A Dissertation

entitled

"Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now":[*] The Lived Experiences of Black

Female Academic Deans

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education

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An Abstract of

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The primary purpose of this interpretative phenomenological inquiry was to uncover the lived experiences, both professional and personal, of Black female academic deans across Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2,000) served as a guiding theoretical framework in light of the unique experiences of Black women as a result of their intersecting identities. Three key findings emerged from the interviews with the study's participants. Together, these findings captured the essence of the lived experiences of the participants in the study. The first finding reflected both the underlining fatigue that Black female deans battled on a daily basis as they navigated constant assaults related to their race and gender as well as their resilience that defined their leadership in the face of such assaults. The second finding captured these deans' commitment to channel their leadership oversight towards holding institutions accountable for their inequitable and unjust philosophy and practices. And finally, the third key finding reflected Black female deans' struggles to reimagine the norms and standards of the academic deanship position to embrace historically under-represented members such as themselves.

I dedicate this dissertation to the individuals who have been the biggest champions throughout my life. To my mother, Juristine Betts, who taught me that I "could do anything with God" and served as a force to be reckoned with as an advocate for my equitable education in the k-12 educational system. "*I finally did it Mommy!!*" This is for you. In loving memory of my God mother, Geraldine Hill. I know this would be a proud mama moment for you. This is for you.

I must also acknowledge my entire family: The Hymen and Hills family - I love you all!!!! I am blessed to share your life and DNA. I take you with me into every room, every platform, and every stage. I am because of you.

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"For I know the plans for you" declares the Lord, *"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"* (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).

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Chapter One

Introduction

"The most neglected person in America is the black woman" (Emba, 2019).

In this chapter, I discuss the plight of the Black woman academic leader in higher education. The historical narrative of Black female academics' access to and experiences in higher education describes insurmountable barriers. Since the colonial era, leadership practices and "who has been deemed a leader" have often been exclusionary. Colleges and universities have been primarily designed for White men thus excluding the participation of minorities such as women and African Americans (Thelin, 2013). It was legislative acts such as the Morrill Acts, the Women's Suffrage Act, the Civil Rights Act, and Title IX, amongst others, that gradually allowed an increased progression in the presence and participation of women and African Americans in the academy. Despite gains, African American women continue to experience underrepresentation and numerous inequities within higher education. According to Henry and Glenn (2009), Black faculty women continue to face a number of issues related to racism, isolation, and marginalization, all contributing to the lack of their critical mass within the academy.

The marginalization of Black women is even more prevalent at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) where institutionalized racist structures contribute to the underrepresentation of African Americans, and create complex issues that have a far-reaching impact. Grant and Allweiss (2014) posit that the historic structures within higher education settings cause people of color to experience overt and covert racism. From a gendered perspective, Allan (2011) contends that women working in higher education

experience the glass ceiling, pay disparities, and the reality of sexual violence. When we

consider the experiences of African American women, they face the challenges of

navigating the overlapping oppressions of being both Black and female. As a result of

these challenges, much fewer African American women are represented in faculty and

academic administrative appointments and roles. According to Bryant et al. (2005),

African American women are situated in a unique position because they continually face

battling racism and sexism. The added layer of racism at some Predominantly White

Institutions and their work environments offer additional challenges for Black female

faculty. These institutional challenges create barriers that can feel insurmountable for

Black faculty women. As Ballenger (2010) notes, some of the challenges Black female

faculty experience include isolation, lack of resources, minimum recognition for their

scholarship, disparity in pay, and limited academic collaborations.

Statement of the Problem

Research related to the academic and leadership journeys of Black women in

higher education lays bare these women's hardship. While Black women have made

progress in obtaining degrees and developing career pathways in higher education, Black

female faculty, administrators, and students are still underrepresented in the academy

(Dowdy, 2008). When we consider the travails of achieving tenure, and the limited

numbers of Black women who achieve tenured faculty status, there are even lower

numbers of Black women who move beyond the faculty rank to academic administrative

leadership positions. Even those who reach these positions often remain "outsiders

within" (Collins, 1986, 2002). Collins (1986, 2002) coined this phrase to describe the

positioning of Black women professionals on or at the margins of traditionally academic

spaces. Predominantly White institutions have been such spaces. Literature suggests that Black female academic deans have lived at the margins of Predominantly White Institutions, and constitute one group of senior academic administrators who have had limited access to certain privileges at these institutions (Banks et al., 2018; Gasman et al., 2015; Haywood, 2004; Scott, 2016). Their invisibility and marginalization have been real and lived (Stanley, 2006).

This "dwelling at the margins" has had damaging effects on Black female academicians' ability to gain social, political, and professional success. For example, Black female academicians oftentimes do not have access to the implicit or explicit cultural rules and social norms that often govern higher education spaces. Both tend to govern access to relationship building, mentorship, professional opportunities, and other resources required to be successful within a higher education in a professional capacity. Grant and Simmons (2008) assert that Black female academicians experience feelings of marginalization and social isolation, which contribute to a negative impact on professional acclimation and poor job performance. On a similar note, Mainah's (2016) study on Black female faculty currently in administrative roles or aspiring towards administrative leadership in academia asserts that Black female faculty who are well respected regionally and nationally within their disciplines face discounting or discrediting until proven otherwise in their academic areas at their current institutions. Likewise, Black female faculty in such situations often face socially cold environments and experience feelings of frustration and isolation in navigating the work environment (Mainah, 2016).

The research on Black female academicians and academic administrators has grown over the past few decades. Studies suggest that Black faculty can thrive in an environment where there is critical mass (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), institutional racism is acknowledged (Grant & Allweis, 2014), isolation and marginalization are addressed (Ballenger, 2010), and campus climate is taken into consideration (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Other studies on Black female administrators also provide insight into our understanding of specific administrative roles held by Black female senior leaders. According to Haywood (2004), the four Black female presidents she studied had to navigate dual challenges linked to their gender and race and, as a result, had to develop strategies to reinvent a presidential role that had not been designed for them. Scott's (2016) study on Black female vice presidents of student affairs, reveals how these leaders had to navigate macroaggressions, face challenges related to both their race and their gender, and battle feelings of isolation from peer executive leaders, all of which overshadowed their confidence in their competence. For Scott (2016), many Black female vice presidents of student affairs find themselves challenged to overcome stereotypes such as "the angry Black woman," which contributes to the constant shaking of their confidence in their own professional competence.

The academic deanship serves a critical role at an institution of higher education and the research on Black female senior leaders, although growing, still permits room for a better understanding of the challenges these women face. Wolverton et al. (2001) remind us that although we have seen an increase in the number of academic deans from 40 years ago, there is still a great disparity in the number of women and minorities who occupy the position of academic deans. Gasman et al. (2015) and Banks et al. (2018) attest to the low

numbers of Black female deans within academic colleges at select public institutions, showing the prevalence of White men and women in academic dean positions. Few studies have focused on the challenges Black female academic deans face, although research attests that Black female administrators across colleges and universities experience similar challenges (Banks et al., 2018; Gasman et al., 2015; Haywood, 2004; Scott, 2016). For Dowdy and Hamilton (2012), one of the few studies on the position of dean, Black female academic deans face challenges as racism, sexism, and obstacles within management. Likewise, the challenges Black female deans encounter in navigating the faculty tenure process, in leading their colleagues and an academic college, and ascending to senior academic roles, all remain unspoken and understudied. A meaningful exploration of Black female academic deans at Predominantly White Institutions and their leadership journey is not only vital to the literature, but is warranted.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

One central inquiry guides this study: What are the lived experiences of Black female academic deans at Predominantly White Institutions? As a result, the primary purpose of this phenomenological inquiry is to uncover the lived experiences, both professional and personal, of Black female academic deans across Predominantly White Institutions, and to draw out commonalities and differences among them. In addition, this study aims to give "voice" to these women, and visibility to their experiences. In this way, this study aims to contribute new scholarship that might inform policies and practices that can enhance the professional trajectories of Black female academic deans.

Significance of the Study

There is significance in carrying out this study and contributing to new scholarship, because the literature indicates that there are a variety of challenges faced by African American administrators and faculty women employed at Predominantly White Institutions. According to Grant and Ghee (2015), "African American women in the academy must work to deconstruct historical barriers, while also situating a sense of the educated self among an academic community who has not previously known her" (p. 761). Scholars such as Howard-Hamilton (2003), Hinton (2003), Patton-Davis (2015), and Mainah and Perkins (2014) have all studied pertinent issues as they relate to Black women including, but not limited to, the dual oppression of race and gender, isolation, and chilly climates as obstacles faced by Black female administrators. Harley (2008) refers to Black female faculty as "The Maids of Academe" to describe the unrelenting servitude expected from them on a daily basis, in addition to their teaching and research responsibilities. Troutman (2009) describes Black faculty women as being the most stressed, most worked, most overlooked, and the least satisfied of all faculty in the academy.

Despite the challenges facing Black female academics, their presence on college campuses has a tremendous impact. Their "physical being" on predominantly White campuses offers support to Black students, which often has a positive impact on student retention, matriculation, and graduation. As Detour and Hirsch (1990) have suggested, "the sheer presence of African American faculty at institutions of higher education may encourage African American students to persist" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 97). These are only a few examples that speak to the value that African American

administrators and faculty women add to the academy, and why it is even more critical to effectively understand their journeys, and how to support and retain them.

This study aims to contribute to research by providing the Black women deans' perspective on their professional journeys to deanship. In addition, it aims to provide glimpses into the ways in which Black female academic deans shape and inform college leadership, navigate academic environments, and provide mentorship to other Black women. Research attests to the difficulties that Black professional women encounter when trying to balance both their personal and professional lives. Wenniger and Conroy (2001) argue that the Black campus community often depends on Black female staff and faculty to perform multiple roles. This study will contribute to our understanding of the strategies internalized and utilized by these Black female academic leaders.

Further, this study strives to offer insights into best practices and policies that can equip institutions to attract, recruit, and hire Black female tenured faculty, and nurture their growth into the academic deanship. Further, this study will inform the justification of recruitment and retention of Black female academic administrators and provide insights on specific action steps that can be documented in both institutional policies and university-wide diversity plans. Finally, this study aims to contribute to scholarship that utilizes Black Feminist Thought (BFT) by first giving "voice" to Black female academic deans while minimizing a historical sense of silence, invisibility, and institutional oppression.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Thought

This study employed a qualitative methodology referred to as interpretive phenomenology. As a research methodology, phenomenology aims to uncover participants' lived experiences with a given phenomenon. As Creswell (2013) notes, phenomenology guides the researcher to explore the lived experiences of people, and the common meanings they share with a phenomenon. In this study, I explored the phenomenon of being a Black woman, one who finds herself at the intersection of gender and race, who has negotiated the tenure process and is currently serving in the senior level academic administrative position as an academic dean at a research intensive Predominantly White Institution. I used phenomenology to understand what the common experiences are of individuals who experience the phenomenon of being a Black female academic dean. Four participants took part in my study to help me identify the universal essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon under study. van Manen and van Manen (2021, p. 1073) describe the essence of a phenomenon as "the very nature of the thing."

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) is the theoretical framework that grounds this study. Built on Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality, Black Feminist Thought was best developed and honed by Collins (1998, 2002). Intersectionality acknowledges the overlapping of socially-constructed identities such as race, gender, and social class. More pertinent to this study is that Black Feminist Thought centers on and honors the unique experiences of Black women. Based on these unique experiences, Collins (1998, 2002) coined the idea of the "outsider within status," which points to the

position of Black women at the margins of academia, but also to their invisibility due to the systems of dominance that continue to exist.

In her work, Collins (1998, 2002) emphasizes three themes within the Black Feminist Thought framework. The first theme recognizes the authentic experiences of Black women, while acknowledging the dominance of others telling their stories for them (Collins, 2002; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). The second theme notes that while each Black woman's story is uniquely different, there are intersections of experiences, which are uniquely situated among Black women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). The third theme suggests that while there are commonalities among Black women, the diversity of identity/identities represented can offer many contexts by which their experiences can be narrated (Collins, 2002; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Black Feminist Thought guided this study in its goal to understand the lived personal and professional experiences of Black female academic deans who find themselves, as professionals and as individuals, at the intersections of race and gender. Further, Black Feminist Thought was used to inform our understanding of how the socially constructed identities of race and gender have uniquely shaped the marginalized position of the participants as they have moved through their career paths as academic deans. Finally, Black Feminist Thought guided this study's examination of the individual experiences that are unique to each participant, while also identifying other experiences that are common to and shared among the research participants.

The Researcher as the Instrument of Data Collection and Analysis

I chose to conduct this study because I believe it is important to highlight the experiences of Black women in academia. As a Black woman who works in higher

education at a Predominantly White Institution, I often find my voice and that of other Black women silenced; our lived realities dismissed. Obstacles exist. I along with many of my sister colleagues desire to break through the glass ceiling of senior administration. More importantly, we aspire to be change agents through research, mentorship, and leadership.

I acknowledge that my experiences, perspectives, and identify matter in this study, particularly as I planned the study, and collected and analyzed the data (Creswell, 2013). I am aware that my experiences of being a Black female who is currently charting a career pathway in higher education at a Predominantly White Institution provided some commonalities with my research participants. I believe that there are shared instances of how we make meaning of struggle and learn to survive. This is in alignment with what Collins (2000) refers to as the Black woman's standpoint.

As I commenced this research project, I recognized that my experiences of working in higher education settings, experiences with discrimination, as well as navigating numerous challenges as a Black woman may impact this study. As the researcher, there may have been instances where similarities existed between my study subjects' academic classroom experiences as both students and educators, and mine. As a Black woman who has held a variety of positions that have allowed me to work with faculty and other academic administrators in developing policies and practices that influence university governance, I found that these shared experiences were helpful in building a rapport with my research participants. As a result, I was prepared, authentic, and transparent in my research endeavors as I sought to understand the lived experiences of these Black female academic deans. For these very reasons, I made a conscious effort

to "bracket" my experiences as a means of balancing the influence of my presence throughout this study.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

As the instrument of data collection and data analysis in this qualitative study, I held key assumptions about my research participants. First, I assumed that my research participants would be open and honest in sharing their lived, personal, and professional experiences. Second, given that my research participants were moving through a career trajectory in the administration pipeline, I assumed that these women would have experienced discrimination and other challenges as highlighted in the literature throughout the course of their journeys. My assumption was that their experiences would have been shaped by the multiple combined oppressions linked to both their race and their gender, while working at Predominantly White Institutions.

I delimited this study to Black female academic deans. I further delimited this study to Black female academic deans who have previously served in faculty ranks. I also chose to focus on Black female academic deans who only serve at large public research tier I institutions within the United States. Finally, this study was delimited to Black female academic deans who serve at predominantly White public institutions.

There are several limitations to this study. First, as a qualitative phenomenological study, my project purposefully targeted a specific group of participants. The study's results are drawn from their experiences and generalizations to all Black female academic deans are not applicable. Due to the lack of critical mass of Black female academic deans coupled with the multiple professional demands these women face on a daily basis, it was a challenge to identify participants

for this study. Future research could aim to broaden the sample, perhaps utilizing quantitative or mixed methods approaches to provide insights into the varied and rich experiences of Black female academic deans.

A second limitation of the study has to deal with hyperconsciousness of the need to protect the anonymity of the research participants. Due to the sheer underrepresentation of Black female academic deans, participants took additional risk to participate in this study. While as the researcher I made every effort to protect the anonymity of each participant, all participants expressed concerns about needing protection during their interviews and while member checking. Anxiety about confidentiality may have prevented participants to share details and experiences that they could have in other situations. To address the issue, future studies might utilize surveys to collect data from a wider swath of academic deans.

Finally, future research can expand the scope of study to include other institution types such as private, faith-based, minority serving and community colleges. This would contribute to our understanding of how the experiences of Black women academic deans might vary by institutional context, funding and organizational structures and demographic composition. In addition, further research can also focus on understanding the experience of Black female leaders in other administrative roles such as chair, associate dean, and provost. This focus will help us understand what challenges and/or steps these women have taken to assume leadership positions.

Definitions

The following concept definitions aim to provide context and clarity in the study:

Academic Dean: a mid-level leader within academic administration. The academic dean leads the administrative processes of an academic college (Wolverton et al., 2001).

Intersectionality: Coined by Crenshaw (1989), this term refers to the interlocking oppression of race, gender, and class experienced by Black women. Intersectionality recognizes that Black women do not experience oppression such as race or gender as separate entities. Rather, these forms of oppression overlap and can be experienced simultaneously. As a result, intersectionality separates the experiences of Black women from White women and Black men.

Marginalization: The act of relegating someone to an unimportant or powerless position. This often takes place in the workplace when the majority group holds pejorative views about another group (Castle, 2019).

Outsider Within: "Outsider Within" (Collins, 1986) refers to the marginalized and often isolating positioning of Black women in occupational or educational spaces. Howard-Hamilton (2003) describes these spaces in higher education settings as places where Black women are invited in by the dominant group, but due to their marginalized statuses are invisible and silent when dialogue or work begins.

Predominantly White Institution: An institution of higher learning with White student population that is at 50% or greater (Brown & Dancy, n.d.).

<center>**Chapter Two**</center>

<center>**Literature Review**</center>

This chapter examines the body of literature concerning Black female faculty and administrators at Predominantly White Institutions. I synthesized the existing research related to issues facing Black female academics such as racism, sexism, cold climate, underrepresentation, isolation, and lack of professional network that may result in diminished faculty and administrative paths to the academic deanship. The chapter begins with a historical overview of the participation of Black women in higher education. Next, the chapter examines Black female administrators and offers a discussion about the challenges these women encounter in their career pipeline. Third, the chapter covers the existing literature on Black female faculty, including research about such issues as challenges to tenure, classroom experiences, and faculty service. Next, I provide a comprehensive overview of the position of the academic dean within the context of academic leadership roles on college campuses. This section also examines pipeline challenges for underrepresented groups, specifically Black females seeking academic deanships. Next, I identify gaps in the literature on the lived experiences of Black female academic deans. The chapter concludes with a description of the theoretical framework, Black Feminist Thought, which guided this study.

Historical Evolution of Black Women's Access to College Education and Leadership Roles

Higher education in the colonial era was exclusionary and only accessible to wealthy White men who studied religion, philosophy, and what would be known as early

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liberal arts education (Thelin, 2013). These exclusionary practices were established with the founding of Harvard College in 1636 where the first Black college student would not graduate until 1873 (Jones, 2017; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2013). Educational access for historically underrepresented groups, such as women and later Black Americans, was met with opposition and challenges. In the colonial era, White women were viewed as property and there was an expectation that their first duty was to the home (Solomon, 1985). Many people at the time believed that women were intellectually inferior to men. As Solomon (1985) stated, "it was assumed that women had smaller brains and weaker minds than men" (p. 22). Further, in the colonial era, birth and family standing determined the role of women. Education in early schools and seminaries aimed to prepare women for their domestic duties within their family (Solomon, 1985). Examples of domestic duties included spiritual teaching, sewing, shop keeping, etc. The type of education that women received directly correlated with the occupational role of her family (Solomon, 1985). For example, if the family owned a shoemaking shop, then the women in that family would study shoemaking.

Until the mid to late 1800s, education for Black Americans was illegal. There was a belief that Black men and women were socially and culturally deficient as compared to White Americans (Glover, 2012). This ideology, inherited from slavery, resulted in limited access to educational opportunities for Black people. Some limited educational opportunities for both Black men and women emerged during the early 1800s as a result of opposition and resistance by abolitionists, radical religious teachers, and later freed slaves (Glover, 2012). Some examples of these early educational opportunities for Black people came through the first Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as

Lincoln, Cheney, and Wilberforce (Evans, 2007; Gasman et al., 2015; Glover, 2012). The Morrill Act of 1862, which developed state land-grant institutions that focused educational efforts on agricultural, military, and mechanical training (Thelin, 2013), further helped to shift access to higher education from just the wealthy White religious men to a broader population. Black Americans benefited from this legislation as a small number of land-grant institutions would offer limited opportunities prior to the Civil War. Many Historically Black colleges (HBCUs) began to emerge after the abolishment of slavery in 1865 (Gasman et al., 2015). While these early HBCUs provided some form of education, those institutions were underfunded and offered woefully inadequate educational provisions. Many of these early institutions were colleges in name only and were able to provide primary and secondary education at best (Gasman et al., 2015). The second Morrill Act of 1890 required the federal government to distribute money equitably for both Black and White educational institutions (Glover, 2012; Thelin, 2013). This legislation helped to improve educational access for Black men and women by laying the foundation for the opening of additional HBCUs and thus widening educational opportunities. The expansion of educational access through the early HBCUs and a limited number of land-grant colleges charted the early pipeline of educational access for many Black Americans.

