Black women to resources and social capital. As Baker and Griffin, (2010) advance, interaction between faculty and students is critically important to college student learning and development, and since "learning is a social process, relationships—especially those with faculty—are powerful tools that aid in students' personal and professional development" (p. 1). Participants emphasized the benefits of mentoring in their educational and career success. This section provides an overarching answer to the first research subquestion. As a reminder, the question is this: What educational and career experiences enhance the journey of African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities?

Analysis across the dataset revealed that the African American women had great K-12 schooling experiences, especially those women who attended segregated all-Black schools. They describe environments that were nurturing and inspiring with teachers who served as positive role models. Participants had teachers who buttressed them as young Black girls and were always around Black excellence with clearly defined high expectations. Essentially, study data affirmed that Black teachers have the propensity to create an environment that is familiar and academically rigorous for Black girls (Huff, 2019). As participants transitioned to college, they were physically and emotionally disconnected from their family, community, and cultural norms. The data showed that some of the women struggled to adjust and navigate their new academic environments—

places that have historically been constructed around Whiteness—due to their lack of high expectations and academic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Collins (2000) and Crenshaw (1991) posited that structural and disciplinary forms of power work to fortify social dominance within academic institutions. While the structural form of power functions through policies that govern institutions, disciplinary power manifests through bureaucratic processes (Collins, 2000). These processes make access to institutional resources difficult for individuals with marginalized identities. Connecting participants' experiences, Dr. Happy lacked the social capital to navigate college life, enroll in classes, and sign up for student loans. Even though technology has reduced bureaucratic processes in today's college environment, during Dr. Happy's time, she had to submit completed paper forms for classes. Her limited understanding of the process became evident when she was told that she was "in the wrong line." In the case of Dr. PG, she "did not know how to learn" and, as a result, received uncharacteristically bad grades. For these two participants, institutional mentoring programs would have supported their early acclimation to the college environment as they did the other participants who had early mentoring opportunities and smoother transitions to the college environment.

As discussed in Chapter 2, individuals who have risen in higher education administration have used mentorship to share, empower, and encourage protégés (McDade, 2005). Also, Smith and Crawford (2007) posited that mentoring is an institutional tool that has the potential to recruit, retain, and advance women in higher education. Data analysis revealed that mentoring and mentors enhanced participants' pathways into every administrative position that they have held, including their current

positions. Whether from an individual or through a formal mentoring program, some form of mentorship helped to provide the opportunities, experience, and resources that improved the women's chances of securing their senior leadership positions. As highlighted throughout the dataset, research participants frequently recognized their mentors and credited them for helping with their professional growth. Dr. Janice pointed to a "phenomenal" individual who mentored her at a critical juncture in her professional career. She began as his assistant. She then helped to create a higher position that was essentially made for her. Also, this mentor nominated Dr. Janice to participate in a prestigious mentoring program. Likewise, Dr. JJ described that mentors helped her along her career pathway:

> Until my last position, every person that hired me was a man and mentored me and gave me new experiences to learn about higher education. My last president was a White woman, and she was the best mentor I've ever had. The day I interviewed for the job, she said, "How long are you going to be here?" I [responded], 4 or 5 years. But I asked her why she asked, and her response was, "I can see you're going to be a president. I can see your trajectory." And she helped me fill every gap that I had. Every gap that I had, she helped me fill.

In some cases, some participants said that their mentors made the journey to leadership possible because their mentors saw potential in them that they did not see in themselves. For example, Dr. Anthony eulogized her advisor and mentor for seeing "lots of potentials" in her, for nurturing her, and for guiding her to secure an Assistant Dean of Students position. Consistent with the literature, the majority of the participants shared that they did not intentionally aim for higher education leadership (Thacker, & Freeman, 2020), until their mentors encouraged them to seek leadership positions. For instance, Dr. Mari was preparing her dossier for tenure before her mentor encouraged her to apply for an associate dean position. Dr. Mari's mentor assisted her in the process, and she accepted the offer before earning her tenure. Dr. Janice and Dr. Mari are proud and

appreciative of their mentors—who are still their mentors and who encouraged them at the same time they paved the way and opened doors for them to thrive.