Black women were different than their White female counterparts in that they were educated alongside Black men (Gasman et al., 2015). White missionaries created various co-educational options where both Black men and women had to train in manual labor in order to gain work (Gasman et al., 2015). The value of the education of Black women went far beyond manual labor within the Black community as Black women

worked hard for racial uplift and empowerment (Evans, 2007; Gasman et al., 2015; Glover, 2012). Christian White women developed grooming schools for Black women and nurtured the belief that these women could use what they learned and pass the knowledge down to their children (Jones & Dufor, 2012). The need to contribute to the advancement of the Black community led most educated Black women to join the teaching profession (Jones & Dufor, 2012). Some of these pioneering women were amongst the first Black women in the teaching profession. According to Jones and Dufor, (2012), the first teacher, Catherine Ferguson, who founded Caty Ferguson School for the Poor, can be traced back to 1793. While Catherine Ferguson did not have a formal education, she placed importance on learning opportunities and was instrumental in creating access for the intellectual development for others (Jones & Dufor, 2012). Sarah Douglass was another recognized trailblazer who contributed to the teaching profession. She was fearless in her work to end slavery (Jones & Dufor, 2012). She opened a school for Black boys and girls in Philadelphia and taught at Cheney State College. These teaching pioneers contributed to the early educational efforts for Black Americans as their schools for Black people were born out of unrelenting activism for education of the Black community. According to Evans (2007), these teachers were among the first of many Black women who "taught themselves, their families, and their communities to read and write during an era when it was either legally or socially prohibited" (p. 27).

As the need for better educational opportunities for Black women arose, they began to make some historical gains in educational access and advancement. Accessing college education marked one of the first milestones for Black women. Oberlin College was the first college to open its doors to Black women in 1837, which was

approximately 30 years after admitting White women to collegiate courses (Glover, 2012; Jones, 1997). The first Black female college graduates were also at Oberlin. Lucy Sessions graduated in 1850 with a literary degree and Mary Jane Patterson graduated in 1862 with a bachelor's degree (Evans, 2007; Glover, 2012; Perkins, 1997).

While leadership within secondary and post-secondary institutions looked different in earlier years, there were some Black female leaders who served as trailblazers in creating the path to academic leadership for Black women. These women were among the first to hold senior administrative roles at either secondary schools or post-secondary institutions. They held positions such as teachers, principals, school directors, and positions of leadership on college campuses. These women pioneers helped create educational access at a time when educational opportunities were severely limited for Black Americans and leadership roles for Black women in higher education were unheard of. Black female leaders faced challenges such as racism, sexism, and politics. They navigated family and career balance while crossing cultural and social barriers as they utilized their positions for the uplift and forward progress of the Black community (Evans, 2007). These women were Mary Jane Patterson, Jackson Coppin, and Anna Julia Cooper, all graduates of Oberlin College.

Mary Jane Patterson began her path in education by teaching at the Institute for Colored Women (Evans, 2007). She held the distinction as the first Black female principal of the Preparatory High School for Negros between 1871-1884. Fanny Jackson Coppin is another example of a Black woman who was a trailblazer in early education. A graduate of Oberlin College, Coppin held the distinction as the first Black woman to

teach in an academic department within Oberlin College (Evans, 2007). Coppin went on to teach and ultimately became principal at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Evans, 2007). Coppin was most noted for her influence in the education of Black women during her administration. Finally, Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, another graduate of Oberlin College with a BA in mathematics, taught college courses at Wilberforce University and served as a teacher and later principal at M Street High School (Evans, 2007). Cooper went on to serve within the faculty and as department chair for the Department of Romance Languages at Lincoln University (Evans, 2007). Cooper's academic journey ultimately led her to serving as president of Frelinghuysen University (Evans, 2007).

These early examples of Black female leaders helped build the capacity for not only an educational pipeline for the Black women, but established a precedent for Black women to hold positions of leadership in academia when their race and gender excluded them. As Evans (2007) states, "despite the limitations of colonial and antebellum education, black women left behind individual, social, and institutional legacies of learning that readied the ground for future enrichment" (p. 35).

After the Civil War as the participation of women in coeducational institutions increased, the need for female administrators also grew to address the needs of a growing student population. Dean of women positions emerged at both historically Black and Predominantly White Institutions. The dean of women role was created as a response to the increased enrollment of women on coeducational campuses. As educational opportunities opened for women, college enrollment increased from 21%-47% by the 1890s, which resulted in a need of women leaders to

serve on college campuses (Parker, 2015). The dean of women role was used on most campuses to navigate the tensions between developing coeducational spaces during a time where women still were not seen as equal to their male counterparts, and where it was perceived by many male administrators that women needed protecting while attending college. The dean of women historically served on the faculty, taught classes, and overall, was charged with advising and protecting female students on her campus (Parker, 2015).

The first Black woman to serve in the position of dean of women was Lucy Diggs Slowe, a Howard University graduate of 1908 and a graduate of Teachers College at Colombia University (Herdlein et al., 2008). Slowe held a career in both teaching and academic administration. Some of her administrative roles included: Lady Principal and Dean of Girls at Armstrong Manual Training School, principal of the Washington Shaw Jr. High School, and most notably, the first Dean of Women at Howard University in 1922 (Herdlein et al., 2008; Lindsey, 2016; Slowe, 1937).

Slowe entered the position of dean of women during the era of New Negro Womanhood and used this new social and political platform to advocate for the advancement of Black college women attending Howard University (Lindsey, 2016). During her time as the Dean of Women, Slowe made enormous professional advances that include the following: founded the National Association of College Women (NACW), advocated for an increase in women in academic disciplines other than teaching, and worked to dismantle gendered oppression of Howard women through policy changes (Lindsey, 2016). According to Lindsey (2016), Slowe shifted the position of dean of women from being one of parental guidance to advocacy for

Black women through institutional policy and practices. While she served in more of a student personnel function, there were several examples that also gave her responsibilities in academic administration. Slowe's championing of faculty issues, gender equity issues for all Howard women, and policy changes for both employees and students established a historical precedence in many problem areas faced by many Black women navigating college and university academic spaces.

In sum, throughout the evolution of higher education, Black women have face many exclusionary practices that have overshadowed their participation and experiences in the academy. Historical milestones associated with the entry of Black women in higher education have marked the early access of Blacks prior to the Civil War, notable Black women trailblazers in education, and challenges beyond the Civil Rights era for Black women in higher education.

Research on Women in Higher Education

The passage of important legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1965, Title IX of 1972, and The Equal Pay Act of 1963 have created greater access for women in the academy (Gupton Del Rosario, 1998; Thelin, 2013). Over the past three decades, we have observed increased gains in the education and degree obtainment for college women. According to Johnson (2017), women obtained more than 50% or more of all bachelor's degrees and 50% of all doctoral degrees over the past decade. These increased numbers provide hope for women who wish to pursue a career in the academy. However, there are still inequities facing women working on college campuses. According to Seliger and Shames (2009), there continues to be inequities in higher education between men and women in the areas of salary and leadership.

The increased numbers of educated women have also increased the pipeline of qualified women to serve in staff, faculty, and administrative positions within the academy. However, there continue to be inequities in the representation and salaries of women within higher education. The College and University Professional Association for the Human Resources completed a data analysis to determine gender equity gaps in representation and pay within higher education. Using these data, Bichsel and McChesney (2017) found that overall, there were more women represented in the staff lines or mid-level positions. However, there were only 30% of women holding executive level positions in higher education. When examining pay equity gaps, this study noted that women earned 75% to 80% per every dollar that their male counterparts earned in the same position. The pay equity gap narrowed, however, in executive level positions where women were underrepresented overall. The study revealed that women on executive positions earned similar or higher salaries than their male counterparts. Continued inequities in representation and pay still impact women in the academy.

The research canon has grown in work that guides our understanding about the impact of gender roles and the experiences of women leaders within the academy (Seliger & Shames, 2009). When understanding the barriers to higher level positions, the term glass ceiling captures the disparity between women receiving advanced degrees and women holding senior level positions such as dean, vice president, provost, or president (Gerdes, 2006). The concept of the glass ceiling was first coined in 1984 (Barreto et al., 2009). The word glass refers to the almost invisible barrier and ceiling refers to the limits women encounter on how high they can reach on the career ladder within organizations (Barreto et al., 2009). There are many obstacles that women face when trying to

transcend career pathways in higher education. Coleman (2020) set out to understand challenges facing women senior managers. Coleman's study found some of the obstacles to senior management included: masculine work culture, discrimination and the glass ceiling, gendered stereotyping, and the difficulties of combining work and family life.

While institutions of higher learning can be places that nurture intellectual ideologies, the structures of these spaces were designed to exclude women in all of their policies and practices. According to Frechette (2009), "although gender discrimination in all of its manifestations is often thought to be absent from higher education, academic institutions are hierarchical organizations that offer rewards, status and privilege, thereby rendering the status of women within these institutions politically and economically vulnerable" (p. 35). These structural inequities often perpetuate hegemonic systems that create spaces where the socially constructed stereotypes of gender are reinforced thus defining how women are perceived as leaders.

Hoeritz (2013) completed a qualitative dissertation study examining the impact of stereotypes on women leaders in higher education. Hoeritz (2013) found stereotypes to be present in their work environments. Further, the women believed that these stereotypes forced them to conform their behavior to traditional gender roles. When these women attempted to climb the career ladder and apply for leadership roles, they reported often being overlooked for male candidates who were equally or less qualified than they were (Hoeritz, 2013). When participants were able to step into leadership positions, they reported being challenged, experiencing discrimination, and retaliation (Hoeritz, 2013). This study highlights the consequences often associated with women who obtain roles that are seen to be traditionally held by men.

Vinkenburg et al. (2011) conducted two studies that examined stereotypes and gender roles of women leaders. These studies sought to understand if gender stereotypes about the "transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership" styles established an advantage or an impediment for women's access to leadership (p. 10). Vinkenburg et al. (2011) noted descriptive beliefs as the typical attributes of women and men, versus prescriptive beliefs, which applied to desirable attributes. The first study examined the truth of descriptive gender stereotypes regarding leadership styles. The study showed that participants believed that women possessed more transformational and contingent reward behaviors as opposed to fewer management and laissez faire behaviors than men (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). The second study explored prescriptive attributes essential for men and women in leadership roles at various organizational levels. The findings showed that inspirational motivational leadership was perceived to be more important for men senior leaders than for women senior leaders (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). In comparison, individualized consideration was perceived to be more important for women senior leaders than for men senior leaders. These findings support that leadership style is valuable for promotion within organizational ranks, especially inspirational motivation. With this in mind, both men and women should display inspirational motivation behaviors if they are to be successful leaders. However, women must supplement these leadership behaviors with prescriptive gender norms and avoid retaliation resistance (Vinkenburg et al., 2011).

Research on Challenges for Black Female Administrators

Due to the low numbers of Black women in the academy, isolation and social marginalization continue to be painful realities faced by Black females working in

Predominantly White Institutions. Grant and Simmons (2008) assert that African

American women face isolation and marginalization, which can negatively impact their

integration on campus and job performance at Predominately White Institutions. These

feelings of isolation can be exacerbated by scrutiny and discrimination from White

colleagues on campus and can lead to significant challenges in achieving success as an

administrator or faculty member. Glazer-Raymo (2001) states that as the number of

Black women professionals increases, these women still face isolation, are left out of

informal networks, and encounter institutional discrimination.

Subject to the challenges they struggle with as a result of the intersecting roles of

gender and race, Black women working in the academy face increased discrimination.

According to Kamassah (2010), "black women in leadership have to contend with

'gendered racism' the double jeopardy of being black and female" (p. 56). Hughes and

Howard-Hamilton (2003) affirm that racism and gender inequity continue to remain very

present within higher education, especially for African American women. Many Black

women encounter acts of racism or sexism daily through even the smallest of interactions

often called microaggressions (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) shares that race and gender

oppression are still occurring for Black women, but the new forms of subtle insults or

forms of discrimination are very difficult to identify or prove. According to Hughes and

Howard-Hamilton (2003), Black women in higher education are confronted with a

multitude of microaggressions, which include "conscious, unconscious, verbal,

nonverbal, and visual forms of insults" (Henry & Glenn, 2009). These pervasive

encounters can be exhausting and take a physical and emotional toll. Taylor (2007)

described oppression as persistent daily microaggressions that subtly flow through the air like an odorless vaper in the workplace.

Research extensively documents the barriers that Black female administrators face at the workplace including isolation, invisibility, racism, sexism, and hostile work environment. Mosley (1980) coined the phrase "endangered species" to describe Black female administrators in higher education. The term endangered species referred both to the underrepresentation of Black female leaders and to the various challenges that present insurmountable obstacles to Black female success and growth into senior leadership positions. Mosley's 1980 study documents some of the earliest scholarship to guide our understanding of the experiences and obstacles facing Black female administrators. Mosley (1980) found that the majority of Black female administrators working at Predominantly White Institutions felt tokenized and held positions peripheral to the policy and decision-making roles within higher education. Further, Black female administrators experienced challenges with both Black males as well as White administrators, thus reaffirming the dual oppression of race and gender that often presents obstacles for Black women (Mosley, 1980). Overall, Black female administrators felt devalued as a whole (Mosley, 1980).

Other researchers have further contributed to the literature identifying challenges and barriers to Black female administrators. Ramey (1995), Mosley (1980), Hinton (2003), Shorter-Gooden (2001), and Jean-Marie (2005), all speak to issues such as racism, sexism, isolation, challenges to authority, and lack of network as barriers for Black female administrators. As one example, Ramey (1995) found that the Black female administrators who participated in a study felt like they lacked needed authority to do

their jobs, had limited opportunities for networking, and felt isolation. Ramey's qualitative study sought to understand obstacles and coping strategies of Black female administrators at Predominantly White Institutions. One of the participants in the study spoke of obstacles while performing day-to-day job duties as the unit's head. She reported having all her decisions needing to be approved by the President before she could move on a decision (Ramey, 1995).

In a mixed methods study of 10 participants that included the administration of a survey and semi-structured questions, West (2015) focused on the self-concept of Black female student affairs administrators holding a variety of position levels ranging from graduate assistant to vice president of student affairs. One of the important findings of the study revealed that the participants associated the physical aspect of underrepresentation with isolation and marginalization. In addition, participants spoke of the psychological association with isolation, underrepresentation, and marginalization. As an example, when asked to define the physical aspect of underrepresentation, some participants recounted stories of being the only one or one of a very few among African American women within their department (West, 2015). The findings revealed psychological consequences of underrepresentation which included pressure to speak on behalf of a cultural group, stress to function at a level of perfection to prevent judgement on Black women as a group, and feelings of underappreciation as a result to invisibility and marginalization of the group (West, 2015). The participants also spoke to the marginalization that they believed Black female student affairs professionals occupied at Predominantly White Institutions. As an example, a participant spoke of being relegated

to the periphery, literally and figuratively, through intentional nuanced behaviors by colleagues and supervisors (West, 2015).

Holmes (2000) conducted a qualitative narrative study of three faculty and two administrators to better understand how social cultural factors impacted the academic roles of the participants. The study found that race was the "environmental landscape" that shaped the experiences of the participants (Holmes, p. 33). While race was very salient in shaping the experiences of the participants, the impact of social class was present as well (Holmes, 2000). The participants reported experiencing the impact of social class in being treated differently by their peers simply because of their race and struggling with the identity of being a part of the new middle class. The impact of gender roles was also experienced by the participants in the study. The participants felt that White male leaders in authority discounted the service activities of Black faculty women with minority students. Further, participants felt tokenized due to their minority status and expressed feeling taken advantage of by White male leaders at their institutions. They were also viewed as less competent than other academic leaders in the academy (Holmes, 2000, p. 34). Nixon (2017) conducted a qualitative study that examined the experiences of five women of color holding the position of chief diversity officer at their institutions. The study found that the ways that the chief diversity officers approached their work connected with how they navigated educational institutions as minoritized employees as "others." Nixon also found that the chief diversity officers had to work on navigating macroaggressions and that stereotypes weighed on the chief diversity officers. As an example, participants in this study reported being a first or "only" in their role as chief diversity officer, which served as a common place of marginality. The chief diversity

officers in this study also reported that they have all found ways to navigate, resist, and shift structures that oppress and marginalize within their role. These studies continue to add to our understanding of the structural and individual challenges that Black female administrators navigate in their day-to-day professional roles.

Although female academicians of color are increasingly visible in leadership positions in higher education, the challenges that they have to contend with in order to achieve this status are not for the faint of heart. The work and road to leadership is arduous for the Black woman. Many Black female leaders continue to navigate challenges in charting a career path that leads to senior administrative positions. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), the term labyrinth has been coined to describe the odd course of upward movement in career trajectories of women within organizations. This labyrinth is often met with challenges and alternative paths to higher positions, rather than a straight path to senior leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women can achieve senior leadership positions, but they must combat many obstacles in doing so. This includes childcare needs, racism, sexism, and discrimination based on these multiple identities and roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Mitchell's (2018) qualitative dissertation study examined the experiences of 25 Black female mid-level managers on the trajectory to vice president of student affairs positions. The themes identified in this study included participants facing personal and professional challenges in their journey; participants needing to access a range of supports to assist them in progressing; participants finding themselves as if in a labyrinth; and participants finding opportunities for growth as an essential component of their advancement (Mitchell, 2018).

Humphrey (2018) examined the paths of Black female administrators as an alternative to a typical career pipeline to the community college president position. This dissertation study examined the unique experiences of Black female student affairs professionals who approached community college presidency through a path less followed. This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of 10 participants who gained the position of president through a student affairs path. Humphrey (2018)) described the structural elements that described the phenomenon to the path of community college presidents for these participants. They included personal pillars influencing ascendancy to the community college presidency; professional factors influencing ascendancy to the community college presidency; advice for African American women; challenges on the journey to the community college presidency; and the student affairs pathway was indeed the road less traveled. When exploring personal characteristics, participants identified important factors such as family, faith, and mentorship as influences on their career development (Humphrey, 2018). As an example, one of the participants revealed that her mentors were not just other individuals in the field but were also a part of her neighborhood and church community. This participant attributed her success to the relationship with her mentors for providing the foundation to build on to become a community college president.

Humphrey (2018) reported that the group of participants in the study identified inequity in promotion, pay gaps, difficulty working with other leaders, and race as challenges. For instance, one of the participants revealed not being promoted despite her credentials, and another participant shared that her supervisor would not promote her because he knew her family circumstances around needing to be place bound or land

locked. Finally, an additional element that emerged as a theme related to the student affairs pathway to becoming a community college president through a student affairs pathway. The participants all took the untraditional path of becoming a university president through a student affairs career path. Most of the participants mentioned the importance of building relationships with faculty because they were not from the traditional academic background. Participants in this study utilized teaching as one of the strategies to build credibility with faculty along their trajectory to president. In addition, participants shared the importance of serving on committees and building connections both across the institution and nationally (Humphrey, 2018). These findings demonstrate some of the unique steps that Black female administrators take on the road to leadership due to being limited or excluded from traditional paths in charting a career pathway to senior leadership. Both Mitchell's (2018) and Humphrey's (2018) dissertation studies are helpful in informing our understanding of the obstacles facing Black female administrators. They are also clearly illustrating the non-traditional labyrinth that many Black female administrators navigate in their career trajectory to more senior leadership positions.

Other scholars have talked about facing obstacles along with navigating a career labyrinth for Black female presidents working at Predominantly White Institutions. Harris and Jackson (2005) and Harris and Jackson (2007) examined 1) barriers to the presidency and 2) career paths to the presidency for Black female administrators. Harris and Jackson (2005) studied the career paths of Black female presidents. This quantitative study was composed of 43 Black female presidents who were currently at two- and four-year institutions. The findings revealed that 100% of these Back female presidents held a

doctorate degree with 70% holding terminal degrees in education with the majority of the

remaining participants holding degrees in the social sciences. The study also examined

the career paths of the participants to their current presidential position. The study found

that almost 60% were holding their first position as president, 20.9% had held previous

CEO positions, and 18.8% had held between 2-6 previous CEO positions prior to

acquiring their current role (Harris & Jackson, 2005). Two other interesting findings were

that 90% of participants acquired their positions after 1990 and 70% of the participants

were presidents at community colleges with the remaining participants being presidents

at 4-year institutions (Harris & Jackson, 2005). The findings revealed that the most likely

position prior to president was chief academic officer, provost, or chancellor, and that the

majority of African American female presidents were more likely to hold doctoral

degrees. This study also found that Black men were more likely to be president rather

than Black women. Additionally, this study emphasized differing paths that Black

females have to take in acquiring their current presidential positions (Harris & Jackson,

2005).

Harris and Jackson (2007) also examined the barriers facing Black female

administrators seeking the path toward presidency with 59 participants. The first research

question in this study examined the perceived barriers faced by African female presidents

related to preventing them from obtaining a presidency. The findings revealed that

exclusion from informal networks was the most often cited barrier by participants 13.6%

of the time (Harris & Jackson, 2007). Other barriers indicated by Harris and Jackson

(2007) included the "the lack of the doctorate, lack of access to multiple levels of

management related to professional goals, exclusion from top management positions,

lack of a mentor, and a lack of experience in instruction and learning to manage people"

(p. 57). Another barrier identified by participants was career development planning and

the glass ceiling (Harris & Jackson, 2007). Jackson found that on a Likert scale list of 12

experiences that could impact advancement, participants ranked the following

experiences as obstacles created by the glass ceiling: male stereotyping and

preconceptions of women (mean 3.03), informal recruitment (mean 2.83), and ethnicity

(mean 2.47) (Harris & Jackson, 2007). As it related to strategies that African American

female presidents had utilized in acquiring a presidential position, the top ways included:

"exceeding job expectations (mean 4.76), holding positions that provided visibility (mean

4.58), having skills outside of higher education (mean 4.08), and education skills (mean

4.00) (Harris & Jackson, 2007). These two studies are important in illustrating the

labyrinth as previously indicated by Eagly and Carli (2007). These studies add to our

understanding of how barriers can place aspiring Black female administrators on an

alternative path, as well as impact traditional processes.

In sum, existing research has captured an array of challenges facing Black female

administrators serving at Predominantly White Institutions in higher education. The

literature speaks to the multiple combined oppressions these women face as a result of

their race and gender, and of the ways these women's social identities shape their daily

experiences as Black female academics. Prevalent themes from the existing research on

the obstacles Black female administrators encounter include racism, sexism, cold climate,

marginalization, lack of mentoring, and negative stereotypes. These challenges have led

Black women to follow a career labyrinth that has often been an untraditional path in

breaking through the glass ceiling of senior higher education (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Research on Challenges Faced by Black Women Faculty

Black female academic deans follow both an administrative and an academic career trajectory. In addition to the extensive research on the challenges Black female administrators at Predominantly White Institutions face, there is considerable research on the barriers that Black female faculty encounter. Many of those barriers are closely associated with the lack of critical mass of Black female faculty at Predominantly White Institutions. According to Alexander and Moore (2008), Black females represent less than 5% of faculty positions on predominantly White campuses. The National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that for academic year 2016-2017, out of 365,489 people with faculty status at 4-year public institutions, only 2,574 were Black women, and out of 174,174 tenured faculty, only 3,879 were Black women. The lack of critical mass presents challenges in creating a pipeline for Black women who aspire to the professoriate. Due to low numbers, there are also challenges such as isolation (McCray, 2011; Salazar, 2005), hidden rules, and supplemental but unspoken expectations during tenure review (Agathangelou & Ling, 2002), less favorable judgments of their work compared to their White counterparts (Williams & Williams, 2006), lack of or minimal opportunities for research collaboration (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), and little or no mentoring (Alexander & Moore, 2008; Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012). For Black female faculty who are subjected to the rigors of academic performance in such areas as scholarly writing, teaching, and service, the barriers created due to la ack of critical mass can be insurmountable and hinder career movement through faculty ranks.

In addition, Black women faculty's dual identities as women and Black add multiple layers of oppression within institutional environments. Collins (2004) and

Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) contend that Black women have many experiences that are shaped by the simultaneous oppression of racism and sexism. These experiences are often institutionalized across the policies and practices within Predominantly White Institutions, and directly impact processes connected to pursuing faculty ranks. Several studies speak to the experiences of Black faculty women as they navigate some of the inequities caused by the duality of race and gender (Bridgeforth, 2014; Edwards et al., 2011; Ferguson, 2013; Singh et al., 1995, 1995; Turner, Gonzalez, & Lau, 2011).

Singh et al., 1995 (1995) explored gender differences in the perception of 413 Black faculty members. In general, this study found that Black female faculty experienced inequity in navigating scholarly research associated with their position, and climate and culture issues within their institutions (Singh et al., 1995). The researchers found that Black female participants perceived fewer collaborative research opportunities within their academic departments and strongly disagreed with the statement "administrators work effectively with faculty to gain research support" (p. 405). The study also found challenges in navigating campus culture and climate for Black women to be more profound than that of Black men. The data revealed that in general, Black female participants in the study experienced inequity in all areas of campus life. Black male participants responded much more positively to the statement "I have made major accomplishments to my field" (p. 406).

When exploring the intersection of race and gender, Edwards, Beverly, and Alexander-Snow (2011) added to the literature with their focus on how Black female faculty define success. Their study examined a marginalized group from the lens of resistance and empowerment, and added a new perspective to what many individuals

may assume is the dominant narrative of Black female faculty. Participants in this qualitative study found that their awareness of marginality guided their sense of success, which empowered these women to define success on their own terms despite the limitations placed on them within the academy (Edwards et al., 2011). Three themes captured the way participants defined success in this study: publishing, giving back, and a journey. For instance, one participant reported that "success for her was being able to publish research about Africans or African Americans" (Edwards et al., 2011, p. 20). Another participant described her journey as "there is always a different plateau you can go to. It's nebulous. It's ever changing. It's being revealed. It's a journey for me" (Edwards et al., 2011, p. 21).

Edwards, Beverly, and Alexander-Snow (2011) also gained insight from participants by asking them if they believed they were successful. The following three themes emerged from the responses: "being successful was defined externally and definitively, participants believed they have had some successes, and never becoming complacent or satisfied" (Edwards, Beverly, & Alexander-Snow, 2011, p. 21). When defining success externally or definitively, some participants reported that views of success as a Black female professor came from family, colleagues, or society. When exploring the theme, never becoming complacent, a participant stated, "I will never become complacent. I have achieved but I have miles to go" (Edwards, Beverly, & Alexander-Snow, 2011, p. 21). This study found that most participants had a difficult time defining what personal success meant for them. Edwards, Beverly, and Alexander-Snow (2011) asserted that "success for Black female faculty is as unexpected as is their presence in the professoriate" (p. 23). While this positioning of invisibility made it

difficult to concretely measure success of Black female academics due to their small numbers, this positionality has given Black female scholars the opportunity to resist current perceptions of success and redefine what success means. One participant stated that "it's not what they say, it's what I know that I have done to get where I am that other people may never see" (p. 24).

The dual challenge of race and gender often impacts Black female faculty in classroom spaces. McKay (1997) contends that Black female faculty teaching at Predominantly White Institutions are always cognizant that their presence signals a disruptive interruption into spaces never intended for their occupancy. Due to this continual outsider within positioning, Black female faculty face such issues as hostility, resistance, and even disrespect within classroom spaces (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). This level of opposition of Black female faculty often comes from a socially constructed lens of a professor that often is not inclusive of Black women to be represented as teachers or within the curriculum. Grahame (2004) states that challenges to hegemonic structures within the classroom such as the reentering of curriculum to include humanist or diverse perspectives, changing race, and gender power dynamics in the classroom lead to resistance from students (Grahame, 2004). As a result, Black female faculty have to negotiate ways of protecting their personhood as well as gaining academic credibility with the students they teach at Predominantly White Institutions. The literature on Black female faculty illuminates some of the prevalent issues encountered within classroom settings (Ford, 2011; Perry, Moore, Edwards, Acosta, & Frey, 2009; Pittman, 2010; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005).

Pitman (2010) conducted a study on the impact of race and gender oppression on women of color in the classroom. This study was built on the early work of Harlo (2003), which found that Black female faculty reported that White students often challenged their competency and authority. Pitman (2010) found that the participants who reported their negative classroom experiences were almost exclusively from White male students. These findings support the research that Black women navigate multiple forms of oppression due to race and gender. In addition, Pitman (2010) found four additional themes which describe the participant's experiences with White male students. These themes were: (1) their authority was challenged, (2) their teaching competency was challenged, (3) their professional knowledge was disrespected, and (4) some participants reported being threatened in the classroom (Pitman, 2010).

In another study, Ford (2011) examined the ways White students exhibit resistance to Black faculty women in the classroom. Ford (2011) used the term body misrecognition to describe the hegemonic lens through which White students often view professors, and the resistance that occurs when women of color do not fit. This study analyzed the ways faculty women of color negotiated the classroom based on their observation of how White students perceived their raced and gendered bodies (Ford, 2011). Examples of misrecognition of women of color by White students abounded. A Black female participant and a Latina female participant recounted being mistaken by White students as clerical staff rather than faculty. Another Black female used the example of a Mammy to describe how White students often characterized her as a mother figure in the classroom. These findings support the notion that because Black female faculty and other women of color do not fit the hegemonic view of what a teacher should

look like, they often experience macroaggressions and are not seen as individuals who hold faculty status. Ford (2011) also found that White students made judgements about the competence of Black female faculty based on characteristics such as "hairstyle, choice of attire and manner of speech" (p. 463). Finally, the Black female faculty in this study reported how they "toned down the Afrocentric characteristics as classroom coping strategies to address resistance from white students" (p. 463).

Sule (2010) conducted a study that explored how Black and Latina female faculty utilized oppositional positioning as a form of resistance to negotiate classroom spaces. Sule (2010) defined oppositional position as "awareness of being part of a socially marginalized group combined with efforts to undermine everyday individual and collective subordination" (p. 170). This study added to the literature about Black faculty women because it explored strategies to dismantle oppressive behavior from students through the application of both interrogating the positions of marginality and applying strategies to address resistance by students in learning spaces. There were two primary findings in this study. The first finding was that the participants utilized "enacting legitimacy" as a means of establishing agency and navigating resistance from their students (p. 177). Some of the strategies that participants used to establish legitimacy were professional presentation, referencing the work of prominent scholars, credentialing, and masking (Sule, 2010). The participants believed that establishing legitimacy in these ways helped to interrupt their competence as professors being called into question by White students (Sule, 2010).

The second finding in Sule's study was that the participants contributed to their institutions by critically questioning diversity and by "restructuring the masters tools"

through their curriculum (Sule, 2010, p. 177). Sule (2010) described emotional distancing, better known as masking, as a strategy utilized by Black female faculty to maintain professional decorum in the classroom. Three masking strategies emerged in the findings: using masking as a shield from disruptive behaviors by not allowing toxic behaviors in their personal space, and finally they demonstrated a commitment to academic practices that promoted critical dialogue while protecting their professional integrity. According to Sule (2010), these masking strategies helped Black faculty women maintain professional structures in the classroom while resisting negative stereotypes and assumptions about their abilities from White students. While much of the literature about Black faculty women and classroom environments informs our understanding about barriers such as hostility from students and centers on the positionality of multiple forms of oppression, this study offered a new perspective on navigating the classroom space. This study added to the existing literature because it provided data that supports Black female faculty utilizing agency and empowerment strategies to disrupt and resist oppression in the classroom.

Tenure and promotion to associate and later full professor are two of the most desired accomplishments within academia in the U. S. (Cox Edmondson, 2012). Black female faculty face unique challenges in navigating tenure due to their race and gender such as the subjective questioning of their research and scholarship, overwhelming service, and unclear rules that create additional barriers when moving through tenure. Creating a robust research agenda and publishing scholarly work are components that are critical to the tenure process. For many Black female faculty, their professional credibility is called into question if their research is centered on areas such as race and

diversity (Harper, 2008; Henry & Glenn, 2009; West, 2015). In addition to the academic

demands of tenure, many Black faculty women experience cultural taxation as they often

serve as a representative to their race on a variety of projects and committee work (Yard,

2012). When navigating the spoken and unspoken rules of the tenure process, the

demanding role of serving as an academic-nurturer teacher-scholar may leave an

unsuspecting Black female faculty in a quandary when demonstrating she has

successfully met the requirements for promotion and tenure.

Research provides insights on some of the prevalent issues faced by Black

female faculty who are pursuing tenure (Boyd et al., 2010; Griffin, Bennet, & Harris,

2013; Herbert, 2012; Jones, Hwang, & Bustamante, 2015). Griffin et al. (2013)

conducted a qualitative study that explored gender differences in how Black faculty

understood their differences in teaching, service, and research. The study found

similarities in how Black male and female faculty experienced tensions with the research

and merit process but found differences in how they experienced teaching and service

(Griffin et al., 2013). In the area of teaching, one of the findings of this study was that

Black female faculty perceived teaching and classroom evaluations to weigh much more

strongly in the tenure and promotion process than their male counterparts (Griffin et al.,

2013). As an example, one participant shared how her tenure was denied due to a

negative teaching evaluation. Other Black female participants also shared how their

classroom evaluations were reviewed heavily even at research institutions where the

focus on teaching is not as strong as at other types of institutions (Harris, Bennet, &

Griffin, 2013).

When exploring the service of Black faculty, this study revealed that the male and female participants experienced service differently. According to Griffin, Bennet, and Harris (2013), the men in the study were more likely to say "no" or set boundaries where female participants felt less comfortable in saying "no" (p. 501). For instance, a female participant shared that she felt bad when not having enough time for students and even gave some students her personal phone numbers. These differences in how Black male and female faculty set boundaries speak to some of the literature around cultural taxation that Black Female faculty experience. Both male and female participants experienced challenges in having their research respected. As an example, one participant shared that many times her research was considered to be suspect, particularly when her research was centered on marginalized groups (Griffin, Bennet, & Harris, 2013). This study added to the literature that informs our understanding about the experiences of Black faculty women. Its findings demonstrated that Black female faculty perceive different expectations in certain areas that help them earn merit during the tenure process.

Wijesingha and Ramos (2017) completed a qualitative study that explored the rate that Black male and female faculty were tenured in comparison to White male and female faculty at eight institutions in Canada. In addition, the researchers explored the extent to which human capital theory or cultural taxation were factors in the disparity gap of tenured faculty. The findings of the study showed that racialized or Black faculty were less likely to achieve tenure when compared to their White or non-racialized faculty counterparts. The data revealed that only 53% of racialized faculty in comparison to 66% of non-racialized faculty achieved tenure status (Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). Similarly, the data revealed that racialized faculty were less likely to be promoted to associate

professor than non-racialized faculty at a percentage of 56% versus 69%. When exploring

human capital theory, which involved factors such as research and grants for faculty

participants, the study examined the rate of publications of research and the awarding of

grants. The study found that racialized faculty and female faculty produced more

scholarly research and were awarded more grants than non-racialized faculty or non-

racialized male faculty respectively. Finally, this study examined rate of tenure and

human capital of racialized female faculty and did not find any significant difference in

the tenure and promotion or rate of human capital (Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). While

this particular study did not reveal some of the concerns faced by Black female faculty

within the U.S., it does support the notion that Black faculty do not gain tenure and

promotion at the same rate as White faculty. Additionally, its findings also demonstrate

that Black female faculty members may have to work harder to achieve tenure. These

findings support the assertion that the minority status of Black female faculty may impact

how they navigate tenure and promotion.

Finally, Jones (2015) conducted a study that examined strategies of success for

Black female faculty going through the tenure process. Three themes emerged in the

findings: "systemic oppression at Predominately White Institutions, eternal supports, and

internal coping mechanisms" (p. 151). Under the theme systemic oppression, participants

reported feeling under the microscope (Jones, 2015). As an example, participants felt

their office hours were monitored more closely than those of other faculty and their

research agenda was scrutinized by White faculty members (Jones, 2015). These findings

are consistent with the literature on some of the challenges faced by Black faculty

women. For the external support theme, participants reported the benefit of Black

professional networks both in person and social media, mentoring from individuals outside the department and institution, and support of leadership such as department chair and dean (Jones, 2015). For internal coping mechanisms, the study found four strategies that were most common among the participants that included persistence, religious practices, time-work load management, and personal integrity (Jones, 2015, p. 153). This study is significant as it not only added to the existing literature about challenges faced by Black faculty women who are navigating the academy, but it also focused on resiliency and coping strategies that can be utilized to successfully move through tenure. While there is literature that supports mentoring and professional networks for Black faculty, there is a lack of literature that helps us understand the benefit of the application of these strategies to be successful in gaining tenure.

For faculty women, the tenure process can feel isolating, marginalizing, stressful, and unwelcoming (Behar-Horenstein et al., 2012; Cox Edmondson, 2012; Frazier, 2011; Harper, 2008; Henten, 2003). For some Black faculty women who have navigated the tenure process, they have found their lived experiences in the tenure process to be in contrast with the experiences of their White counterparts. Cox Edmondson (2012) found that participants perceived scholarship, values, and a campus culture that was in contradiction with her institution. These participants were able to develop coping strategies to get them through academic tenure, but experienced great emotional stress and isolation along the way. This study added to our understanding of how coping strategies can be used to navigate some of the issues associated with tenure such as emotional stress, cultural taxation, and producing research. Further, this study provided

data for institutions that reinforce the benefit of mentorship programs within academic departments as well as professional networks as strategies to retain Black female faculty.

In sum, Black female faculty face unique barriers on their academic career paths. Many of these barriers exist within teaching in classroom spaces, the processes linked to the pursuit of tenure, and along a career pathway within the professoriate. The literature points to the underrepresentation of tenured Black female faculty and examines the obstacles that contribute to this issue. Some of the challenges that research has identified include racism and sexism, hostile classroom environments, overextension for university service, and inequitable processes towards achieving tenure. Research has also pointed to an array of strategies, such as mentorship and professional networks, that Black female faculty utilize in efforts to address the existing challenges.

Research on Academic Deans

The term dean comes from the Latin word *decanus,* which means "a leader of ten" (Cassady, 2014). Decanus was used in the monastery schools and later in the Catholic diocese to describe groups of 10 students or to identify the head of a community (Cassady, 2014). As universities evolved from the early monastery and Catholic schools, the position of the dean was used to describe an administrative leader with various responsibilities. The role of dean began to form within academic colleges. The first example of a dean is John Collins Warren from 1816 to 1819 at Harvard College of Medicine (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001). From 1830 to 1870, the role of academic dean began to expand to other colleges such as schools of divinity, law, and liberal arts-sciences. By 1913, the position of dean had gained broad recognition within

academia (Deferrari, 1956; McGinnis, 1933). Over the next several decades, the role of academic dean would continue to grow, evolve and become a critical component of academic leadership that would touch faculty, university administration, and even a broader external community reach. This need resulted in the appointment of faculty who were often referred to as scholar deans. These scholar deans held teaching assignments within their college in addition to administrative task (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001).

McGrath (1936) conducted one of the first studies on the role and function of academic deans. McGrath's study showed the importance of teaching scholarship associated with the early office of the dean. According to McGrath (1999), the data revealed that the position of dean "universally combines administrative duties with teaching" (p. 602). In a sample of 32 institutions, the data revealed 97% of participants held teaching appointments while serving as dean. The administrative responsibilities associated with the office of the academic dean functioned differently across academic colleges and institutions. Deans were assigned a range of responsibilities that were originally more student-focused in nature (Wolverton et al., 2001). Some of these administrative tasks included: discipline of students, registering students for classes, addressing complaints, and attending meetings (Wolverton et al., 2001). In to the 1890s, the role of the registrar was established on college campuses, which led to deans moving away from student-centered tasks to broader administrative responsibilities (Hawkes, 1930; Wolverton et al., 2001). By the 1940s, the deans supervised faculty, participated in curriculum development, managed budgets, and had fewer direct connections to students in their college (Estep, 2002; Forrest, 1951; McGrath

1947; Wolverton et al., 2001; Woodburne, 1950). Due to the development of the position of academic dean, it has been very challenging to identify similar criteria for the position. McGrath argued that "the numerous titles used to describe the office, the wide difference in teaching assignments, and the variation in degrees held, all go to prove that there is no 'standardized dean' (McGrath, 1999, p. 605).

Current Role of Academic Dean

Over the past decades, higher education has continued to grow and expand to not only operate within institutional governance practices, but within more sophisticated management models as well. According to Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, and Arnal (2008), the increase in the managerial focus in contemporary education has a direct impact on higher education function. These changes within university administration have a direct impact on how the enterprise is organizationally structured and managed. Given the changes in management practices within higher education, the position of academic dean has shifted from an appointed position from the president to a competitive search process with a broad range of career paths that lead to the position. Over the years, research has revealed multiple paths to the academic dean (Arntzen, 2016; Cassady, 2014; Forrest, 1951; McGrath, 1947; Morris, 1981, Woodburne, 1950; Wolverton et al., 2001). Morris (1981) suggested that people moved into academic positions by the following career trajectories: internal department promotion, by way as a trained administrator, an external candidate with managerial experience, or by political appointment. In a study conducted by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2015), the researchers explored a range of areas associated with the position of academic deans within business colleges. Among the areas under scrutiny was

the current career path of the 574 deans and 76 interim deans who participated in the study. The study found that of those who became academic deans outside higher education, 52% held executive positions, 24% were in government, 12% were in nonprofit, 8% were self-employed, and 4% were categorized as other (AACSB, 2015). For those participants who became academic deans who were in higher education, the data provides the following breakdown of professional roles prior to dean: dean 20.8 percent, department head/chair 16.8 percent, associate dean 15.9 percent, faculty member 12.5 percent, interim-acting dean 10.6 percent, vice dean 6.9 percent, other academic 6.7 percent, non-academic 4.8 percent, program director 4.6 percent, and assistant dean .4 percent (AACSB, 2015). The findings of this study demonstrated the growing complexity of the role of academic dean, as well as the diversity of career paths of those who enter the position.

The academic dean serves as a mid-level manager within executive leadership. The person in this role serves as the academic leader who has oversite for the administrative processes of an academic college. The function of academic deans continues to be different across factors such as institution type, size, and organizational structure (Wolverton et al., 2001). Despite the lack of continuity within the role, the focus on more executive managerial responsibilities seems to be a current reality. According to Wolverton et al. (2001), "over the past thirty to forty years, as universities grew in size and complexity, the deanship became decidedly more managerial in nature" (p. 15). Wolverton et al.'s research identifies some of the following tasks associated with the position of academic dean: strategic and operational management, academic management, external partnerships, and fundraising. These job functions expand the

stakeholders who work with the dean, which in turn broadens the level of performance

accountability of the position. In essence, deans must "go up, down, across, and out" to

ensure success for their colleges (Fagin, 1997; as cited in Wolverton et al., 2001).

Tension and Stress Within the Role of Academic Dean

The position of academic dean can be complex and encounter many challenges.

Gallows (2002) described the position of academic dean as "bimodal and bicultural" (p.