Research shows that a formal mentoring program is beneficial and provides aspiring university leaders with professional development opportunities (Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Jablin, 2001; Oikelome, 2017). An example is ACE. The ACE Fellows Program, established in 1965, is designed to identify and prepare faculty and staff for senior leadership positions in higher education through a unique cohort-based mentorship model. As highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5, two participants participated in the ACE Fellows Program. Specifically, Ms. BB and Dr. Janice, through the fellowship, believe that they acquired new knowledge and skills in leadership that were critical for higher education. They both shared that participating in the mentoring program was the impetus for applying for their current positions. Also, they valued the opportunity to network and engage with others who are in the pipeline to becoming senior leaders.

There were some interesting but not surprising convergences in the participants' experiences with mentoring. First, the majority of participants counted very few Black women as their mentors. Some are their colleagues, so they are peer-mentoring themselves. Second, they do not see other individuals who look like them in higher positions in colleges and universities. This finding is consistent with several studies that highlight the difficulty in identifying mentors because of the disparity of women of color in senior leadership roles in U.S. higher education (Catalyst, 2010; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Evans, 2007b; Mainah & Perkins, 2015). Third, most of the women mentioned men as their mentors. Fourth, some of the participants mentioned White men and women as part of their mentoring networks. Holmes et al. (2007) suggested that Black women

could reap lots of benefits from mentors who are Black males, White females, or White males. While other studies have recommended cross-gender and cross-race mentoring (Holmes et al., 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004), this study confirmed that diversity in mentoring enhances women's career development needs and increases their visibility and access to resources (Brown, 2005; Turner, 2007).

To break the invisibility cycle within higher education senior leadership, the African American women in this study bear testimony to the benefits of mentoring. They all credited their mentors from graduate school for their socialization and for introducing them to additional mentors they met on their career journeys. This study showed that African American women recognize the importance of mentoring other Black women. However, there are not many Black women in senior administrative positions. So, it can be challenging to establish a mentoring relationship that prepares aspiring African women for leadership roles. Research participants want to "pay it forward." They expressed their interest in mentoring and sharing their experiences with young African American women to provide a roadmap for them to advance to senior leadership roles in education or any field of choice. This study has proven the immense benefits to mentoring for Black women. Having that person to help guide an aspiring leader through their educational and career journeys, especially at the traffic intersections, could make a difference for Black female educators, from a substitute teacher to a university president.

Leadership Characteristics

This section provides an answer to the second research subquestion, which is: What are the characteristics of African American women that they describe as contributing to their career advancement and success in senior leadership positions? As

revealed across the dataset, the participants in this study possess unique characteristics that have contributed to their career advancement and success as leaders in higher education. Also, their experiences with racial and gender discrimination became the impetus for developing a leadership style that seeks institutional reform and challenges the structures and influences of power. In particular, the women focus their leadership on improving the educational experiences of students and the working conditions of faculty and staff at their respective institutions.

During the interviews, participants mentioned the traits they embody that have contributed to their upward mobility and success. These characteristics included consensus building, relationship building, attentiveness, fairness and equity, emotional intelligence, vision, collaboration, service, persistence, transparency, inclusiveness, a strong work ethic, diplomacy, trustworthiness, integrity, inspiration, thoughtfulness, and inquisitiveness. Some of the participants mentioned that exercising integrity and being ethical during challenging times are characteristics of a good leader. Dr. Dixon, for instance, is a leader who validates team members' strengths and competencies. She described her leadership characteristic as having the ability to put together an amazing team of people across the United States and the world with different strengths:

> As a leader, I can't accomplish anything by myself, but it's always a team working together that make things happen. I honor and value the contribution of everyone who is working with me. It is okay to recognize that you have some strengths and need other strengths.

For Dr. JJ, her leadership characteristics are transparency, integrity, and showing sympathy and empathy to students. Specifically, she talked about meeting regularly with the faculty, a strategic planning committee, and people in the community to better collaborate when making decisions that will impact students and all university

constituents. Also, Dr. JJ said that she has a moral compass as a president and knows what is right and wrong and how to stay on the high ground. In the case of Dr. Mari, she described the following as key traits for higher education leadership: building relationships with colleagues and students, providing equitable resources to faculty, creating opportunities for students, and making thoughtful decisions that positively impact students. To Dr. Happy, being tenacious is a critical trait for higher education leaders, especially Black women. She explained this way: "I have developed a thick skin, and you have to if you want to be a university president. And as Black women, we have to because we are judged and challenged for everything we do." Dr. Happy also added that the gift of discernment and emotional intelligence are important and need to be well developed for an aspiring college president. Dr. Happy's usage of the term "gift of discernment" further highlights her faith. This terminology is a rooted in the Christian faith traditions, which means being able to distinguish or appraise a person. Specifically, the Bible describes is as the ability to distinguish between spirits and to discern good and evil (1 Corinthians 12:10, Hebrews 5:14).

As highlighted in Chapter 1, scholars in the early 20th century conceptualized leadership traits by emphasizing stereotypically male leadership characteristics; these definitions were called *great man theories* (Northouse, 2016, p. 19). However, Horsford (2012) challenged the great man theories by arguing that "such theories have not similarly explored the natural, inborn or divine gifts and traits associated with the 'great woman,' and certainly not women of disadvantage and color" (p. 13). Also, Murtadha and Watts (2005) proposed that the exclusion of Black leadership narratives, along with adequate analyses of the contexts in which leadership has worked, limits the ability to

develop ways to improve schools for disadvantaged students. In particular, understanding Black women's leadership experiences and how they practice leadership serve as valuable resources in producing practical strategies that will improve educational opportunities and workplace environments for the marginalized (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Evidenced throughout the dataset, the study participants' leadership traits push the boundaries of the "great men theories" to illuminate the qualities of Black women. Also, their leadership practices are oriented toward building relationships and collaborations to serve in the best interest of students and community. The Black women leadership orientation were borne out of their experiences, which Dr. PG for example said "I don't want someone to have to go through the trials and tribulations I went through." As scholars have posited, interpersonal skills, such as the ability to collaborate, are critical to successful leadership (Bass, 1990; Hackman & Johnson, 2004). I believe that the study participants' interpersonal skills have enhanced their career success. The women's emphasized the following interpersonal skills: valuing constituent voices in the decision-making process, making ethical decisions, being a visionary, and being aware of when change is needed. These examples from the narratives support Goleman's (2000) suggestion that a democratic leadership style positively impacts the work environment. Indeed, the research participants' interactions with students, faculty, staff, and community members demonstrated sociopolitical activism that is reminiscent of the leadership practices of Civil Rights activists (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). As some of the participants stated, their leadership is a "calling" from God.

Scholars suggest that African American women leaders are emotionally, ethnically, socially, and spiritually positioned to rely on their leadership traits to grow and succeed (Bass, 2009; King & Ferguson, 2011). While the women leaders in this study rely on their characteristics, they also emphasized that their vision must drive them and maintain the commitment to their teams' and institutions' success. This finding is consistent with other studies suggesting that Black women leaders tend to show ethics of care and to be spiritually and emotionally connected to their positions in higher education (Bass, 2009; King & Ferguson, 2011; Washington, 2006). In all, the data revealed that, across the sample of African American women, they identified service as the most pleasurable aspect of their jobs. They valued the opportunity to serve all students irrespective of their identity. As Dr. JJ concluded, "Hearing my students say, 'Hi, Madam President, can I have a hug?' That's why I do what I do because it's about them."

Implications for Future Practice and Research

In this section, I outline the implications for both K-12 and higher education practices, and how teachers, faculty, and institutional leaders can assist African American women in successfully navigating their educational and career journeys to success. As Dill and Zambrana (2009) suggested, intersectionality encourages the promotion of social justice. In the context of education, promoting social justice should include reimagining institutional structures, policies, and practices so that they no longer disenfranchise students, especially Black women, with marginalizing identities. Nash (2008) encouraged intersectionality scholars to consider the perspectives of individuals with marginalized identities because they possess an epistemic advantage in fashioning a vision for social justice. In adherence to Nash's (2008) advice, I asked research participants what they

would say to their elementary teachers or principals if they could go back to advocate for themselves. I also asked what it will take to see an increase in the number of African American women in senior leadership positions at 4-year institutions. Their responses have helped shape implications I share below.

Implications for K-12 Practice

Throughout the dataset, research participants shared their life experiences as young Black girls living in segregated communities. Notably, three participants highlighted their schooling experiences pre-*Brown v. Board of Education* and the high expectations parents, teachers, and community members had for them. Even though their segregated schools might have had inferior materials and facilities when compared to upper class neighborhood schools, the teachers had high standards, believed in their students' capabilities, and were role models for the young African American women. This research data confirms that Black parents valued education for its potential to move their children beyond the inequities of segregation (Walker & Archung, 2003). However, over six decades since the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark decision, schools are not safe, loving, and caring communities centered on trust (Watson, 2018). Especially for Black girls, school environments are where children are overpoliced and underprotected (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Morris, 2016) by teachers and administrators who view their social behavior as inappropriate, backward, angry, and promiscuous (Chavous et al., 2008; Harris-Perry, 2011; Morris, 2005; Skiba et al., 2002). As the teaching force is predominantly White and White-gendered norms serve to disenfranchise Black girls, Dr. Asantewaa urged practitioners to reconsider their perceptions that cloud their visions of who Black girls are. Also, she said that all teachers and administrators need to "study