175). The dean is often accountable to the culture of the academic enterprise and

corporate structure of administration (Gallows, 2002). Wild, Ebbers, Shelly, and Gmelch

(2003) described the academic dean as jugglers who have to contend with priorities,

agendas, and concerns of faculty and administration. One of the areas of tension that

research identifies is the relationship between the academic dean and faculty (Coll, Niles,

Coll et al., 2018; Coll et al., 2019; Gallows, 2002; Wolverton et al., 2001). As many

deans have served in faculty positions at some point within their career, they are expected

to navigate the intellectual values of academia such as academic freedom of faculty. On

the other hand, there are pressures to hold faculty accountable in such areas as curriculum

development, research, and teaching evaluations (Coll et al., 2018; Coll et al., 2019;

Wolverton et al., 2001).

Deans might find themselves in conflict when making decisions at the college that

have a direct impact on faculty such as budgeting cuts or interrupting changes in tenure

processes. The expectation of having to serve as both a scholar dean who advocates for

the needs of faculty and as an administrator who manages the outcomes of the academic

college can cause conflict within the role. Dill (1984) contended that the higher the

administrative role, the greater the disagreement between the administrator and faculty

will be. The faculty member may be challenged with understanding the former faculty member's decision to move to a position that often moves the bureaucratic agenda of the institution, where the needs of the faculty are often not represented. According to Bray (2008), "faculty hold perceptions of how academic administrators should behave, to which topics they should give attention, and how much they should involve faculty in decision making" (p. 694). In essence, the perceptions of the academic dean's ability to be successful in meeting expectations of faculty is important to minimizing tensions between faculty and administration.

Bray (2008) explored the relationship norms between academic deans and faculty. This quantitative study examined norms of inappropriate decision making by academic deans, which led to tension between faculty members. Participants consisted of faculty from both public and private institutions. In the study, four norms of inappropriateness of a dean's behavior were: inept evaluation and representation, failure to communicate, fiscal intemperance, and regulatory disdain. According to Bray (2008), these norms identified by the participants support the notion that faculty have an expectation that their academic dean is aware of institutional policies and is taking ownership of what happens within their college. Failure to do so can cause oppositional relationships between the faculty and academic dean especially if they are personally affected by one of the aforementioned areas.

Research identifies several stress factors associated with the role of academic dean. Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, and Sarros (1999) spoke of the following seven stress factors associated with the position of academic dean: administrative task stress, provost related stress, faculty-chair related stress, time-personal related stress, scholarship

stress, salary and recognition stress, and fundraising stress. These detentions of stress cover various aspects of all the areas that academic deans touch within the scope of their work. Other scholars have explored these areas to add to the understanding of how the organizational structure of the role can be stressful. As an example, Chan Huan Zhi, Malek, Dahlan, and Bahari (2017) conducted a study to understand the phenomenon of organizational stress on academic deans. The study found that two of the primary areas of organizational stress were in the areas of the dean's responsibilities - burdens and heavy workload (Chan Huan Zhi et al., 2017). One of the primary factors identified in the study was time. Deans reported that there was not enough time to complete all the expected tasks. These studies shed light on the challenges of the role of academic dean, including a broad range of responsibilities and competing priorities.

Female Academic Deans

Despite the gains in participation of students who represent racial and gender diversity within higher education, we continue to see a lag in the representation of diversity within administrative leadership roles within higher education (Jones & Palmer, 2011; McKenney & Cejda, 2000; Priola, 2007; Wilson, 1989). As a result, the majority of positions of academic deans continue to be held by White men. For instance, Isaacs (2014) suggested that female administrators often do the work associated with women but are rarely promoted to positions such as deans of business, engineering, or technology. Further, the study found that women administrators were promoted less often than men in higher-level positions.

Research demonstrates that there are obstacles associated with perceptions and stereotypes associated with gender differences in administrative leadership positions

(McCullough, 2011; Randel, 2014). Administrators experience certain challenges and barriers based on perceptions and stereotypes associated with their gendered identities. The research reveals that some of the barriers for female administrators include, but are not limited, to negative stereotypes, sexism, the "glass ceiling," juggling work and family roles, and a lack of mentorship (McCullough, 2011; Nguyen, 2013; Randel, 2014).

The scholarship about women administrators helps guide our understanding on how gendered identities shape the experiences of female academic deans. There have been several studies that speak to barriers faced by female academic deans (McCullough, 2011; Nguyen, 2013; Randel, 2014). These studies explored barriers to success in the pursuit of the role of the academic dean or the retention of women within the role. A common theme across these studies is that women identified issues such as discrimination, family obligations, and negative stereotypes as obstacles to navigating academic deanship. For instance, in a study conducted by Nguyen (2013), one of the female deans interviewed recounted feeling penalized by not receiving a rating of excellent in a staff evaluation due to frequent instances of absence or tardiness due to a sick child.

Brower, Schwartz, and Bertrand Jones (2017) expanded the conversation of barriers faced by female academic deans in their study of gender-based attributional ambiguity. The term attributional ambiguity was coined by Crocker et al. (1991) and can be described as "situations in which members of underrepresented groups find it difficult to determine whether interactions, both positive and negative, have occurred due to their minority status or for other, unrelated reasons" (as cited by Brower, Schwartz, & Bertrand Jones, 2017, p. 117). Brower, Schwartz, and Bertrand Jones (2017) found that gender based attributional ambiguity dominates among deans within the United States

and may present a barrier to female academic deans. The researchers found that both cognitive and social gender-based attributional ambiguity were common within academic leadership. Research participants gave situations where they were uncertain if their decision was influenced by gender or other factors (Brower, Schwartz, & Bertrand Jones, 2017). As an example, Dean Johnson expressed cognitive ambiguity in her hesitancy to return a female department chair back to a non-administrative role based on job performance. Dean Johnson wondered whether her male counterparts would have been as slow to return a low performing dean back to faculty (Brower, Schwartz, & Bertrand Jones, 2017). In this example, Dean Johnson was calling into question her perception of how gender was influencing her leadership style and decision-making. The second example described an organizational consequence of gender-based attributional ambiguity experienced by participants in the study. Dean Irwin experienced budget cuts within her college that seem more severe than her male peers (Brower, Schwartz, & Bertrand Jones, 2017). Dean Irwin wondered whether the organizational decision to cut her budget more severely was influenced by gender or other unknown reasons. This study added to our understanding of the experiences of female academic deans. This research demonstrates how gender can shape bias and discrimination that can influence perceptions of leadership practices and organizational structures that female administrators encounter.

As we seek to understand the experiences of female academic deans, it is important to explore how gender shapes how supervision and leadership is perceived through the lens of various institutional stakeholders. Men and women are said to have distinctively different types of leadership styles. According to Eagle, Karau, and Johnson

(1992), a more dominating or authoritative leadership style is more favorable for male administrators, whereas collaborative or consensus building are more favorable traits for women leaders. With this in mind, these traditional gender norms within leadership roles can impact both vertical and horizontal relationships for female academic deans. Not only can these gender norms impact relationships of direct reports of female deans, but these norms can impact higher level relationships that female deans hold with other academic leaders and stakeholders.

Rosser, Johnsrud, and Heck (2003) and Isaac, Behar-Horenstein, and Koro-Ljungberg (2009) studied how gender roles influenced how leadership was perceived among academic deans. Rosser et al. (2003) found that men and women reflected differing patterns in their role as leaders. More specifically, female deans were thought to be more likely than their male peers to improve the quality of education in their colleges, participate in "research, community, and professional endeavors, promote and support institutional diversity within their units, and manage personnel and financial resources fairly and effectively" (Rosser et al., 2003, p. 77). Isaac et al. (2009) also found that traits such as effective communication, goal setting, and relationship building were more effectively practiced by female deans. The study by Isaac et al. (2009) added to our understanding of the ways gender shapes the leadership approach of female deans. This study found that most of the participants took on a more masculine style of leadership as a means of navigating various power structures within their institutions. These studies support the earlier work of Eagle et al. (1992) and others who speak to the influence of traditional leadership traits for men and women. These studies inform our understanding of how women deans are perceived to be more effective leaders when they follow

traditional leadership traits associated with female leaders such as being seen as strong communicators and relational. Isaac et al.'s (2009) study also supported the notion that male leadership qualities are more commonly associated with successfully navigating power structures. These studies reinforced how female academic deans who are perceived to be successful have to subscribe to a masculine leadership style to be respected in many spaces as a strong competent leader.

Research on Black Academic Deans

While there is a growing body of research about the position of academic dean, there continues to be a paucity of literature on the experiences of academic deans from minority backgrounds, especially those who are Black academic deans. One of the primary contributors to the lack of understanding of the experiences of Black academic deans is the underrepresentation of individuals in the role of dean as well as other academic administrator roles. As an example, findings of the Path to the Presidency study revealed that while women in chief academic officer roles increased from 40% to 43% between 2008-2013, the representation of Black Americans in such positions declined from 3.7% to 2.3% (Jones, 2014). Data from the National Center of Education Statistics also illustrates the disparity gap in the representation of Black female senior leaders in a recent report. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES, 2017), there were 114,178 executive level administrators at 4-year public institutions, and of this number, 7,391 positions were held by Black women. While these data do not show executive leaders by specific administrative positions, it clearly confirms the significant underrepresentation of Black women in key roles in public colleges and universities. Research on the underrepresentation of Black deans at public institutions has lagged.

There are a couple of studies, however, that examined the underrepresentation of academic deans as a part of the discourse centered on pipeline issues for chief academic officers.

Gasman et al. (2015) explored the representation of chief academic officers across the eight Ivy League institutions. The study examined the representation of underrepresented groups within chief academic roles at these institutions. The study found that across the eight institutions, there were five total Black academic deans, two Asian academic deans, four Hispanic/Latinx academic deans, and four Middle Eastern academic deans as compared to 65 White academic deans. Banks, Hopps, and Briggs (2018) conducted an exploratory study that examined the demographic data and published research profiles of deans and provosts across 50 colleges of social work. They found that across these institutions, there were nine Black deans, one Latinx deans, and four Asian Deans as compared to 36 White deans. Banks, Hopps, and Briggs (2018) found that African Americans and other minority groups were often excluded while White women and White men were often favored for academic dean positions at top social work programs. While these findings added to the research that illuminated disparity gaps among chief academic officers, they further emphasized the need to examine the experiences of Black academic deans.

There are a number of challenges that contribute to the pipeline issues for aspiring Black Americans seeking academic administrative roles such as academic dean. Some of these issues include lower numbers of masters and doctoral degree completion; racism and discrimination within the career pipeline; and issues associated with isolation and tokenism to name a few.

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The stagnation associated with graduate and degree completion for Black

Americans continues to be an area of concern. According to Kim (2013), while the

numbers of underrepresented students of color continue to increase at the bachelor's

program level, the representation of diversity within graduate and doctorial programs is

not increasing at the same rate. These low numbers of terminal degree completion of

masters and doctorial programs significantly impact the administrative pipeline for

positions such as academic dean (Gasman et al., 2015). Another barrier that prohibits

more Black academic deans is racism and discrimination (Gasman et al., 2015).

According to Gasman et al. (2015), the dearth of senior administrators, faculty, staff and

graduates of color in higher education can be attributed to discriminatory and racist

practices at every point of the career path. In Oikelome's (2017) study of female

university presidents, African American female participants noted experiencing racial and

gender bias simultaneously while navigating various administrative roles in their career

path to presidency. Further, these participants accepted the reality that undertones of

racial bias would always be a part of the academy. Oikelome (2017) also contended that

tokenism and isolation of graduate students, staff, and faculty of color continue to create

obstacles to ascension to academic leadership. Black women faculty and administrators

often experience challenges around being the only person in their area. This isolation

often leads to a lack of professional networks that is needed in navigating an academic

career path (Hinton, 2006; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Scholarly work on Black female academic deans is almost nonexistent. In a

detailed search for peer reviewed publications using the terms "Black female academic

dean," I was able to identify three recent publications: one article and two books. The

first publication was "Lessons from a Black Woman Administrator: I'm Still Here" by

Dowdy and Hamilton (2012). This qualitative study shared the experiences on the career

path of a Black female scholar who was the first non-White female to hold a position of

associate dean and department chair. The themes that emerged from this study include

"the management, challenges, and cultural aspects of being Black and female in a

predominantly White workplace" (p. 189). This study illuminated the difficulties of

navigating the dual challenges of race and gender in the experience of being a Black and

female academic administrator.

In her book, *Turnaround Leadership: Deans of Color as Change Agents*, Welch

utilized the case study of six academic deans of color. This book examined how these

deans were able to implement a change initiative and how effective these deans were in

achieving change within their organizations. The four women leaders examined in the

book, Fayneese Miller, Leslie Fenwick, Renee Middleton, and Olga Welch, illustrate how

they successfully persuaded faculty and other university administrators to adopt and

embrace their visions for reformation and transformation. They all acknowledged that

battles and challenges were a part of their successes as well as other women of color as

mentors and role models.

Finally, the most recent contribution to our understanding of the leadership

experiences of Black female academic deans comes with the book *Truth without Tears:*

African American Women Deans Share Lessons in Leadership by Hodges and Welch

(2018). Hodges and Welch (2018) examined their experiences of serving as Black female

academic deans through autobiography. This work utilized a business leadership model

through a lens that centered the combined challenges of race and gender. One of the

leadership concepts the authors share in this work is "leading from behind" (Hodges & Welch, 2018 p. 5), which allowed the authors to build collective leadership within their units, rather than just establish direction, and design strategies to combat individual and institutional patterns of racism. Hodges and Welch argue that from their experience leading from behind also required "engaging in conduct that resembles the very deliberate and carefully constructed actions of our enslaved ancestors to combat cultural dynamics and long-standing institutional paradigms that stand as threats" (p. 6). This leadership model acknowledges both the practical challenges with achieving organizational change and those associated with navigating the duality of race and gender.

Hodges and Welch shared their perspective on a variety of areas important to administrators seeking organizational change. These scholars drew from their years of experience within faculty and administrative roles, including the role of academic dean, to shared perspectives relevant to professionals of color seeking the position of academic dean. The book's recommendations included effective skills that leaders must develop to be problem finders, building a vision, applying collaborative leadership and collegiality as means of achieving organizational change with faculty, navigating the balance act of hiring the "right" faculty and staff to move the organization forward, and "walking around a problem" in short- and long-term decision making (Hodges & Welch, 2018).

The work of Hodges and Welch (2018) acknowledged that the position of academic dean, although ambiguous, has many functions across institutions that are similar. At the same time, for these scholars, the role of academic dean was also uniquely different for each person holding the position and can pose unique challenges depending

on that person's race and gender. The authors stated, "the academy tends to be very homogeneous, it can generate a culture of isolation related to difference, so that if you do not fit, you are less likely to be invited in, or, if you do get in, less likely to advance or be invited to the table to enjoy the full benefits of the role" (Hodges & Welch, 2018, p. 15). Hodges and Welch's autobiographical work provided helpful insight on various areas of leadership that are not only associated with serving as academic dean, but any other academic administrative position. This work also added to our understanding of the unique positionality of being both Black and female, and how these dual identities shape the role of academic dean and academic leadership.

In sum, research on academic deans has traced the evolution of this position from its earliest iteration as an appointed position that focused on student needs, to the current more complex role that has operational and managerial oversight of a university academic college. The academic deanship is unique from other academic roles such as department chair or provost because of the complex relationship between the academic dean and faculty. One of the primary challenges for an academic dean is to successfully navigate the tensions between the dean's administrative role within university governance, and her/his role as a manager of faculty. Existing research has identified several challenges that academic deans face including high stress, ambiguity within job function, and tension in navigating administration and faculty.

This section also examined the path of historically underrepresented men and women who served as academic deans. Overall, a scarcity of literature on deans of color creates gaps in our understanding of the experiences and issues that these academic deans encounter. Some prevalent challenges included discrimination, limited pathways for

upward mobility, and lack of critical mass. These challenges have served as contributing factors to the underrepresentation of minoritized groups especially Black women holding academic dean positions.

Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Thought

The present study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Black female academic deans utilizing Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as its theoretical framework. Black Feminist Thought provides a unique lens to highlight, investigate, and give voice to the myriad of challenges associated with being both Black and female, while serving as an academic dean. This theoretical framework brings the experiences of Black female intellectuals to the forefront allowing the reader to understand both the individual nuances of each of them and the commonalities amongst them as Black female leaders in the academy.

Historical Overview of Feminism and Black Feminism

Historically, the oppression and experiences of Black women were not captured in general feminist movements. Collins (2002) argued that both the United States (U.S.) and European White Women's Studies movements challenged the *hégémonie* of White men but ignored the lived experiences of Black women. Indeed, historically, Black women have not always found a welcoming space or place in White feminist contexts, discussions, or organizations (Collins, 2000; Giddings,1984).

It should be noted, however, that Black women activists and thought leaders were already speaking to and addressing the unique concerns of Black women prior to any formal recognition. For instance, in 1851, Sojourner Truth spoke out at a Women's Rights Conference in Ohio, namely to White women. She noted that as a Black woman,

she did not have the legal right to vote. Her question was quite poignant: "Aren't I a Woman" (Truth, 1851). Lucy Diggs Slowe followed in the same tradition. She was the Dean of Women at Howard University and found that Black women faced similar challenges as they traversed and navigated higher education (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Black Women and the Influence of Intersectionality of Socially-Constructed Identities

Crenshaw (1989) first introduced the concept of intersectionality as a means of addressing discrimination and the invisibility of Black women, and other women of color, in the U.S. legal system. Crenshaw (1989) suggested that the dominant culture views Black women's race, class, and gender as mutually exclusive. For her, these categories were not inclusive and/or integrated, and were considered as separate where one cannot or does not impact the other. As a result, Black women often lacked adequate legal protection. Crenshaw's (1989) development of intersectionality of individual categorizations disrupted and interrogated the dominate notion that race, class, and gender are mutually exclusive. Rather, Crenshaw (1989) fervently argued that Black women's race, class, and gender, as subordinate statutes, are interlocked and interwoven in the combination of challenges they present to the individual. Thus, if there is an interlocking and interweaving of race, class, and gender, the lived experience of Black women is uniquely different than those of White women and Black men.

Black Feminist Thought

Collins (2000) expanded on Crenshaw's (1989) understanding of intersectionality by developing and honing a theoretical framework entitled Black Feminist Thought. Collins (2000) recognized that Black women are uniquely positioned in a marginalized status as a result of their subordinated location within the dominant systems of race, class,

and gender. Black Feminist Thought recognized the combined influence of race, class, and gender on the individual, and how it shapes and informs the experiences of Black women (Collins, 2000). Further, Black women are encouraged and empowered to give "voice" to their own experiences, resist ideas and practices of oppression, and find power within their marginalized identities. In essence, Black women define and celebrate their own unique ways of leading, knowing, and narrating their lived experiences (Collins, 2000). Black women do this by employing what Collins (2000) describes as six distinguishing features. These six distinguishing features are often used to describe the lived experiences of Black women. They include understanding the Black woman's standpoint, creating a diverse space for Black women, encouraging activism, Black women intellectualizing, committing to change, and practicing social justice.

The Black woman's standpoint speaks to the commonalities and shared experiences of Black women - especially in group settings. It speaks to their way of being. The Black woman's standpoint allows and gives permission to Black women, a self-informed opportunity to define "who they are," on their own terms, while resisting multiple forms of oppression. Creating a "diverse" space for Black women refers to the allowance of those special moments reserved racially minoritized women. Black Feminist Thought recognizes that there are varying responses to common challenges that Black women may experience (Collins, 2000). There is intra-diversity among Black women as they span multiple and varied ages, sexual orientations, social classes, and geographies. This intra-diversity recognizes that Black women can have and participate in varied experiences but do this work in a space that is meant for them, and this intra-diversity should be acknowledged as others seek to understand how they experience the world

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(Collins, 2000). Because of Black women's early experiences with racism, class and gender discrimination across employment, education, and housing areas, for instance, Black women have historically found supportive networks and organizations as a means to spur advocacy and activism. This is the third tenet of Black Feminist Thought and it reaffirms Black women's commitment to improve their individual, raced, classed, and gendered experiences through encouraged activism.

Black Feminist Thought recognizes the "essential contributions of Black women as intellectuals" (Collins, 2000, p. 33). This means that Black women counter the dominant narratives written and spoken about them, even in educational spaces like the academy, where Black women are often expected to operate within a Eurocentric and heteronormative intellectual space. Ultimately, Black women narrate their reality. Collins terms this aspect Black women intellectualizing. The final two tenets of Black Feminist Thought are intertwined: committing to change and practicing social justice (Collins, 2000, p. 35). Black women understand that their individual "fight" is a collective one as well especially in intellectual circles. Collins (2000) asserted that man Black women intellectuals embrace this perspective regardless of their educational backgrounds, field of study or historical periods. In the same manner, Black Feminist Thought recognizes its relationship to and for the work of social justice. Collins (2000) asserted that a vast group of Black women has advanced the perspective that Black women's struggles are a part of a broader struggle for "human dignity, empowerment, and social justice" (p. 43). This perspective of Black Feminist Thought supports Black women's collaborative efforts across silos to build coalitions with other marginalized groups to address issues of inequity and social justice.

Guiding Thematic Concepts of Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist Thought provides a theoretical foundation for the present study. Terminology around the Black woman's standpoint, creating a diverse space for Black women, encouraging activism, Black women intellectualizing, committing to change, and practicing social justice provides insights into the environment of those who identify as being Black and female. Collins (2000) argued that these women have had to creatively negotiate the academic landscape by specific actions that include innovation around their outsider within status, demanding recognition of their intellectual activism, exposing the matrix of domination, rejecting controlling images, and adopting their own self-definition. In the next section, I develop these terms further.