their own implicit biases and stop the let-me-fix-you mentality." Dr. Asantewaa's recommendation is an imperative for all educators, including Black male educators, because of the tendency to underestimate how patriarchy influences our views of Black women.

I have been acutely conscious of this point while engaging in *mesearch* (Douglas, 2016) throughout this study. As Douglas (2016) explains, mesearch is the study of an individual's ways of knowing, personal experiences, and journeys and how identity markers intersect to influence one's approach to the world. Douglas encourages scholars to engage in mesearch since identities are complex, contextual, and constantly in flux. In light of my personal identity, and positionality as a Black man married to an African American woman and as an educator who has taught young Black girls and women and will continue to do so in the future, this study has helped me unlearn my biases that I have highlighted in Chapter 3. My life experiences, and the educational and career investments women have made to ensure my growth are the impetus of my research interests and commitments to improving the educational experiences of young Black women. Throughout this research, I engaged in a high level of self-examination and cultural values that shape my view about women relative to educational and career advancement. This self-reflection helped me to not fall into the trap of patriarchal thinking that privileges my educational experiences and social status and ultimately contribute to the diatribe of deficit thinking about Black women in particular.

Contrary to the way African American girls are considered in schools and in the media, data in this study affirmed that Black women are tenacious, intelligent, capable, visionary, and resilient. The conditions that fostered the academic success of this study's

participants must prevail in educational spaces so that young Black women are constantly exposed to high expectations and aspirations to maximize their potential. For Black girls to be successful in attaining their dreams, Dr. JJ and Dr. Mari advised that educators must be “more culturally aware and responsive” in order to establish strong relationships, develop best approaches, and make thoughtful decisions in creating positive outcomes. School district leaders must work towards culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016) that recognize and challenge common patterns of inequities that lead to the exclusionary schooling practices that confront students of color while creating and sustaining school environment that addresses their needs. Teachers and other administrators need regular equity training to help them unlearn their unconscious biases towards students of color, especially young Black girls. Through the training, educators would understand the intersectional experiences of Black girls, allowing for impactful relationships that support them in their pursuit of success.

Implications for Higher Education Practice

Higher education institutions are diversifying, and African American women are attending colleges at higher rates. However, this study confirms that Black women continue to deal with negative stereotypes and racial prejudices that influence their ability to access resources necessary for their educational and professional success (Banks, 2009; Solórzano et al., 2002; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). Also, Black women college students in PWI’s lack a sense of belonging since there is no personal or cultural fit between them and the dominant group (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Critical Race Theory emphasizes the permanence of racism, stating that American society privileges White individuals over people of color in almost every aspect of life, including education (Bell,

1992; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Therefore, colleges and universities should endeavor to create more inclusive campus environments that make someone like Ms. BB feel welcome to walk on campus without being asked about her hair texture and the kind of food she eats. Institutions should continue to mandate that all constituents take diversity-related training and courses, which have been found to have moderately positive effects on the reduction of racial bias, support for race-based initiatives, and social action engagement (Case, 2007; Denson, 2009; Hurtado, 2005; Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005).

Moreover, study participants highlight the importance of designated spaces for Black students, which is consistent with Patton (2006) study about Black Culture Centers (BCCs) and found that BCCs represent safe and welcoming spaces, help Black first year students become acclimated and adjusted to the campus environment, provide a sense of historical and personal identity for Black student, and serves as home away from home for Black students at predominantly White institutions. For example, when discussing her experience in college as a young Black girl, Dr. Anthony shared how the African American Center on campus served as a “safe space” for Black students. Dr. Anthony’s narrative can enlighten university administrators on how Black students, in general, develop community and a support system that enhances their academic success. Hence, higher education institutions are encouraged to establish supportive environments and spaces such as BCCs or Multicultural Centers for students of color to build relationships among themselves and to feel belonged.