Outsider-Within

The concept of "outsider-within" speaks to the marginalization of Black women. Howard-Hamilton (2003) described the outsider-within, for Black women administrators in higher education, as being "invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they (meaning Black women) remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences" (p. 21). The outsider-within speaks to the challenges of trying to do one's work with structural limitations imposed on the Black woman. It is because of these barriers, Black women have to innovate in order to be successful.

Intellectual Activism

Intellectual activism offers a "blackened lens" that acknowledges the contributions of Black women artists, intellectuals, and activists. Rather than have to serve as activists to give value to their intellectual contributions, or "know-how," the

work of Black women is often considered objects under critical examination. Their output, product, and contributions should be recognized as scholarly work within the dominant community (Collins, p. 17). Intellectual activism requires the Black woman scholar to educate and challenge those who attempt to minimize or criticize her work.

Matrix of Domination

The "matrix of domination" is the opposite of intersectionality (Collins, 2000). Intersectionality refers to different forms of intersecting identities. In contrast, the matrix of domination speaks to how the intersecting oppressions are organized. According to Collins (2000), the matrix of domination examines "structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power that reappear across different forms of oppression" (p. 18). Navigating and exposing this matrix of domination is no easy feat. It takes time and attention away from the Black woman's formally charged work.

Controlling Images

Controlling images have been used to control and reinforce negative stereotypes of Black women (Collins, 2000). The use of controlling images is designed to make racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression normalized, as if they are a part of daily life (Collins, 2000). Black women have been portrayed as mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas. These images have been used as a means of justifying oppression (Collins, 2000). Black women are then forced to counter these pejorative images in order to be accepted in the academy.

Self-Definition

According to Collins (2000), self-definition is the "power to name one's own reality" (p. 105). Self-definition is a collective Black woman's consciousness that resists

multiple forms of oppression imposed by the dominant culture (Collins, 2000). This insider perspective of Black women's consciousness allows for the empowerment, strategies, and voice to resist oppression in employment and educational settings, as well as other socially constructed environments.

In conclusion, Black Feminist Thought provides a theoretical lens for this study, as its focus is on the lived experiences of Black women in academic spaces. Black Feminist Thought offers a space of authenticity and affirmation when examining the lived experiences of Black women in higher education (Collins, 1990, 2000). Black Feminist Thought is most appropriate for this study because it takes into consideration the ways that the triumvirate of race, class, and gender shape how Black female academic deans encounter and experience their roles within a predominantly White environment. Black Feminist Thought promotes self-definition and the Black woman's standpoint as a space to acknowledge and celebrate the often-oppositional ways of existing in higher educational settings that run counter to the dominant narrative. Black Feminist Thought centered the voices of this study's research participants by offering a lens to explore their unique experiences in a field where they are often invisible.

Chapter Three

Methodology

While research contributes to our current knowledge of the experiences of Black female faculty or executive administrators, there continues to be a paucity of research about Black female academic deans. This study examines the lived experiences of Black female academic deans working at Predominantly White Institutions in the United States. This chapter includes a review of the research design, overview of the participants, description of the data collection process, and consideration of the analysis of data.

Research Design

According to Merriam (2016), 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. 23). This qualitative study allowed me as the researcher to gain an understanding on how serving as an academic dean at a Predominantly White Institution is shaped by the duality of race and gender. A qualitative paradigm is appropriate for this study because qualitative research is centered on human interactions and allows for the creation of space for the narratives associated with these interactions. Green (2000) asserts that understanding others is to comprehend and feel their stories. This qualitative approach centers the stories of Black female academic deans as a means of adding to an area of research where the dominant discourse has not acknowledged their lived experiences.

Qualitative research moves beyond a positivist approach which promotes only one true reality to the acknowledgement of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013; O'Connor &

O'Neill, 2004). As Merriam (2016) highlights, the post-structural or constructivist perspective in qualitative research recognizes that knowledge or ways of understandings are socially constructed (Creswell, 2013; Haraway, 1988; Merriam, 2016). This perspective recognizes that the social location of both the researcher and participant brings about new knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2016; O'Neal & O'Conner, 2004). Qualitative research gives power to both myself, the researcher, and my participants who as Black women see experiences from the margins and may hold other realities than the dominate culture.

According to Creswell (2013), there are several factors to assess in determining whether a constructivist framework for a study is appropriate. The first question is to determine whether the researcher is interested in discovering the multiple perspectives of the phenomenon being studied. Specifically, these questions should be answered, "Does the researcher and participants interact closely? What values are important in the research? Does the researcher intend to create themes from the data? Will the findings be interoperative inductively generated from the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 23).

In this study, I was interested in illuminating the multiple stories of Black women as they shared their experiences in higher education. I recognized that while these women shared a common phenomenon, their multiple perspectives added value to the research process. I was in close relationship with each participant, and it was important for me to bracket my own experiences as I searched for the experiences of my participants. Finally, a constructivist approach was most appropriate because this approach recognizes the importance of the human interaction and constructed multiple realities within the research process.

The Methodology: Phenomenology

This research study employed an interpretive phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is grounded in the human experience and has historical roots in psychology and the social sciences. This qualitative approach supports researchers who seek to interpret or develop knowledge about personal experiences (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study focuses on the lived experiences of people within a particular group. When conducting research of a phenomenological nature, the investigator is seeking to come to a point where he/she/they are able to describe the nature of particular phenomenon (a fact or event) about a group of people. van Manen (2014) adds that phenomenology involves studying and understanding the world and how we interpret the functions in that work daily.

Phenomenological research assumes that the essence(s) to common experiences exists among a group being studied. Merriam (2016) describes essences as "the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon" (p. 25). Phenomenology seeks to get at the core of shared experiences through the stories of the research participants. van Manen (2014) describes this as the hold or nature of the object. In this study, I aimed to capture the essence(s) of the lived experiences of Black females holding academic deanships at Predominantly White Institutions.

Interpretive Phenomenology

Interpretative phenomenological analysis guided this study. Interpretative phenomenological analysis has been informed by underpinnings of the philosophy of knowledge from phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Smith, 2009).

According to Smith (2009), interpretative phenomenological analysis is concerned with the detailed examination of human experience and strives to conduct this examination in a way that allows the experience to be expressed in its own terms rather than in pre-defined categories. This form of analysis emphasizes the personal experiences of people and the perceptions of these experiences both by the researcher and participants. Interpretative phenomenological analysis is an interpretive process (Smith, 2009; Smith & Owens, 2013). The experiences of my research participants as Black Female academic deans form their own realities. Through their narratives, I aimed to interpret these realities.

Finally, interpretative phenomenological analysis acknowledges that the research itself is a dynamic process equally involving the researcher and research participant (Smith & Owens, 2009). Interpretative phenomenological analysis encourages the researcher to take an "insider" perspective and utilizes bracketing through the research process to help the researcher set aside their biases (Smith & Owens, 2013). As the researcher, I was aware of my own identity as a Black female administrator working in higher education. While some of my experiences might be very different from my research participants, I was aware of the commonalities. Further, I had to analyze my own lived experiences throughout the research process due to my prior experiences.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

A set of criteria guided the purposeful selection of participants for this study. I approached Black women who serve as academic deans at Predominantly White Institutions that have a Carnegie designation of a research comprehensive university. I utilized purposeful sampling to select the participants for this study. Patton (2015) states

that purposeful sampling seeks to obtain the most ideal sample so that rich insights can be gleaned from the participants' experiences. Additionally, due to the low representation of Black female administrators holding academic dean positions at research intensive institutions, I employed snowball sampling which is a common strategy of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2016; Patton, 2015). I first identified a small number of respondents based on professional relationships already established. I reached out to each potential respondent via email to ask for their participation after explaining the study. When it was determined that the respondent was appropriate for the study, an agreed upon time was set aside for a 90–120-minute Zoom video interview. At the completion of that interview, I asked each respondent to refer me to other colleagues who met this study's research criteria.

Participants had to identify as Black women or women of African descent. Additionally, they had to 1) hold a confirmed doctorate degree from an accredited university; 2) have previously served within higher education in a tenured faculty position; and 3) be currently serving in the role of Associate or Academic Dean at a public comprehensive research institution. Creswell (2013) suggests that the criteria for participant samples in phenomenology studies are narrow. He reiterates the importance of all participants having experienced the phenomenon under study.

When considering the number of participants for this study, I used a sample size appropriate for extensive interviews. The literature gives a broad range of the number of participants for phenomenology research. Creswell (2013) states that participant numbers can be as small as one participant while Polkinghorne (1989) asserts that the sample can be as large as 325. Dukes (1984) recommends 3-10 participants while Smith and Flowers

(2009) recommend between 6 and 10 participants. I interviewed four participants for this study. I made a final determination on participant number after I observed that the data collection reached saturation. Saturation or redundancy occurs when the researcher is no longer able to gain new information from data collection (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Data Collection

Methodologists recommend semi-structured interviews for an interpretative phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Smith & Owens, Patton, 2015). According to Merriam (2016), an interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. Interviews allow the researcher to gain access to the participant's perspective. Semi-structured interviewing allows for more of an intuitive process between the researcher and the participants. Semi-structured interviews permit the researcher to be responsive to emergent ideas and topics during the interview. They assist the researcher to be less restricted when asking questions, develop rapport with respondents, and allow the researcher to ask follow- up questions based on what is being shared in the interview. Last, developing rapport allows for relationship building and trust (Glesne, 2006).

Interview Guide

During the interview, I followed an informal interview guide. The set of questions utilized during the interview process included the following:

- Can you share a little about yourself and your professional path within higher education?

- You are currently working at a research comprehensive institution; can you tell me about other institutions in which you have held faculty or administrative positions?

- Can you tell me about your faculty and administrative trajectory that led to your becoming an academic dean?

- Tell me about what you enjoy about the position of academic dean and can you give me an example of a high point you have experienced in the role?

- Tell me about challenges you have experienced in the role of academic dean and give an example of a low point you have experienced in the role?

- Can you tell me what impact gender has had in shaping your experiences and trajectory in the academy?

- Can you tell me what impact race has had in shaping your experiences and trajectory in the academy?

- Can you tell me how the duality of race and gender has impacted your experiences and trajectory in the academy?

- Tell me about barriers or obstacles you may have experienced in obtaining the position of academic dean.

- Tell me how these barriers or obstacles may have impacted you while serving in the role of academic dean.

- Tell me about success strategies you may have utilized while on your trajectory to academic dean.

- Tell me about success strategies you may have implemented while in the position of academic dean.

- How has support such as mentorship, establishing counter spaces, and professional networks impacted the development of your career path?

- How have these spaces and strategies impacted your development as academic dean?

- As a Black female academic Dean, how do you approach decision making within your role?

- What choices did you make, and why did you make choices in a specific way; what influenced those choices?

- Is there anything else about holding the position of Black Female Academic Dean that you would like to share?

My shared identity(s) and common professional experiences helped to establish a connection with the participants that allowed open and honest dialogue. Following Creswell's (2013) recommendation, I used audio recording to record the semi-structured interviews. Due to the potentially diverse geographic locations of the participants, I met with my interview participants via conference calls to conduct the interviews. After each interview, I took reflection notes to capture my thoughts and reactions. Finally, I transcribed each interview to add to my data collection for the analysis process.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes before finally reporting the data (Creswell, 2013). To begin the steps of data analysis, I adhered to the recommendations of Creswell (2013). This

entailed organizing my data which consisted of transcripts, recordings, field notes, and my researcher's journal. I began data analysis with the reading and rereading of my transcripts. Creswell (2013) recommends immersing oneself in the transcripts for meaning, understanding, and interpretation. In addition to immersing myself in the transcripts, I also immersed myself in the reading of my interview notes and journaling. The interview notes were helpful in helping to capture my thoughts and reactions after each interview, while my journal was used to help me bracket myself in this research project. These additional notes offered additional insight into this study. Creswell (2013) suggests that hunches, insights, and intuition are a part of understanding the data. Once I immersed myself in all of the written data, I took notes to assist with the analysis process.

Once I organized and began to immerse myself in the data, I began to move into more of the interpretive phenomenological analysis process. IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of the human lived experience and aims to examine that in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems (Smith & Flowers, 2009). Further, IPA situates participants in their particular contexts, examining their personal perspectives, and starting with a detailed exploration of each participant transcript before moving to more general claims (Smith & Flowers, 2009). In step 1 of the analysis, I immersed myself in the first transcript by reading and rereading while imagining that I heard the voice of the participant (Smith & Flowers, 2009). For my next step, I began notating on the transcript paying attention to semantic content and use of language (Smith & Flowers, 2009). In this stage of analysis, I reviewed the transcript line by line and began to create codes. Creswell's (2013) process of coding involves aggregating the data into small categories of information and seeking evidence for the

code from different databases being used in a study. I followed the initial a-priori categories derived from existing research as a starting point in my categorization efforts. Some a-priori categories include challenges for Black female administrators, challenges for Black faculty, Black Feminist Thought's concepts of outsider-within, self-definition, and women standpoint. A-priori categories guided my initial analysis of all transcripts, but I also looked for emerging categories that my participants shared or exhibited as unique experiences.

The next step was to look for themes across all transcripts (Smith & Flowers, 2009). To accomplish this, I created documents representing the codes from each transcript and read them to identify common patterns and themes. Working across transcripts sometimes led to a reconfiguring and relabeling of themes. From this process, I created emergent themes across the transcripts (Smith & Flowers, 2009). I then moved from the themes across the transcripts to structural elements which I used to find the essence of the phenomenon.

Establishing trustworthiness adds validity to my research process and findings. I recognize that in order to influence policy, theories, or practice, this study must be rigorous and present perspectives and findings that present insights and conclusions that have validity with scholars in the field (Merriam, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe research trustworthiness or validation in such terms as "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (p. 250). I implemented such strategies through member checking, peer reviewing, rich thick descriptions, triangulation, and clarifying researcher bias or her lived experiences. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study in terms of member checking, I sought out the participants' perspective of the

accuracy of the findings and interpretations of the study (Creswell, 2013). I asked

participants to review transcripts, margin notes, and field notes to ensure accurate

representation of their stories. A second strategy used to engage in peer review is an

external check of my research strategies (Creswell, 2013, Merriam, 2016; Patterson,

2016). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) share, a peer reviewer keeps the researcher honest by

asking hard questions about interpretations and process and allows the researcher a space

to process. In order to provide relevant information for my peer reviewer, I provided

transcripts, field notes, and the interpretative analysis process that I am used for coding to

be reviewed. My third strategy in ensuring validity of my study was using rich thick

descriptions. Creswell (2013) states that rich thick descriptions allow the reader to make

decisions about transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants

and/or setting (p. 253). Creswell shares that rich descriptions can emerge from physical

descriptions, movement descriptions, and activity description. I looked for rich thick

descriptions in the transcripts of the interviews.

Triangulation is a method of using different forms of sources, methods,

investigators, and theories to provide confirming evidence (Creswell, 2013). In my study,

I triangulated certainties in the data by consulting the literature. I also checked my own

lived experiences on a regular basis as the researcher. I understand that as the researcher,

I am the primary instrument for this research project (Creswell, 2013). My own

positionality was calling for me to acknowledge my own lived experiences and welcome

the idea of value laden research (Lather, 1986). For me, this meant honestly stating at the

onset of this research study that as a Black female, who has been both a professional and

a scholar-in-training, I share some similarities with my intended participants.

"Bracketing" my experiences helped to lay out in the open any potential biases I may hold, but also emphasizes strengths and advantages I bring to the project.

I have held a career in higher education along a student affairs pathway for the past 15 years. I have held several administrative and management positions where I had experienced many of the obstacles identified in the research on Black female administrators. I have been perceived as the "angry Black woman," or aggressive, by my White peers. I have felt the sting of isolation as I was the only Black woman professional at my department in one institution, and in my division at another institution. I have struggled with the imposter syndrome both as a practitioner and an emerging scholar of higher education. I have been in spaces and places where I have asked myself, "Do I have the goods to really be here?" I have navigated the sometimes ambiguous but unrelenting overlapping oppression that comes from being Black, female, person with a disability (visual impairment with an eyesight that cannot be corrected to a normal or standard level), and various other parts of my identity(s) that make up the core of Katherine.

While being a Black woman working in higher education is not easy, I would not trade my journey. My experiences have shaped me as a professional and an emerging scholar that is passionate and intentional about holding healthy counter spaces and working on scholarship that contributes to our understanding of the lived experiences of Black women in the academy. My passion for this area of scholarship has led to my participation in several summits that provide support and mentoring spaces for Black women. I am proud to be one of the founders of a networking group for Black faculty and staff at a former institution. Finally, I have read and written on various aspects of research concerning Black female academics for years.

I recognize that my proximity to this topic may have had some advantages and disadvantages when establishing rapport with my research participants. The primary advantage was that my proximity to this topic helped me to truly value its importance within the cannon of scholarship in higher education. For this reason, I did all that I could to ensure that the stories of my participants were shared with care. The second advantage is that I believe that my experiences both as a professional and a scholar helped to me connect with my participants in a way that made them truly comfortable to share a deeply personal part of themselves during this study.

As I considered the disadvantages to my proximity to this study, my own personal and professional experiences coupled with my familiarity with the research on this topic may have caused me to make assumptions or infuse my own lived experiences and perspectives throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. Additionally, I may have unintentionally influenced my participants with my lived experiences. This could limit the findings of the study and minimize the unique experiences of my participants.

To ensure that I engage in the work to bracket my lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2016), however, I put a plan in place that I was be able to utilize throughout this study. My first step in bracketing myself was to keep a personal journal. This journal allowed me the opportunity to reflect, express, and hold myself accountable for how my lived experiences may have been influencing this study. I began using this journal at the onset of data collection and continued using the journal until the final page of the dissertation was written. The second step I took in bracketing myself was to process my experiences throughout the project with a selected faculty member to be

accountable for truly keeping my biases in check and bracketing them. Finally, I committed to the work of approaching each research participant and the data analysis with "a fresh perspective" and actively worked to bracket myself throughout this process. In closing, I believe that owning my close proximity to this work as well as my passion for this topic was vitally important to the integrity of this research project. I took conscious measures to bracket my lived experiences and limit their influence through this study.

Chapter Four

Findings

While research has informed our understanding of the experiences of Black female academicians, the lived experiences of Black female academic deans remain-understudied. The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive phenomenological study was to uncover the lived experiences, both professional and personal, of Black female academic deans across predominantly White institutions, and to draw out commonalities and differences among them. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) framed the study methodologically. This chapter presents the results from the study's data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four begins with an introduction, which features a chapter overview, participant summary, and discussion of data collection. The next section presents individual narratives of the research participants. These narratives were derived from participant interviews and were created to center the voices of the participants as a critical component of the research project. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the main themes that underlined the participants' experiences.

Sample Description

A demographic profile of the participants is vital to the IPA research process (Smith et al., 2009). I identified four Black female academic deans as participants in this research study. I received the assistance of colleagues and professional network members in reaching these women, as the pool of available participants is very shallow. All the participants in this study were currently or have very recently served as academic deans

for a comprehensive research university in the United States. All the participants were between 40 and 60 years of age. Participants were at varying stages in their personal lives related to family responsibilities, parenting, or relationships alongside their professional careers. Three of the participants identified as not being married; three participants identified as parents; and one participant identified as currently being married. Two participants were from the southeastern region of the United States, one participant was from the eastern region of the United States, and one participant was from the western region of the United States. The participants completed degrees ranging from bachelor's to terminal degrees with three participants completing degrees within the social sciences and one participant completing a degree in the physical sciences. All participants had served in faculty and administrative positions in higher education for more than 10 years.

Regarding their professional experiences, the four participants shared some commonalities. First, all participants had a non-traditional path to administration and the position of dean. Two participants held professional careers in their field of study outside of higher education and found a path that led to faculty, a variety of opportunities, and administrative and dean positions. Two participants had a non-typical experience with tenure. One participant worked in administration prior to her tenure journey. She immediately became associate dean after tenure. Another participant was in a tenure-track faculty role while she completed doctoral studies.

Second, all four participants experienced a range of racialized experiences throughout their time in the academy. Three participants gave examples of White peers either trying to exert power dynamics over them or making racialized demeaning comments to them. Third, all four participants felt the negative impact of the lack of

critical mass. They reported cultural taxation, feeling under a microscope, and feeling lonely as they moved up into dean roles. They all reported feeling additional pressure in decision making due to this issue.

Next, all four participants noted the importance of having mentors as a success strategy and method of support throughout their career and as deans. Three participants talked about very specific professional networks and one participant referenced their off-campus community networks that worked together to strategize to navigate and problem solve within the university system. All four of the participants also noted the complexity of the role of dean and navigating various issues noted in the research around academic deans: budget, administration, being in the middle of faculty and administration, and resistance to change. Three of the deans noted feeling resistance to decisions they made in the role as dean. Two of the participants clearly tied this back to race and gender and the third person stated that she did not realize this dynamic at first until after processing with her network. Two deans noted strong examples of sexist behaviors or comments in their experiences of academia. One was regarding the lack of postpartum accommodations. The other noted disparate treatment from White male faculty to her and other women in her college. Finally, all four women enjoyed serving as an academic dean and felt as they have been able to use their role and positionality to have a positive impact on campus. All four deans believed that there should be more Black women in the pipeline to prepare for this position.