Additionally, the findings of this study offer significant implications for leadership and mentoring opportunities. Participants’ narratives revealed that they are

still navigating systemic barriers regarding their ascension to senior leadership positions, and the lack of formal mentoring opportunities is one of those barriers (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Smith, & Crawford, 2007). While these participants exemplify the emergence of Black women in higher education leadership, the realities are that senior university leadership is dominated by white males (Gagliardi et al., 2017). However, leadership training and formal mentoring for African American females in higher education administration could challenge this reality and enhance career pathways of Black women to senior leadership positions. Such was the case for Dr. Janice and Ms. BB, who participated in the ACE program. Moreover, this study confirms that mentoring is an aide to career advancement for Black women. So, institutional leaders should create mentoring opportunities, such as the McNair program, within their institutions to enhance the career development of African American women. Specifically, universities that are ready to address the dearth of Black women in leadership, should intentionally create leadership programs aimed at increasing their numbers in the hiring pool. Thus, institutions should enforce diversity goals through policies and practices that focus on retaining the talent and intellectual excellence of Black women. As a positive consequence of diversifying institutional leadership teams with the inclusion of more Black women, institutions could yield long-term benefits, such as having diverse approaches and perspectives to improving how they do things.

Implications for Research

This study highlights the fact that African American women in senior leadership positions are not shielded from the ethos of patriarchy and hegemonic power structures within higher education, even though these women possess the qualifications,

experiences, personalities, and leadership traits to serve as leaders. Therefore, as the face of higher education leadership continues to evolve with increased inclusion of Black women leaders, researchers must use Black feminist frameworks to continue to provide a deeper understanding of how Black women are challenging—and being challenged by—the systemic structures within higher education. Black feminist frameworks such as Black Feminist Though and Intersectionality (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991) help scholars to recognize that power, privilege, and oppression move in multiple directions which causes an interlocking system of domination that need be dismantled. Indeed, this framework helps me as a researcher and man seeking to use anti-oppressive approaches to further progressive outcomes for Black women. Also, scholars should examine males in upper leadership positions about what they look out for when hiring women to leadership positions. This inquiry will provide rich data and compelling information about the nuances in the hiring processes that have perpetually excluded African American women.

Furthermore, research could focus on other women of color to ascertain whether there are commonalities in career experiences. This future research would add value to the body of literature on the experiences of women of color in higher education administration and to broaden the research foci to include women with various marginalized identities who seek leadership opportunities within educational institutions. Likewise, future research could broaden the foci concerning the types of institutions under study. Researchers could examine the career trajectories of women of color in government and nonprofit organizations, which would be valuable for women who aspire

to leadership positions in those sectors and the men who, like me, desire to better support them

Conclusion

This research focused on the educational and career experiences of nine African American women who have occupied senior leadership positions in U.S. universities. Narrating their stories, the women provided insights into their journeys as young girls and as women within homes, communities, schools, and workspaces, demonstrating the diversity in the realities of their experiences. They provided a snapshot of how they navigated various educational and professional careers. I sought to combine the participants' stories to develop a metanarrative while highlighting emerging themes that provide implications for practice and research

Nevertheless, it is appropriate to recognize how each Black woman's story incorporated details specific only to her journey. The benefit of probing deeper into their narratives was that I could find the points of differentiation. As each participant described her journey, it was evident that every decision could be harness toward personal and professional growth. A broader look at the nine pathways reveals critical differences in their educational journeys and experiences. While some went through segregated schools, others experienced integrated school systems. Though some of the women came from family backgrounds where the pursuit of undergraduate education was expected, all of them stated in their narratives that graduate school was not among their families' expectations. Indeed, all the Black women who served as study participants possess advanced or terminal degrees, except one who has JD and is in the process of earning her terminal degree at the time of this study. In terms of career paths, only two of the women

had been faculty members before transitioning to leadership roles. Almost all of them followed nonlinear trajectories that point to the creativity with which young African American girls and women can reinvent themselves.

With tenacity, all the participants in this study overcame the barriers, stereotypes, and oppressive systems that sought to define their realities. They are currently occupying some of the most influential positions in higher education. They all exemplify *Yes She Can*, an inspiration from the Yes We Can slogan made famous by President Obama—a Black man who was supported by an influential Black woman.