Data Collection

To recruit participants for this study, I used purposeful sampling, relying on my professional networks, listservs, and individuals among my colleagues to assist me in

circulating the call for participants. I disseminated the call for participants at Women's

Centers at institutions that met my research criteria, professional dean's listservs, and

amongst specific individuals who were serving as academic deans and met my research

criteria. Due to the low number of Black female academic deans working in

Predominately White Institutions, I repeated the recruitment process several times before

finally identifying potential participants.

Initial Participant Contact

As participants contacted me by email, I followed up with each participant by

sending research criteria and study information and confirming their interest in

participation in my research study. Once I received confirmation from each research

participant, I sent a separate email to confirm the participant criteria. All four participants

met the research criteria; however, one participant had just left her position three months

prior to my contacting her. My dissertation advisor approved her as a participant. I then

sent confirmation emails to all research participants in the study and scheduled their first

interviews.

Participant Interview Protocol

Each participant confirmed by email. I followed up with a time and date for the

first interview by email. All interviews took place by conference call and were recorded

using an audio recording device. I began each interview by thanking the participants and

going over the confidentiality statement. I then spent some time establishing connections

through sharing my own journey and building rapport with the participants. I wanted to

be respectful of the time of the participants and wanted to create an environment where

the semi-structured interview could happen organically. The original research protocol suggested a 90-minute interview with follow up and member checking. However, after the first participant interview, I realized that 90 minutes would not be adequate time to move through the semi-structured interviews and fully allow for the participants lived experiences to emerge. Therefore, I added an additional 60-minute interview time to the interview protocol for all participants. After the conclusion of each interview, I used reflexive journaling to process my thoughts and reactions to the interviews.

Data Analysis

Upon completing data collection, I began data analysis guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al, 2009). I organized my data, which consisted of audio recorded interviews, transcripts, field notes, and reflective journals (Creswell, 2013). I then began the process of engrossing myself in the audio recording and all the written data for the first case. Consistent with IPA, I immersed myself in the reading of the first transcript and coded line-by-line using *a priori* categories from existing research and emergent categories from participant interviews. I then condensed coded data into themes. I repeated this process with each case, then worked across cases to identify emergent themes (Smith & Flowers, 2009). I then organized separate documents representing each case. As I listened for emergent themes across all four cases, I moved themes to a new document and worked to further condense them to the final three main themes. Finally, after identifying the themes I worked to identify the structural elements, which captured the essence of the phenomenon.

Once I moved through data analysis and began to construct participant narratives, I reached out to the participants with additional questions for their stories. All participants

answered by email or phone. Once their narratives were completed, I asked each participant to member-check by reviewing their narratives. I worked with each individual several times as I incorporated feedback from member checking in the final version of their participant narrative.

Black Feminist Thought and Related Research Ideas: A Lens of Analysis and Summary of Findings

I embraced Black Feminist Thought as the theoretical lens to analyze the data and understand the experiences of the research participants in this study. Elements of Black Feminist Thought helped shape the individual narratives of the participants and the final emergent themes. In addition to the highlighted distinguishing features of Black Feminist Thought, the following guiding thematic concepts provide a foundational lens for this study: Outsider Within, Intellectual Activism, The Matrix of Domination, Controlling Images, and Self Definition (Collins, 2000). Below, I discuss the connections between the participants' experiences, the main themes that capture these experiences, and the concepts of the initial theoretical framework.

Collins' Ideas on the Black Women's Standpoint and the Participants' Narratives

Following the ideas on the Black Women's Standpoint (Collins, 2000), an examination of their experiences would give voice to common experiences shared among Black women, but also acknowledge differences among these common experiences. The participant narratives give voice to unique experiences, tell how they resist various forms of oppression, and how they find power in the margins. Black Feminist Thought guides me to note the ways in which my participants navigate forms of oppression that come from racism and sexism. Collins (2000) recognized that Black women are uniquely

positioned in a marginalized status because of their subordinated location within the dominant systems of race, class, and gender.

Consistent with Black women's standpoint (Collins, 2000), the participant narratives demonstrate how as Black women each participant defines Black womanhood both personally and professionally. As an example, each of the participants were from a different region of the United States, had different influences in their upbringing, and had different academic and professional experiences. These unique differences inform a perspective and journey to academic dean and guided me to chart a unique narrative for each participant's professional journey. Just as each participant followed a unique path, they also shared many commonalities among them that they experienced differently. For example, all participants encountered racism and sexism within the academy, but their narratives highlight how they navigated these experiences differently. The themes I identified aimed to capture the shared experiences of all participants, but the narratives provided the story of their unique experiences. I tell all four narratives in a similar structure, starting with each participant's education and early influences, then the participant's academic and career pathways, then her journey as an academic dean, and finally her experiences as a Black woman leader.

Main Themes and Their Connection to the Guiding Ideas of the Theoretical Framework

Collins (2000) provided a theoretical framework throughout the analysis process. I drew from the four distinguishing features and the six theoretical concepts in this framework, as I began to listen for codes, categories and ultimately, themes. As I listened to the data through the lens of Black Feminist Thought, I also made connections to some

of the a priori categories found in research regarding Black women in the academy. To name a few, these are some of the a priori categories I used in my analysis: Black Women Administrators, overcoming stereotypes of Black women, Black women's professional experiences, and Black women support networks.

Guided by Black Feminist Thought, I used these *a priori* categories to inform my preliminary analysis. I identified codes such as Overcoming Negative Stereotypes, Black women's journey to the academy, Black and gendered lens of an administrator and Challenges to leadership of Black women. The distinguishing features and the theoretical concepts of Black Feminist Thought helped me to hear the codes in each case to then identify themes across all four cases.

Some of these *a priori* categories were Black women administrators, overcoming stereotypes of Black women, Black women's professional experiences, and Black women support networks. The *a priori* categories were derived from concepts in Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and known research on Black women working in administrative positions in higher education (Haywood, 2004; Scott, 2016; Mainah, 2016). In synthesizing codes to develop themes, these a priori categories helped me to listen for themes that emerged in this study.

Three major themes emerged from the interview transcripts and reflective journals of the four study participants. The three large themes worked together to capture the lived experiences of Black women deans at Predominately White Institutions. The themes touch on both these women's professional and personal experiences. The themes and their respective subthemes include:

- Battle Fatigue of Black Women Deans

  - Navigating Microaggressions

  - Questioning of Professional Competence

  - Navigating Stereotypes

- A Call to Justice

  - Leading From a Social Justice Ethos

  - Challenging the Status Quo

  - Navigating the Politics of Social Justice Centered Leadership

- Living Under the Pressure of The Concrete Ceiling

  - The Pressure of Being The First/Only

  - The Pressure of Perfection

  - The Balancing Act of the Black Tax

There are six distinguishing features of Black Feminist Thought, which often describe the lived experiences of Black women. These features include understanding the Black woman's standpoint, creating a diverse space for Black women, encouraging activism, Black women intellectualizing, committing to change, and practicing social justice. While the narratives have aspects of all these distinguishing features, four of these features guided me through the data analysis in all narratives: Black women's standpoint, creating a diverse space for Black Women, encouraging activism, and Black women intellectualizing.

Results: Detailed Discussion

Participant Narratives

In the following section, I present each participant's unique journey to the

position of academic dean. I have organized and narrated each story in a similar way for consistency. Each story begins with the participant's education and early influences, then tells the participant's academic and career pathways, then goes through their journey as an academic dean, and ends with their experiences as a Black woman leader.

Elaine

Education and Early Influences

Elaine currently serves as an academic dean at an institution located within the Southwestern region of the United States. An engineer by training, Elaine earned a BS with Cum Laude distinction in Mechanical Engineering, ME in Engineering in Systems Engineering, and PhD in Interdisciplinary Engineering.

Elaine is from a state in the South and has lived in the New England and Midwest regions of the United States as well. She was raised as an only child whose life aspirations were strongly influenced by her parents. The value of achieving dreams was introduced early in life through her parents' professional journeys. Elaine's parents transitioned from teaching within the K-12 system to starting their doctoral programs and pursuing careers in higher education. Elaine remembers being in the third grade when her family moved to a state in the New England region where her father completed a PhD program and began working at a university. Both of my parents were originally K-12 science or reading teachers. Dad then moved to the university level and was director of alumni affairs and then became vice president of student affairs." Elaine shares, "My mother ended up going back to get her PhD at 45, so education has been an important factor in my upbringing, and I grew up on the college campus." Elaine's chosen career

path in higher education was strongly influenced by her family values of education and hard work, and affinity for the college campus community.

Elaine attended a Historically Black College (HBCU) where she pursued a degree in Engineering. Elaine quickly realized that she had chosen a White male dominated profession and noted the absence of Black female faculty represented within her chosen discipline. "I went to an HBCU as an undergrad, but there were no Black women in my engineering program. My Black women professors, I had one in physics but most of my Black women professors were in English or sociology or something like that." After graduation and receiving her BS degree in Engineering, Elaine enrolled in an engineering graduate program. Elaine attended a Predominately White Institution (PWI) for graduate school, which provided her with very different experiences than the HBCU she attended as an undergraduate student. While Elaine experienced underrepresentation of Black women in engineering as an undergraduate student, her college experience was centered in the Black community and its rich cultural experiences. As a doctoral student attending a PWI, Elaine had to grapple with being Black, female, and an engineer. As a graduate student, Elaine encountered both racialized and gendered experiences in a university structure that was not designed to support a Black woman in a predominantly White and male dominated field of study. Subsequently, the lack of critical mass of Black women engineers both as students and teachers had a very profound impact in shaping Elaine's experiences both within engineering and academia. As she shares,

> I think about when I was in my PhD program, and we had very strong women in
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> the engineering program for undergraduate students. And I would laugh with the

Director of the program, and I would say to her, 'I don't know if I'm a woman first or I'm Black first.'

Elaine found such resources as the Women in Engineering Program, Minority Engineering Program, and student organizations such as Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) to be important resources and spaces of community. Elaine believes that NSBE, an organization dedicated to recruiting, retaining, and supporting Black engineers, was a very critical space of affirmation and mentorship. NSBE became more important as Elaine began to make meaning of her identities as a Black female engineer at a Predominately White Institution where there was underrepresentation of Black students especially represented within the STEM fields.

Now, I never went to the SWE meeting. That's the Society of Women Engineers. I would go to the NSBE meeting, because again, I felt like race was the thing you saw first. So, for me, gender, I mean, I've always been a woman, but I was always Black first.

As Elaine continued her graduate study and received her PhD, Elaine's love of engineering along with an awareness of gaps in equitable access for Black women and other historically minoritized students continued to fuel her interest in teaching, research, and a career in academia.

Academic and Faculty Career Pathway

Elaine's lived experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student in engineering fostered her desire to provide mentorship and support for other students pursuing a career in engineering. Her professional career began in administration as a support staff member in student services. Upon the completion of her master's degree Elaine obtained her first professional staff role in academia. Elaine served as the director of minority engineering programs at two institutions. Through these professional opportunities, Elaine began learning the various functions of student services and academic support within engineering colleges. Elaine's desire to have a student-centered focus on academic support and retention programs within an engineering college led her to accept a position as associate dean. Through this position, Elaine was able to lead her college in supporting students as they matriculated through their studies. As she shares,

> I had an opportunity to kind of see, in a school of engineering, what kind of roles people had, what kind of things they did. And so, I decided that my goal was to become an associate dean for academic affairs, because I was very student-centric. And that was the place on campus in an engineering school that worked with most of your student activities, your outreach programs, your women in engineering programs and things like that.

Reaching the professional milestone of associate dean, was a goal of Elaine's prior to achieving her Ph.D. Elaine recognized that she needed a doctoral degree to obtain higher administrative leadership positions that would allow her to influence curriculum and create a research agenda. With a PhD in hand, earned at a university in the

Southwestern region of the United States, she took a tenure-track position in engineering at a college located in the Midwest. As a faculty member she completed tenure while serving in a variety of administrative and faculty positions. Holding an array of faculty and administrative roles came with many accomplishments and challenges as she consistently found herself in spaces where she was the only Black faculty member or administrator. She recounted,

> In 1998, I was the first Black faculty member hired at X-university. I would go to NSBE just so I could see some Black people, I could talk to people. I could complain about things that might have been happening.

Elaine's positionality as the only Black faculty and administrator came with the cultural taxation of being the representative for the Black community. She was often asked to serve on committees, take on extra mentorship of Black students, and be the university representative for the college. Learning how to navigate faculty and administrative positions deepened Elaine's commitment to become a transformative leader with a far-reaching impact. This experience inspired Elaine to begin exploring the possibility of becoming a university president which placed her on the path of pursuing an academic dean position. For Elaine, her experiences in administrative leadership and faculty service had to be augmented with academic leadership. As she noted,

> One day it kind of hit me, maybe I should think about a presidency. I started studying the presidential pathways, and most presidents had been traditional academics. They would be department head or associate dean. They've been provost and then on their way into a presidency. So, around 2004 is when I

decided I wanted to be a president. And then that put me on the pathway to become a dean.

Journey as an Academic Dean

Elaine has served as academic dean in the College of Engineering at two institutions and believes that the role of academic dean provides an opportunity to lead change that will strengthen students' ability to access employment in the field of engineering. Throughout her administrative and faculty career, Elaine has established a research agenda and shaped policy and practices that have historically excluded minoritized students. As she shared,

> The first historical academic report calling for reform and engineering education came out in 1918. So, we know a lot about what needs to be done and how we can make those changes. I can bring forth the best of the research literature around educating students and try to create a space where engineering is becoming more accessible to those who have historically been underrepresented.

As an academic dean, Elaine describes herself as a fair and transparent leader. Elaine is not afraid of tackling the hard questions and being equitable in decision making. She stated, "I'm transparent. So, people always know where they stand, what's going on. You know, we make strategic decisions about the budget. Everybody can see the budget. And I think that allows you to build trust."

Elaine leads from a collaborative consensus building leadership orientation that engages members of her college and the extended university. Elaine realized the value of

fostering open lines of communication with her faculty and making them co-constructors in the work. Elaine has used such strategies as one-on-one meetings, monthly programs, and faculty dinners at her home to build relationships. These strategies have allowed her to establish trust and consensus building as the culture of the college changes. Elaine said,

> I set a goal to try to meet with every single faculty member and for 30 minutes. But I asked them to prepare a written document that would help me understand who they were. And so, when times are or were tight or they didn't understand something or they wanted to challenge me, it's like, okay. But wait a minute, we already met, we have some common ground. And I think that made it easier. Elaine has been able to utilize her collaborative leadership style as a means of bringing change to her college.

As an academic dean, Elaine recounts several accomplishments. One of the changes Elaine highlights during her tenure as academic dean has been shifting the culture of only having tenured faculty teaching in the classroom to allowing doctoral students to teach. Elaine believed in equipping the next generation of faculty with all the needed experiences to prepare for the profession. Elaine recalls,

> Some grad students actually asked me that question, 'Can we not have experiences teaching? If we want to go into the professoriate, it would seem like it would prepare us for that.' And I'm like, 'You're absolutely right about that.' So, I talked to the provost and I said, 'Hey, is there any reason why we couldn't have graduate students teaching?' And she said, 'No, there's no reason why you can't

do that.' The conversations with the graduate students and provost led to the development of an inaugural Teaching Fellows program in the school.

The Teaching Fellows program both prepared engineering scholars for the professorate by giving them opportunities to teach in the classroom and addressed a current deficit of teaching faculty. Elaine faced resistance in trying to implement this program due to the reservations of members of her college. Elaine saw the resistance, but utilized the situation as an opportunity to model the innovation she wanted to see from the faculty within her college. As she said,

> I think it's just the culture of my institution. You start to do things different, it requires them to be different. And some are excited about it, some aren't, some faculty think it's a good idea, some don't, but I have faith in my department heads, but I also know that the culture of my institution has been one of upper-level administration does everything, and they're not necessarily held accountable for expectations that are set for them to do things differently. And so now if I want them to behave differently, I have to help facilitate that.

Elaine believes that an effective leader must identify and minimize obstacles that can negatively impact the operations of the college and its faculty. One of the challenges Elaine had to overcome as an academic dean was leading a college through significant fiscal challenges. She remarks, "We had a deficit when I joined the college...I was told I would have resources to help me address the deficit. But when the deal really went down, there were no resources there to help address the deficit." As a means of addressing the

deficit, Elaine moved the college to a centralized budget process where all revenue streams came to one location. Elaine continues,

> So I had to clean up the deficit by myself. And my approach was, okay, let's centralize all the money coming in. So, if we can put all the money in one place and then we can dole it all out, everybody can see what everybody's getting, because if one-person gains, somebody else has to lose. There's not enough money for everybody to get everything they want. We have to be thoughtful about how we allocate resources.

The centralized budget model created structures that aligned fiscal decisions to mission driven outcomes, increased productivity, and improved fiscal accountability within the college. Elaine had to rely on her leadership strategies of being goal oriented, transparent, and fair to push through resistance during these difficult changes. In the end, the centralized budgeting became a model across the university. Elaine was able to leave the college in a much stronger financial position as well as contribute to a university process that continues to be utilized.

Experiences as a Black Woman Leader

Throughout her career, Elaine has noticed the limited numbers of Black women in leadership positions and in the field of engineering, both as students and as emerging Black engineering scholars. She believes part of her responsibility as a leader is to bring the voices of underrepresented groups in spaces where policy and practice are being made that impact them. In her words,

"Serving as an academic dean in engineering puts me in rooms and at platforms where I can discuss and advocate for others. I can be the one who says, oh no, we need to do this differently, because it's not attracting certain types of people.

Elaine has been able to create a path for other immerging professionals from minoritized populations as she continues to personally navigate predominately white spaces in academia herself. As a Black female academic dean, Elaine has encountered the impact of resistance to her leadership through various forms of microaggressions. At one institution where Elaine was the first Black female academic dean, the members of the college seemed over critical of her professional abilities to serve in the role as academic dean. Some faculty criticized the length of time she spent in faculty positions versus administrative roles as a way of measuring Elaine's "fit" for the role. Elaine also experienced faculty going around her to the provost when they did not agree with her leadership decisions. Finally, Elaine always had to be aware of how she spoke so as not to reinforce negative stereotypes about angry Black women. She explains,

> Naively so, opportunities came and I've always had mentors and champions and things to advocate for me in places, but I've always just been good at what I do. It was instilled in me early, if you're good at what you do, good things will come your way. And so that has actually happened. . . I think I was challenged in my last job, and the funny thing about that was other people had to tell me what was happening to me was because of my race and gender because, I just saw it as these people were just obstinate.

As a Black female leader working at PWI institutions, Elaine recounts her limited access to the sociocultural and political rules within institutions. Similar to other Black women who have learned to survive institutional structures that were not created for their success, Elaine has developed spaces of support and affirmation, mentor relationships, and professional networks as valuable tools to help her thrive as an academic leader. Elaine has a circle of friends who are also Black women professionals. This space provides a place for Elaine to vent, process challenges, and get advice on how to address some of the issues she navigates as a leader. Elaine states that her professional friend network provides an important "counter space" that is "beneficial for support, encouragement, nurturing, sound-boarding, bitch moaning, and complaining as a friend of mine calls it." Elaine utilized her friend network to process a negative experience she had with a White male dean where the dean displayed unprofessional behavior towards her. She comments,

> I called my girlfriend. She's associate dean at State University, Black female. And I called X (name redacted) like, 'You won't believe what just happened to me.' And she was like, 'Girl, that's so wrong. She said, but I don't really know how to coach you on that one. You might want to call next level mentor for that.'

Elaine's counter space of friends who are undergoing similar experience have validated her experiences and provided a network of support. Mentoring relationships have also been critical to Elaine's success. As she noted,

> "…because as an engineering person my community is all White, right? I mean, I'm at a Predominantly White Institution. So, there might have been some other

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Black faculty around, but there were no Black women leaders for me to observe, study, emulate, whatever word you want to use. So, I think, mentoring has absolutely been critical to my success.

Elaine attributes having mentors to provide support and remind her of the possibilities of what she could accomplish as motivation for her to continue her leadership path. She said,

X (name redacted) is one of my mentors and I had an opportunity to go and shadow her at X (name redacted) college when she was president. And I got a chance to see a Black woman leader be decisive, be commanding, be larger than life and people still respected her.

Elaine also attributes mentoring relationships as a means of helping to hold her accountable for continuing to reach her professional goals. She remembers early in her career a mentor who served as an academic leader at the institution where she completed her undergraduate degree. Elaine confidently told this mentor that she would be an asset to his team and that he should hire her. The mentor told her that he would not hire her until she completed her doctoral degree. This level of accountability from her mentor helped Elaine understand how critical obtaining the PhD was to her career trajectory.

Finally, Elaine believes in taking time for self-care. She enjoys cycling, swimming, quarterly vacations, carving time out with no work, and spending time with friends and loved ones. As she continues to serve as a leader as well as mentor for others,

she believes these strategies help to refuel her energy and commitment for being a leader in the academy.

Mya

Education and Early Influences

Mya serves as dean of education at a university in the Midwestern region of the United States. Her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees are in the fields of education and counseling. Mya was born in the southern region of the United States into a large family. As the oldest of five children, Mya grew up in a household where family, faith, and education were their top values. Mya was raised around rich cultural experiences that centered Blackness as a critical part of her identity. Her love for education and giving back to the community led Mya to become an educator and activist.

Throughout her university studies, Mya experienced education as a vehicle to exploring her own socialized identities as well as learning about others. After graduating with her teaching credential and master's degree, Mya began her career in the classroom as an elementary school teacher. In her own words,

> I started off as an elementary school teacher and I feel as though I was really successful at it, not by my own assessment, but by the fact that parents requested me for their children. They wanted me to be their teacher and I had decent relationships with my principal and that sort of thing.

While she was successful in the classroom, Mya became disenchanted with the school system. Mya became frustrated with the standardized practices and autocracy that was

negatively impacting historically underrepresented students in her classroom. These issues led to Mya deciding to leave the classroom and explore other paths that impact the k-12 educational system. As Mya states,

> I was looking to leave the classroom, to step away, there was a lot of standardization that was starting to happen, and I really wasn't happy with the direction that things were going. And so, one of my mentors said, 'You need to stop playing around and go get your PhD.' And I was like, 'Why would I do that?' She was a Black woman and she said, 'You would be a really good teacher of teachers.

With the goal of entering the professorate to prepare future teachers for the K-12 classroom, Mya began her doctoral program. Mya attended a research PWI in the Midwest as one of a small number of Black doctoral students. She received academic support from her program in such areas as her research interest, dissertation study, and conference travel. While Mya felt supported academically, she started noticing expressions of racism and other forms of oppression that were happening at the institution and negatively impacting Black graduate students. Mya wanted to foster community and work towards overcoming institutional issues that negatively affect Black graduate and undergraduate students. Therefore, Mya joined the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA) and served in various executive positions within the organization. In addition to BGSA, a nurturing and mentorship space was provided to Mya and other Black students through the support of Black faculty members. As Mya shares,

We had a strong group of Black graduate students across the campus at the time, but in our unit, the Black faculty ... started this thing where once a year, one of them would host dinner, a dinner for all the Black PhD students in the school, as well as other Black faculty. And it became this tradition, and they rotated it. And it was ... a good community. And I felt supported by Black instructors and professors.

Mya leaned on her network of Black faculty and Black graduate student support when she had to navigate experiences with White faculty members. As Mya recalls,

One of my Black faculty mentors, she was an assistant dean in the college at the time, and she said, 'Okay, now look, this one, she has a lot of clout and a lot of influence.… You want to be careful with how you navigate this.… Just keep it very surface with her. She's going to try to want you to be emotionally dependent upon her. Don't do that.' So, I was like, 'Okay.'

The experiences that Mya had, especially as a doctoral student, helped her learn how to navigate complex racial and political environments at a Predominately White Institution and provided a foundational preparation for her career in the academy.

Academic and Faculty Career Pathway

Mya's career in higher education began in the traditional faculty tenure process. Her first assistant professor position was at an institution located in the Southeastern region of the United States. While Mya enjoyed teaching and mentoring students in her program, she personally found this first faculty position to be challenging. As she shares,

I was well prepared to be a scholar and all of that ... for my doctoral training, but really was under-prepared for what it meant to be a Black woman at a Predominantly White Institution in the South, that had only integrated 50 years before I showed up. So that was a very, very eye-opening and hard experience in the beginning as an assistant professor.

From early on, Mya began to have racialized experiences with faculty within her college. She recounts having to navigate being stereotyped and uncomfortably treated as though she was exotic due to her hair texture and skin tone. During her interview process for the position, Mya chose to straighten her hair to limit negative interactions. As she states, "I'm a light skinned Black woman, and so I know that White people feel more comfortable with my light skin and my straightened hair. I know that. I've known that my entire life." After receiving the position, Mya encountered several negative interactions with her department chair when she wore her natural hair texture. The chair would carry out racialized microaggressions by commenting on her hair and touching it. Mya recalls, "When I showed up, moving into the office, I had my curly fro. And it was like she was mesmerized like, 'Oh my gosh, how did you get your hair like that?' Mya recounts her frustration and anger at both being touched without permission and experiencing the microaggressions. As Mya states,

Then the third time I was like, 'Okay, I'm pretty sure I asked you not to touch my hair and just so you know, I'm not an animal at the zoo. You don't get to pet me.' And these are the things that Black women then do when you're going into this

predominantly White space and people don't understand natural hair and people have reactions to natural hair.

Mya navigated additional racialized experiences during her time as an assistant professor but was ultimately tenured at this first institution. She attributes her ability to successfully move through the tenure process to her support system of another Black faculty member. However, due to so many negative experiences, Mya made the decision to leave this institution in search of a university where she felt more affirmed and supported as a person and faculty member. Mya states,

I had this wonderful support group of Black women who were fighting their own battles individually, and then we were working together collectively, but it was hard. It was a hard, hard space to be in. I was tenured and I did not want to stay there.

Mya's second faculty appointment led her to an urban research institution located in the Midwestern region of the United States. By the time Mya had transitioned into her role as a tenured professor at this new institution, she had gotten married and was expecting her daughter. She was looking forward to her new role, but had not given thought to any career possibilities beyond serving as a tenured faculty member. A senior-level Black female faculty member encouraged Mya to push beyond the low expectations and institutional barriers she might experience in order to pursue full professorship. Mya recounts the conversation she had with the faculty member about the importance of achieving the status of full professor. As Mya states, "But she said they don't think that we should aspire to more than just tenure. They think that tenure is our bar. And so, she

was like, 'You need to have a plan for getting full professor.'" Mya achieved full

professor status and eventually began to move into more administrative positions within

her college.

Mya had served in some leadership roles such as university committee member,

program coordinator, and mentor to adjunct faculty members, but did not have a desire to

move into administration full time. Mya comments,

> What I like doing is my research and my teaching and working with students...
> and mentoring students. I don't like having to be an administrator and dealing
> with grown people. I do not care for it. But that being said, I know that I have the
> temperament and the skillset that lends toward this kind of leadership work. And
> so, it started off with me just doing my part, what I thought was my part, and then
> ... we needed a department chair. And so, I'm like, 'Okay, I'll do it. You know.

Mya served as department chair and then based on her exemplary leadership was

appointed as interim dean and then permanently appointed dean of the College of

Education.

Journey as an Academic Dean

Mya describes herself as a servant leader who focuses on the well-being of the

individuals she supports. As a dean she enjoys serving as an ambassador of her college

and advocate for the research, unit wide initiatives, and broad campus work of her

faculty. As she states,

I tell stories to different stakeholders that connect them to the bigger mission of the unit and to individual faculty research, into goals that we have for our students. So, when I'm meeting with donors, I get to tell stories. When I'm meeting with school district leaders and talking through partnerships, I get to tell stories. When I'm meeting with the campus's administration about our research funding, I get to tell stories.

Mya is committed to being a dean who is relational, a careful listener, and apprised of the various aspects of college life to be able to effectively serve her faculty and students. She believes in getting to know her faculty individually and understanding their area of research and how she can most effectively support their work. As a dean, Mya desires to position her college on the forefront of the field of education. In order to best serve her institution, Mya leverages her position to lead her college in its commitment to social justice and equity work.

Mya's college has had a long-standing history of being grounded in antiracist and anti-oppressive practices. Mya has enjoyed leading her faculty through some deeply personal internal transformative work that is needed to engage the campus community on topics such as racism and social justice. The process of moving faculty forward and gaining collective buy-in has caused tensions and discomfort amongst the members of the college community. As dean, Mya has challenged her college to embrace this commitment to social justice. One of the highlights of her career as a dean has been to move her college through this growth process and externally help others, who viewed the

college as problematic, begin to understand the value of its transformation. As Mya states,

> Well, externally people have seen the conflict and tension that the unit has experienced as a negative thing. And it's like, 'Oh, there they go in that school of education, they all fighting over there. They're doing this.' And so, it's like, well, it's not an easy row to tow, when you're trying to disrupt institutional racism and White supremacy. And so, there's going to be some discomfort. There's going to be some knockdown, drag out fights that people who are in the unit may hear about and perceive negatively. And so, when I came into the role there, I think there definitely was a negative perception from other people on campus, about the faculty in the School of Ed. And one thing that I have done in my role as dean, and as an ambassador for the unit, is to tell our story and to help people understand that there was a means to an end. And it's still an ongoing process.

Mya utilizes her ability to be agile, relational, and a strong organizational administrator to make informed and effective decisions as an academic dean. Mya believes that one of the most challenging aspects of being an academic dean is being in the middle between senior leadership and faculty. Due to the tensions that arise from navigating university political and administrative expectations alongside university governance from faculty, Mya believes that decision making, and its impact are critical. As Mya reflects,

When you're in the position of dean … you start seeing the inner workings of the

university, and you start seeing what's behind closed doors and you start having

access to conversations that you don't have access to as a faculty member.

As Mya leads her college, at the forefront of decisions are the fiscal health, mission, and

impact of the college and its stakeholders. In Mya's words,

So I do think about the fiscal implications of decisions that I make. I also think

about, for my particular school of education, we have a commitment toward anti-

racism, anti-oppression and social justice. And so, I think about when I'm making

decisions, how are we meeting that mission and focus of our school? The

decisions that I make, administrative hiring, anything like that, what are the

implications of that in terms of our mission? And then I think I also think about in

general, which is impact, who is going to be positively impacted by this decision,

who's going to be negatively impacted and who's going to be impacted that I'm

not thinking about.

Mya recognizes that budgetary decisions have a long-term impact on her college and the

university overall. She takes into consideration how the budgetary decisions will create or

hinder opportunities for research and other support for faculty. During her tenure, Mya

has had to address fiscal shortfalls and has made difficult decisions about the replication

of budget lines in the college. One of Mya's accomplishments as dean was to bring her

college from a deficit into a healthier fiscal state. She was able to accomplish this by

working in collaboration with faculty to increase research grant funding, increase funding

development opportunities by leveraging college initiatives to external partners, and reallocating funding to higher priority areas.

Experiences as a Black Woman Leader

Mya recognizes that she is one of very few Black female academic deans both on her campus and within higher education nationwide. Therefore, she utilizes her position as a senior leader to ensure race and social justice issues continue to remain at the forefront of the national conversation about higher education. In addition, she works to create a strong pipeline for emerging Black female faculty and administrators. As one of few Black female leaders in the academy, Mya has had to become successful at navigating the political, social, and cultural landscape of predominately White institutions. In these environments, negotiating the duality of her race and gender often feels uncomfortable. However, Mya has utilized her role to address important issues such as racialized practices that impact the Black community in higher education. According to Mya,

> I have never wavered from centering the experiences of Black folks, Black children, Blackness in my work. I've never wavered from that. And I've never wavered from that just as an academic, in my research, in my teaching, and in regular conversations with colleagues. And so, I know that when I'm in a meeting, when I'm in a setting, I know that if I say I want to talk about something, I know that people are holding their breath, like, 'What does she want to say?' Because they know, well, I am probably going to say something about race. I am probably going to say something around White supremacy, institutional racism. Just I am

probably going to say those things. And so, I often feel that there's this... kind of clutching of pearls, like, 'Oh my gosh, should we let her talk?' You know? And it's like, you don't have to let me talk, because I'm going to say what I'm going to say anyway.

As a Black female academic dean, Mya has had to navigate her own experiences with racist attitudes and practices commonly associated with PWIs. Mya often feels the pressure to work harder and be a step ahead of her White counter parts. This type of cultural taxation has caused Mya to take on additional committee work, constantly being the representative for the Black community for her college and working hard to ensure that she is mentoring the next generation of Black scholars. As Mya shares,

> You got to be better than everybody else. And as a dean, I still have my research. As a matter of fact, that was a part of my conversation, is that 20% of my time was going to be devoted to my research. I have two major grants, I'm supporting research teams, I'm writing with junior scholars, doctoral students. I got eight advisees right now, all of them Black. Mostly Black women. Other deans are not doing none of this shit.

Mya often feels the pressure of a different set of rules, performance expectations, and challenges that her White deans do not experience. According to her,

> I know that I can't mess up. I know that much. I know that as a Black woman, I have known my entire life that there's a different set of rules for how I operate within institutions. And that, I have to go into decision making, understanding

that. So other folks, other deans, they may have more room to take risk. They may have more support to take risks. I know that's not the case with me.

Mya has experienced extra scrutiny in making decisions that she believes White deans are not experiencing. She has had to be aware of the external surveillance and micromanagement of her academic college by White university administrators when addressing issues. For example, when Mya was addressing a personnel issue between a Black faculty member and White department chair, she had to consider the political implications of the situation. The department chair and faculty member had a prior history of racial tension, which complicated the performance management process. Mya had to balance coaching the department chair through the evaluation process while holding the faculty member accountable. Additionally, she also navigated the political repercussions of how she handled the racially charged situation. As Mya recounts,

> It was difficult. That was difficult in making that decision to pull that person in and have a conversation with them because I don't want to support any narratives of incompetence when it comes to faculty of color. I don't want to do that, but I also have to recognize that it can go left. It can go left really quick just given the dynamic.

As a means to sustain her wellbeing as a Black female leader navigating a Predominately White Institution, Mya has learned the importance of developing mentorship relationships and self-care strategies. Throughout her career, Mya has had the benefit of strong mentor relationships with Black women leaders. She attributes her

success to the nurturing and guidance of these women and is also committed to contributing to the lives of other Black women through mentoring. As Mya states,

> I have had the privilege of being mentored every step of the way by Black women. And my whole career and professional trajectory has been marked by the mentorship of Black women. And in return, I try to do the same thing. I'm sure I miss the mark sometimes, but Black women have poured into me, and so because of that, I try to mentor other Black women in my space.

Mya recounts that one of the most impactful mentoring relationships in her career was during her first year as an academic dean. She was assigned an executive coach who happened to be a Black female administrator at another institution. Mya found this mentoring relationship to be not only supportive in a space where she felt alone, but she was able to feel safe and vulnerable in a way that she did not feel among her White colleagues. As Mya states,

> By the end of our year together, I was calling her auntie. But she was my everything that first year. Just getting me through. I mean, I cried with her. It was heavy. It was so heavy because the learning curve was so high, and I didn't want to do it. I would say I felt like people had confidence in me, that I could do something that I wasn't sure I could do, and she would always remind me of successes that I had in previous spaces and how I could bring the same things that helped me be successful previously into my new role as dean.

Mya also found her faith community and spiritual practices to be a space of affirmation, healing, and support. She incorporates her spiritual practices into her workspace by praying and saging her work area to cleanse the air of negative energy. Mya also has a group of Black women on campus who come together to support and pray for each other. She describes her prayer circle by saying, "It is a space where I just show up as a child of God, and I get to process ... who I am in this space through that lens, and have my sisters pray for me and we pray for each other." In addition to a strong mentoring network and faith community, Mya enjoys spending time with her husband, daughter, and extended family. She attributes intentionally finding balance with work and self-care activities as strategies that equip her to show up as her authentic self in her role as a leader.

Yolonda

Education and Early Influences

Yolonda currently serves as Dean of the Liberal Arts College at a research comprehensive institution in the Mid-Western region of the United States. Yolonda holds a bachelor's degree in economics and political Science, terminal Master's degree and a Ph.D. in Educational Studies. Yolonda was raised by two loving parents who were from the United States. Both of Yolonda's parents held military careers and careers within the federal government, which caused Yolonda's family to live all over the United States.

Yolonda attributes her passion for the pursuit of education from the outcome of her family's experiences and journeys. She attributes the influences of her parents and grandparents instilling a love for education at an early age. Yolonda shares that her

grandfather who was working class and did not have much access to education made great sacrifices to ensure better educational opportunities for his children. Yolonda's parents grew up as first-generation college students and instilled education as a path to success to their family. As Yolonda states, "my parents were part of the first generation in their families to attend college They grew up very poor in the south but, it was higher education that transformed their lives."

Yolonda attended undergraduate studies at a Predominately White Institution where she studied economics and political science. Yolonda describes her choice of major by stating that she "was very interested in politics and the systems that shape society." As an undergraduate, Yolonda was interested in political and social justice issues and began to utilize student leadership as an opportunity to become involved in activism on her campus.

As Yolonda attended graduate school and critically examined such issues as politics, social class, racism, and other forms of oppression, she began to make meaning of some of her own lived experiences as a graduate student. As a Black female navigating both a professional field and a graduate program that was White male dominated, Yolonda noticed her own encounters with racism and sexism. Yolonda recounts an incident in her graduate program where she attempted to check out equipment from her department for an assignment. She was interrogated by a White male security officer who did not believe she was a graduate student in the program. As Yolonda states, "the security guard stopped me and wasn't going to let me leave. And I was like, everybody takes out equipment, and he was interrogating me to find out about if I was entitled to use

the equipment." Only when Yolonda's White colleague interrupted the exchange and insisted that Yolonda had a right to check out the equipment did the security guard allow Yolonda to leave. Yolonda was outraged that it took another White student to validate her legitimacy to this White male security guard. This racialized experience reiterated to her how privilege, power, and oppression are perpetuated to send messages that people of color and Black women do not belong in academic institutions. As Yolonda shares, "at that moment it became really crystallized about privilege and how it works. And that was just one of many examples of microaggressions I experienced." As a result, she became increasingly more interested in the mission of public institutions to provide access to higher education. Through her own experiences as well as what she was learning about in her academic discipline she wanted to contribute to scholarly research and practice that addressed equity disparities within educational systems. She decided to return to graduate school to pursue a doctoral degree in educational studies.

Academic and Faculty Career Pathway

After the completion of her doctorate degree, Yolonda began her academic career by pursuing a tenure track faculty position. Yolonda obtained a tenure track faculty position at a public R1 research university on the east coast. Yolonda enjoyed teaching students and participating in research activities to enhance the educational experiences of her students. At this point in her career, Yolonda viewed achieving tenure as the ultimate goal in her professional trajectory. She valued the student-professor connections and the opportunities to mentor young people.

It was in the process of navigating tenure as a Black female faculty member that Yolonda began to experience some of the institutional obstacles that perpetuated racism and sexism. Yolonda recalls frequently being ignored in faculty meetings by White male faculty. In her own words,

> I would be making a comment in a meeting about an issue or making suggestion, and it appears to go unheard until the guy next to you says the same thing and then everybody's like, 'Gosh that's a really great idea Jim!... and it's like, I just said that.

Yolonda also shares about becoming a mother as a tenure track faculty member. This was a very happy time for her and her family. She was always confident that she would be able to navigate her career path and balance with being a mother. She recalls a tenured White male faculty member congratulating her and telling her that he did not know how she was going to move through the tenure process as a mother. In addition to the individual examples of sexism from male faculty in her department, Yolonda gradually became more aware of institutional obstacles that continued to marginalize women. Yolonda recalls the frustration and discomfort of having to find places to breast-pump because her institution had no lactation rooms. "It was kind of a nightmare. I remember having one hand up against one door trying to make sure no one accidentally walked in while I was pumping."

Experiencing some of these obstacles connected to her race and gender led Yolonda to a passion to address some of these historical institutional practices of racism and sexism through both scholarly research and practice. Once Yolonda achieved tenure,

she began to take on more committee and administrative work. Some of the service work Yolonda participated in included chairing rank and tenure committee, participating in faculty evaluation processes for faculty coming up for promotion and tenure, participating in a committee to develop a new doctoral program, and serving across the broader institution. Through these additional experiences, Yolonda discovered that she was passionate about academic administration and began to consider a career pathway that would blend faculty and administrative work. In her own words,

> I just ended up doing a lot of work that related to the administration of the academic unit, and I found that I was good at it... And effective, and I enjoyed the work. That was the first kind of indication to me that maybe administration might be a rewarding career path.

After deciding to pursue an administrative trajectory, Yolonda relocated to the mid-west to begin her administrative career at a public research comprehensive institution where she held a variety of administrative positions.

Yolonda's first administrative position was as director of The Women's Center in the office of the provost and a joint tenure appointment in Women's and Gender Studies. As director of the Women's Center, Yolonda worked across the institution to address policies and practices that marginalized female-identified students, staff, and faculty. Yolonda was able to lead work that particularly centered on women in STEM and have an impact on increasing institutional commitment to national retention programs in women's STEM initiatives. As a tenured faculty member in Women's and Gender studies, Yolonda was able to contribute scholarly research and teaching that focused on

women in higher education and their experiences. After serving as director of the Women's Center, Yolonda then served in a three-year appointment as department chair of Women's and Gender Studies. As department chair, Yolonda took on a leadership role supporting faculty and working on broad institutional academic initiatives.

Yolonda's broad experiences in the various roles at her institution helped her to understand the role of public institutions in addressing issues of inequity and making higher education accessible. Through Yolonda's work across campus, she was able to shape policies and practices that enhanced the degree obtainment and college experiences. As Yolonda states, "When I got to the X-University and I really understood the impact that public higher education has on the lives of working families, low-income families and families of color. I was really all in." Through Yolonda's experiences as an academic administrator, she started to realize the personal impact she could have on all members of the university community. As she considered her next steps in her trajectory, Yolonda was committed to moving the needle of more equitable opportunities within the academy as an academic dean.

Journey as an Academic Dean

As an academic dean, Yolonda has been inspired and driven by her values of making higher education accessible to everyone. She believes that the role of academic dean is where she can have the greatest influence in moving the needle and transforming her institution. Yolonda goes on to say, "I oversee hiring as an academic dean so my values around making sure we had diverse faculty I could actually move the dial. And so, serving as an academic dean was very exciting for me in that capacity." Yolonda was

deliberate with ensuring that the search committee understood the importance of being intentional throughout the entire process with the recruitment of possible candidates and inclusive hiring practices.