Whereas I am against the pervasive discourse that casts women as incapable of being great leaders, I have avoided using celebratory narratives to project African American women senior leaders as conquerors of systemic discrimination within the academy. Rather, I have sought to illuminate the fact that more Black women can be great institutional leaders if given the opportunities, resources, and the necessary support.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Dr. …

I write to respectfully invite you to participate in a research study titled Yes She Can: Examining the Educational and Career Pathways of African American Women in Senior Leadership Positions in 4-year Public Universities. You have been identified as a potential participant based on your identity and professional reputation as an African American who is a (state their specific position) in a 4-year public university.

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis department at the University of Missouri. In this qualitative study, I am exploring how African American women navigate their educational journeys and administrative career pathways to senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities. Through narrative inquiry, participants will talk through their educational and professional life stories, and what competencies, skills, experiences, and personal attributes they believe have contributed to their triumphs and monumental successes.

The study involves participants being asked to participate in either face-to-face or telephone or Skype or FaceTime semi-structured interviews that will last approximately 120 minutes. While the interview will be audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, neither participant's name, nor institutional affiliations will be associated with the tapes, the transcripts, or any reports resulting from this study. All identifying characteristics will be replaced with pseudonyms. In addition, participants will be provided an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy, as well as make any changes as deemed necessary.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and I will be honored if you decide to participate. Prior to the interview, I will share the interview questions with you. Also, I will email you an informed consent form that explains the full details of participating in this study. Once you have reviewed the consent form, please let me know if you have any questions. Furthermore, I will collect your current resume or curriculum vitae, news articles, or press releases from your university regarding your appointment to assist in my preparation for the interview.

I will be very grateful if we can schedule the interview to take place in February of 2019. I will endeavor to travel to your location. Please note that the results of this research study will advance the understanding of the characteristics that contribute to the success of Black American women senior-level administrators in universities. I believe your story will provide hope and inspiration to young African American and Black women in the diaspora who may be aspiring to leadership positions in the academy.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. I hope that you will agree to participate in my study, as I am excited to learn about you becoming a leader. Please, do not hesitate to contact my advisor, Dr. Ty-Ron Douglas via email: xxxx@missouri.edu or phone: (xxx)-xxx-xxxx or me if you need additional information or interested in participating in the study.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

Ransford

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant/Pseudonym_____

Interview Date_____ Length of Interview_____

Demographic Background

1. How would you describe your demographic background?
    a. Where did you grow up (state, city, neighborhood, etc.)?
    b. How would you describe your childhood?
    c. How would you describe your family growing up?
    d. What is the highest education level of your parents (mother, father)?
    e. Tell me about how you were raised (matriarch vs. patriarch, strict disciplinarian environment, less monitored, self-raised, religious affiliation, etc.).
    f. Do you have siblings? If so, how many?

Educational Journey

1. How would you describe your K-12 experience (great, good, average, not good, awful)?
2. What did you like most/least about your school? Please explain.
3. Did you plan to attend college or university? Why or why not?
4. What was your major? Why did you choose that major?
5. How would you describe your college experience as a young Black woman?

6. Why did you choose to go to graduate school?
7. Was there a personal and family expectation for graduate school?
8. How did you get there (the application process, scholarships, fellowships, etc.)?
9. As an undergraduate student, what inspired you to pursue a graduate degree? What specifically were you going to do with the degree?
10. What were the challenges you encountered, and how did you get through them?
11. How did you thrive in graduate school (mentorship, network, student associations/organizations)?
12. What are some of the critical messages you received from your teachers, family members, and acquaintances that shaped your educational life?

Career Pathway

1. How and why did you get involved in administration?
2. What led you to administration as a career path?
3. What influenced your decision to become a vice provost?
4. When did you realize that you wanted to become an administrator, or did the rubber just meet the road?
5. How did you prepare for your current position?
6. Could you share a story with me about the most significant influences in your life that led you to this position?
7. Tell me about your support system as you moved up the professional ladder.

8. What specific obstacles did you overcome/deal with as you progressed through your career, professionally? What strategies did you use to overcome those challenges?
9. Regarding your personal and professional life, how do you set priorities?
    a. What strategies have worked?
    b. How has your professional journey impacted your closest relationships (e.g., partners, spouses, children)? Do you feel that you have made sacrifices/been required to make sacrifices in this regard in order to get where you are in your professional journey?
    c. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently in navigating your personal and professional life?

Career Experience

1. What is the most challenging aspect of your job?
2. What strategies do you use to cope with your challenges?
3. What is the most pleasurable aspect of your job?
4. In your opinion, does your identity shape your interactions between you and your colleagues?
5. Do you belong to any professional organizations or networks?
6. When issues of diversity are raised on campus, do you feel that there is a different expectation for you?
7. What kind of support do you receive from family, your spouse, and friends?
8. Does religion play a role in your life?

9. How would you describe success?
10. Would you say you are successful in your career? Tell me some significant experiences that you felt made you successful.
11. Finally, what keeps you in the profession?

I envision this dissertation as a source of information for young Black women, administrators, and faculty who might want to pursue a top-level administrative job and chart a career path but lack the direct mentorship from a Black woman's perspective. So, I have four questions:

1. What are the skills/attributes that they may need to learn that cannot be articulated/understood from your CV?
2. What would you like to impart to those individuals about navigating the higher education structure?
3. What is it going to take to see an increase in the number of Black women in senior leadership positions at 4-year institutions?
4. What would you say to your elementary teachers/principals if you could go back to advocate for yourself and others?

Conclusion

1. What legacy do you want to leave?
2. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not already covered?
3. Would you recommend someone with the same identity and in a similar position or higher for me to interview?

4. Can I contact you if necessary to clarify/augment answers?

5. Thank you for your participation in this study.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY ANALYSIS

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Title: Yes She Can: Examining the Educational and Career Pathways of African American Women in Senior Leadership Positions in 4-Year Public Universities

Principal Investigator: Ransford Pinto under the guidance of Dr. Ty-Ron M. O. Douglas

What is the study about?

The purpose of this study is to hear and examine the factors and characteristics that contribute to the academic achievements, career advancement, and success of Black women in senior leadership positions in 4-year public universities in the United States.

Why are you asking me?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are one of the few African American women in senior leadership positions in 4-year universities in the United States, and your success stories are relatively unknown in academic research. I believe your story will provide hope and inspiration to young African American and Black women in the diaspora who may be aspiring to leadership positions in the academy, as

well as a blueprint to follow in the quest to reach their educational and career goals. Your participation will include a 90-minute interview. After conclusions are drawn from the study, you will have the chance to review and confirm the accuracy of the findings drawn from the interview. If you find that the results do not accurately reflect your perceptions, you will negotiate until agreements are reached.

Is there any audio recording?

Yes, participants in this study will have their voice recorded while being interviewed. While the interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for accuracy, neither your name nor your institutional affiliations will be associated with the tapes, the transcripts, or any reports resulting from this study. All your identifying characteristics will be replaced with pseudonyms. The code list that will be generated from the interviews and signed consent forms will be kept under lock in a file cabinet at the residence of Mr. Ransford Pinto. Upon completion of this dissertation, Pinto will destroy immediately the code list, consent forms, resumes, notes, and transcripts. The audiotape will be destroyed after 7 years.

What is the risk involved?

There are no physical harms; however, you may find that some of the interview questions may raise sensitive issues resulting in mild emotional discomfort. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and may take a break at any time during the interview. In addition, you may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after the interview, without any negative consequences.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to participants in this study. However, your insight may provide a guide for young African American women aspiring to leadership positions.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

Contact Information

For questions about this research, please contact Ransford Pinto, a Ph.D. candidate, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or xxxx @mail.missouri.edu, or the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Ty-Ron M. O. Douglas, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, University of Missouri, at 207A Hill Hall, Columbia, MO 65211 or douglastyr@missouri.edu.

Voluntary Consent

I confirm that I know the purpose and parameters of the research study outlined above. I am aware that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the project at any time with no complications. I hereby provide consent for the use of my quotations and wish to participate in this research endeavor now.

_____ _____

Name (Print or Type) Telephone

_____ _____

Signature Date

VITA

Ransford Pinto holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His research focuses on the intersection of race and gender in educational leadership, educational leadership preparation in a global context, and educational equity and social justice in the P-20 system. Ransford's dissertation examined the educational and career successes of Black Women in Senior Leadership Positions in U.S 4-year public Universities. He has articles published in the Educational Review, Journal of Negro Education, and Frontiers. Additionally, Ransford has presented his work at national, and international conferences, including the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA). Prior to his doctoral studies, Ransford worked at the British Council, Accra Ghana as the administrator in charge of the University of Cambridge International Exams. He received a B. Ed degree in Basic Education from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana and a Master's degree in Public Affairs from the University of Missouri's Harry S. Truman School of Public Affairs. Ransford recently received the 2020 University of Missouri Graduate Professional Council Academic Excellence Award.