As an academic dean, Yolonda believes that her most effective strategies have been open communication, goal setting, and values-driven decision making. Yolonda strives to establish open communication with her faculty, university administration, and campus stakeholders. Through this open communication she has been able to gain trust and bring others along in supporting the vision of her college. She works with faculty to communicate goals both for faculty as well as the broader college and ensures that the goals are aligned to the broader mission of the institution. Yolonda also utilizes communication and consensus building to guide her decision-making across the college. These leadership practices have allowed Yolonda to be successful in several outcomes as an academic dean.

One of Yolonda's greatest successes as an academic dean in the college has been the improvement of completion rates for students of color in her college. Yolonda was able to work with her faculty as well as student support programming across campus to design specific initiatives to provide support strategies and measure their success. Yolonda was also able to increase external funding sources such as grants for faculty within her college. These efforts provided additional faculty research opportunities and helped to expand the brand of the college in sharing the work that was happening. Yolonda describes these successes by stating, "I like helping the college achieve its strategic goals. Whether it is increasing funding for external research, supporting faculty,

increasing first-year retention rates, increasing six-year graduation rates, those are all the kinds of things that I find very satisfying."

Yolonda has experienced challenges in navigating the academic deanship. One of the primary challenges has been addressing difficult budget decisions coupled with unprecedented social unrest during the global pandemic. As Yolonda states,

> It was like, COVID happened, we shut down the university in April and didn't go back... And that was spring of 2020. And then simultaneously, we had huge budget cuts. And then I think the George Floyd murder happened like the beginning of June. So, in a two-month span, it just felt like, it felt like what else locusts.

During this crisis in her college, Yolonda had to make very hard decisions that impacted personal as well as academic priorities for the next budget cycle. One of the effects of the budget crises that Yolonda had to face during this time has been the broader advocacy for classes in her college from the arts and humanities that promoted critical thinking and a liberal arts education.

Yolonda attributes her experience as dean in two institutional types as a great training ground to navigate through the global pandemic. Prior to Yolonda's current position as dean, she served as academic dean at an academically well-resourced institution. In this environment she was able to align the institutional values around retention and graduation rates as well as academic outcomes with greater resources. At

her current institution that has fewer resources, Yolonda has learned how to do more with less fiscal and personnel resources to gain similar outcomes. As she shares,

> At my current institution, which is a public university, like the institution where I held my first academic position, but it's a public university with significantly fewer resources. And so even if you have shared values, you don't have the kind of deep pockets to dip into, to assign resources to the things that are always our top priority. So that was learning to work in a resource challenged environment which is a different skill from pursuing your values in a resource rich environment. I feel like both of those experiences enhanced me and my skillset as a dean...

Experiences as a Black Women Leader

Yolonda's leadership trajectory has been uniquely shaped through the lens of gender and race. As Yolonda has ascended the career ladder, she has often found herself in spaces where she has been the only Black female professional. As an example, Yolonda recalls being the only tenured Black female faculty member at one of the institutions where she has served. As Yolonda states,

> I am routinely the only African American woman in a room and often, I'll be the only African American in my department, only tenured African American full professor in an institution for a while. I think I am the only tenured African American woman academic dean in the state. All of those things are just examples where the further you go up, the more isolated it can get.

Yolonda often recalls being told that "to whom much is given, much is expected." As a Black woman who is navigating the impact of isolation and a lack of critical mass, Yolonda must navigate additional pressures to be extraordinary, to overcome negative stereotypes, and to balance work responsibilities with the need to represent her community. As one of very few Black female academic leaders, Yolonda often feels pressure to work twice as hard, and believes that there is less room for error in her work. As she shares,

> You're going to have to be two steps ahead, because you're a woman, and you're going to have to be two steps ahead, because you're African American, just to be seen as on par. I think that it puts a lot of stress on me and on African American women in general in the academy.

The impact of lack of critical mass also increases the encounters with negative stereotypes of Black women that Yolonda navigates as a Black female leader. One of the stereotypes that Yolonda is very conscious of, especially in her leadership role, is being perceived as angry or emotional. She believes that as a Black woman, she does not have the same liberty to be vulnerable or express emotions as her White colleagues do. As Yolonda recalls joking with another Black female colleague, "I have to be careful not to speak above a whisper so as not to be labeled aggressive or emotional."

In addition, Yolonda is often called upon to represent the Black community and or serve as mentor to students or other professionals of color. As Yolonda states, "If there's only one person of color at an institution, then that person becomes a person that any

other person trying to strive for professional or academic advancement, they reach out to." And she adds,

> If you're a Black woman trying to talk to a Black woman administrator and there's one, I'm going to get like 30 calls. And so, the responsibility around mentorship of other academic leaders, of other faculty, of other students, is significant.

Yolonda often has to navigate the cultural taxation of being the representation of the Black community associated with the additional service and with finding time for her own self-care and being present for her family.

Yolonda has been creative in finding support, community, and professional experiences that nurture her as a Black woman both personally and professionally. Mentorship is something that Yolonda believes has been critical to her success as a Black woman navigating the academy. Yolonda has mentorship in various ways including peer mentorship and mentorship from individuals in other industries. This guidance has helped her to process challenging moments throughout her career and learn best practices that may not be available to her at her current institution. Yolonda believes that one of the most impactful mentoring experiences in her career was when she was moving through the faculty tenure process. As Yolonda recalls,

> When I was on the tenure track, I had several colleagues, other Black women that were also on the tenure track, and we were sharing information with each other, giving each other advice, encouraging each other, so that was really critical,

helping each other negotiate our contract when we got job offers, troubleshooting

issues within our departments, and so forth.

As Yolonda has moved up in the role of academic dean, she does not have other Black

female dean mentors, but relies on peer mentoring from other academic deans in her

field. She makes it a point to mentor other Black women deans because she notices the

lack of mentoring and support for women of color striving to hold these positions.

Yolonda has also found her personal friend circle and Black women's networks

on campuses where she has served to be a great space of support and affirmation.

Yolonda has a circle of friends who are also professionals in the academy. This circle

provides a safe space for Yolonda to face hard challenges, get advice, and show up as her

authentic self. As she shares,

My friendship circle of women that I've known over 20 years has always been

critical. And they are in different professions, but they've always been very

supportive and helpful, they helped me work through problems, to have a place,

again, as a sounding board for all the craziness that we would see in the PWI

institutions sometimes.

In addition to Yolonda's personal professional friend network, she has been active

in networks or affinity spaces for Black women on her campus. Yolonda has found it to

be helpful when she can come together with other Black female administrators who are at

various levels at the institution and be in community and support of one another. In these

spaces, Yolonda felt that she was among a community with shared experiences with the

institution and this group could work in a very grass roots way to address issues

impacting Black faculty and staff on campus. As Yolonda states,

> We generally were on the same page. We could use a shorthand with each other,
>
> we understood each other, we understood the historical context, what we were
>
> dealing with. And it was a safe place. It was a place where we didn't have to
>
> explain ourselves, and it was a place where we could talk frankly and not be on
>
> guard, and that we also try to think about how we could support each other on our
>
> campuses.

Finally, Yolonda has had the opportunity to participate in a variety of local,

regional, and national professional leadership cohort programs. These opportunities have

provided spaces for Yolonda to learn leadership skills and other skills to prepare her for

senior leadership institutions within higher education. As she reports,

> Yeah, I belong to a couple different professional organizations, a couple different
>
> professional leadership programs. And those are really helpful in lots of ways. I
>
> mean, you get some concrete skills, you get access to another network of people
>
> that you can call upon for advice and help and resources. So those professional
>
> organizations and networks and leadership development programs, those can be
>
> really helpful in concrete, specific ways.

In closing, Yolonda attributes having access to mentoring, professional friend

networks and affinity spaces, and professional development and leadership as being

critical to her preparation and success as a Black female academic. In all that she does,

Yolonda is intentional about balancing the need for her personal wellness and family as a priority. Yolonda often states that her "wellness strategy is to get plenty of rest, spend time with her friends and family, and laugh on a daily basis."

Angela

Educational and Early Influences

Angela serves as an academic dean at a university located in the Western region of the United States. Angela and her siblings were raised by her parents in California. Her family shaped her values, which are centered on faith, community engagement, and a love of learning. Angela credits her parents' career journey as a source of motivation for her pursuit of a college education. He states,

> My father had a 5th grade education but was very bright—mostly self-taught. My mother went through to community college but gave it up to get married and have kids. My parents always stressed how important it was to go to college, but I was the first of my siblings to go and finish.

In Angela's family, her father served as a role model in fostering leadership qualities that Angela would later adopt throughout her educational and career pursuits, and her mother exemplified the traditional gender roles of women in her family. As Angela states, "I have a lot of my dad's qualities and he often positioned himself to be a leader. I also knew I wanted more than I saw the women of my mother's generation experiencing." The desire to redefine expectations of what it means to be a woman

navigating career, leadership, and family served as an important piece of Angela's

journey as she began to pursue college and a career trajectory.

Angela completed all her post-secondary education at Predominately White

Institutions (PWI) located in the Western region of the United States. She received a BA,

a master's degree and a doctoral degree. Angela was very engaged in work, leadership,

and undergraduate activities during college. She was involved in extracurricular activities

and utilized her college years to connect practical work experiences with her studies to

shape her career path. She leveraged opportunities such as part-time positions, college

internships, and practical field experiences to round out the classroom curriculum.

Angela's extracurricular activities and field work led her to pursue a career in the public

sector and attend graduate school. Angela returned to graduate school after working full

time for two years. Upon graduation, Angela held a range of professional of positions.

These roles helped to fulfill her desire to be active in the community where she lived.

Angela also found purpose in participating in work that provided equitable opportunities

for historically underrepresented communities in her region.

Administrative and Faculty Career Pathway

Angela's entrance into higher education was untraditional, even unique. Angela

recalls,

Early in my career, I didn't see myself in higher ed. I was a practitioner working

in my field, and at some point, saw an ad for part-time instructors. And in doing

so, I said, 'Okay, I could teach this.' And I said, 'Okay, this is something I love

doing. I wonder if I'd like teaching it.'

Angela taught part time which led to a one-year contract teaching classes on a

college campus. Teaching ignited her passion to influence the field of social work by

preparing emerging professionals. She applied for a tenure-track faculty position and

simultaneously began her doctoral studies in public administration. As Angela states,

"And it all happened at once. And so that was my entry into higher ed. It wasn't

something I really had consciously sought out, but I moved in, loved it and there I was."

As an assistant professor, Angela entered the professoriate during a time when her

institution made a great effort to increase the diversity of administrators and faculty by

hiring more women and people of color. Angela was the only Black female tenure-track

faculty in a White male dominated college. The department culture upheld oppressive

practices and power dynamics that marginalized people of color, women, and female

lower ranking faculty members. As a Black female assistant professor in the college, it

was common for Angela to be reminded that she was the "affirmative action hire" by

both male and female faculty members within the college. In addition to racialized

microaggressions, Angela navigated an environment that promoted servitude and

paternalism particular to the more senior male faculty. She recalls an experience where

she attempted to give her feedback in a department meeting and her comments were

rudely dismissed openly by a senior male faculty member. Angela describes, "I stated an

opinion and he turned to me and said, 'Who cares what you think? You're just an

assistant professor." He said that to me in a faculty meeting." Angela also recalls being

expected to give her newly issued computer to a more senior faculty member. As Angela states, "This male faculty member told me that I didn't need this one because I wouldn't use all the advanced features. That I could take his older version, give him my new version." Angela's negative experiences by some of the White male faculty caused her to feel isolated and unsupported within the department. The oppressive work climate was held by both the White women and the White men within the department. Angela recalls that even women faculty who considered themselves to be feminist and champions for equity were afraid to push back. Their silence helped reinforce the negative climate. As Angela remarks,

> I had women who were in that department who were strong feminists and they stood up for the rights of women in every way possible. But again, it really was interesting because it was more in a global sense they did that. And they would push back against what they saw were inequitable policies on a larger level and even at the department level, but they seemed to not see how some of the everyday practices were problematic.

Angela's challenges navigating racism and sexism within the academy helped her to identify the need to be a voice for underrepresented students as well as other staff and faculty who were having similar experiences.

As a faculty member, Angela held a strong commitment to teaching and mentoring students and saw this aspect of her role as essential to her purpose. Therefore, Angela began to extend her reach beyond the classroom and became involved in committee service, mentorship, and shaping university initiatives. Angela successfully

completed the tenure process and moved from an assistant professor to full professor in her college. Her commitment to enhancing the experiences of both students and faculty within her college led her to accept a department chair position. Angela used the position as department chair to be a voice of change for her college. As she comments, "I was always a strong advocate for faculty, for students, for staff. I was always fairly outspoken, even as a department chair. I felt as though I ruffled feathers. I felt like that was part of my role." While Angela appreciated the ability to bring about important work in her college as a department chair, she always felt a strong calling to continue teaching in the classroom. Angela did not see herself as an emerging administrator and saw the position as department chair as the height of her career trajectory. She remarks, "When I was department chair, I saw that as the pinnacle.... But I didn't really see beyond that for me."

Over time in the role of department chair, Angela became more involved in university governance practices, and she further realized the importance of more senior leadership roles as a strategy to influence change on her campus. Angela began moving up the administrative ladder by holding an associate dean position within her college, as well as a range of leadership positions across her institution. As Angela began to develop as an administrator, she believed it was important to broaden her experiences beyond her institution. Angela established collaborative relationships and participated in a range of national higher education initiatives. These experiences provided Angela with new perspectives about higher education that allowed her to introduce new best practices within her current institution. Angela attributes her collaboration with a variety of academic institutions and professional organizations as having a great influence in

informing her work as an administrator. One of Angela's examples on professional

influences relates to diverse organizations. As Angela states,

> I worked with organizations that had close ties to HBCU and Hispanic-serving
>
> institutions whose demographic profile is very different than ours. And in doing
>
> so, was able to gain some perspective about what were successful approaches in
>
> meeting the needs of certain types of students and faculty.

Angela's impact across the institution grew with time. As a skillful administrator

who was innovative and effective in moving the needle, she aimed at influencing practice

and policy change. These successes as an administrator eventually led to Angela

becoming an academic dean.

Journey as an Academic Dean

As an academic dean, Angela is committed to advancing equitable access to

higher education by using her leadership role to influence policy and day-to-day

decisions. Angela is a collaborative leader who is deeply committed to social justice,

equity, influencing policy change, and making education and the institution accessible to

the extended community. She leads from an ethos of establishing trust, coalition building,

and modeling the professional practices that she wants her faculty to adopt. Angela

attributes her leadership style to the influence of leaders that have mentored her along her

journey. As Angela states,

> If we wanted change, if we wanted improvement, if we wanted to go through
>
> more development, knowing that we really had to be the ones ... It wasn't a matter

of trying to point things out to other people. I always felt like I had to do my share. I had to do my part. And my part was stepping up and taking on the reigns of leadership.

As an academic dean, one of Angela's core values is to serve as an advocate for historically underrepresented groups and to address institutional inequities. She does this by interrogating policy and practice. Angela has served as an advocate through her academic dean position by addressing the needs of individuals who are often invisible within the policies and practices of her college and institution. Angela believes that it is important for her to ask the hard questions and help the institution face the hard truths about issues that require changing. One of Angela's highlights as academic dean was leading her college and university in the creation of new diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Angela created the first university climate survey which was used to establish priorities for her college and across the university. She initiated diversity and inclusion training for administrators, staff, and faculty, and worked with a campus group to create a guide for faculty hiring and retention. As Angela shares,

> Taking our commitment to these kinds of equity initiatives beyond just talking about them and acknowledging them, to actually putting in practice some real practical steps to make sure that we saw movement in those areas. Emphasizing and being clear about my expectations about what I wanted to see. Using, again, my influence to push back and to move things forward.

Angela was committed to expanding the equity work of her college to the entire university to address broader access and equity issues.

As a leader, Angela has remained committed to having the difficult conversations about budget allocation, policies, and practices as a means of holding university leaders accountable to their commitment to diversity and inclusion as a value. These conversations were often difficult, but as a leader Angela felt the need to be a voice in these spaces. Angela states, "You have to be out of step sometimes with the other deans and say, but this is something I value, we value. I'm going to stand up on this." One of the outcomes of the diversity and equity work that Angela led in her college was enhancing student success initiatives. Angela worked with faculty in her college and campus stakeholders to improve the campus experiences, retention rates, and graduation rates of students within her college. As Angela recalls,

> When I had my role as an advocate for all students, but particularly the students that I saw as most vulnerable and many times those who were most vulnerable, [were] Black students. [If an incident occurred, her response had to be] . . . an equitable response to a range of things that students might be experiencing …

Angela leads from an ethos of viewing people as her most valuable resource. She attributes creating spaces for people to be heard, valuing the contributions of employees, and making fair decisions as strategies for being effective as a dean. Angela comments, "Understanding what their motivations were and being fair and equitable, direct ... sometimes making the hard decisions, but also being fair and equitable. That's really been my strategy."

Although Angela has been able to navigate many difficult moments in her leadership approach that centers people, there have been times where she has experienced

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challenges that have required difficult decisions. Angela recalls a challenging time where she stepped in to address an issue where she believed a student was not being treated equitably in the college. The staff member addressing the issue challenged her openly and through email for stepping in and for the final decision. When making decisions as an academic dean, Angela makes every effort to consider feedback from all levels and to truly understand the position of everyone involved. However, there are times when a leader must step in and make the difficult decisions. As Angela states, "If you're an academic dean, ultimately the decisions you make in your role of the dean about your programs, your people, your students, actually it stops with you. And so, it requires you to be ever-present, to trust a lot of people to do what they do right. But you also can't assume. And I would always tell department chairs, and faculty, other administrators is [that] the president is not going to call a staff member or a faculty member. They're going to call the dean if there's a major problem." Angela had to lean on her ethos of being a values-driven, relational leader in navigating this sensitive issue.

Experiences as a Black Women Leader

As a Black senior leader on campus, Angela has had to often navigate the academic terrane as the first or only Black female leader. As a longstanding member of her institution, she has experienced many firsts and has been committed to creating not only a pathway for more opportunities for historically underrepresented students, but more pathways and opportunities for Black leaders. Angela's role as an academic leader has also positioned her as a Black leader in the community. This position has given her an opportunity to encourage and mentor other emerging Black women leaders both

internal and external to the university. Most importantly, Angela's visibility as a Black

leader has been a point of pride and affirmation for the Black community on campus. As

she remarks, "The community really took pride in seeing Black administrators on

campus, really took great pride in, that meant a lot to me to know that particularly the

black community that was a big deal to them."

Moving through the personal and professional milestones to be a Black female

academic dean at a Predominantly White Institution has not come without personal cost

to Angela. As Angela reflects on her career, she states,

> So I have found that I think because of who I am or who I've come to be, I have
>
> found support in some places that are unexpected and I've been respected for the
>
> most part for who I am or who I show up to be on a college campus, I would say I
>
> have felt in the last decade of my career, I have felt relatively safe, I have felt
>
> mostly supported. I have felt valued, but I've had to pay dues. I had a lot of dues
>
> to get there.

For example, Angela has paid her dues with the emotional and cultural labor that

is attached to working in an institutional system that is still dismantling structures such as

racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. These systems have created cultural,

social, and political dynamics that have caused Angela to feel marginalized. Serving as a

Black female leader without the critical mass of other Black leaders to consult for support

has placed constant pressure on Angela. As Angela comments, "As a Black woman, I

often have to work harder, I have overanalyzed decisions, and I feel the pressure to make

sure that my i's are dotted and my t's are crossed because I know that people are

watching." As one of very few Black women leaders, Angela has experienced issues of being type cast for certain positions and combats the perception of promotion due to political correctness. As Angela explains,

> I would say on the one hand, for an institution to bring in and provide
> opportunities and promote Black women, I've experienced that, those
> opportunities are there. But also, they're wrapped in paternalism and the
> motivation sometimes isn't pure. What I have found in my experience is people
> who want to encourage you and push your name forward and provide
> opportunities for you, sometimes those people, their motivation is to be your
> White savior.

This form of exploitation at times has caused Angela to deal with impostor syndrome, which…., and feel that as a Black woman she does not belong in leadership. For many years, as a result of Angela laboring under the pressure of imposture syndrome, she had felt as though she had to overcompensate and prove that she was worthy to be in the positions she held at the institution.

As a Black female academic dean, Angela has experienced a lack of diversity that often placed her as the only voice in the room to step up and advocate for Black students, staff, and faculty. Angela remarks,

> As a dean, you're often in spaces. As a Black woman, you could often be the only
> Black person in those spaces. And so, knowing that there was nobody else, there
> was no other voice there, no one else was going to speak up, I had to be the one to

do it, and did it willingly. And doing so knowing that it wasn't always the popular

thing to do.

While Angela was committed to being a voice of influence for the Black community,

these expectations also came with the labor of cultural taxation. Angela was expected to

bare the weight of being a problem solver, mentor, and community leader on behalf of

her institution for the Black community. As Angela states,

The tendency [was] to seek out Black people when it was a Black issue. So, I

would say again throughout my career, and even as a dean called upon to either

step in when there were incidents or crises involving Black people, or to sit on

committees or task force or tenure promotion or those kinds of things.

Navigating the cultural taxation of taking on additional work as one of the few Black

leaders caused Angela to walk a balancing act of being accessible to the Black

community and setting boundaries for her time and energy. Angela states, "Of course you

wanted to. It was this push pull of wanting to make sure that Black students saw me and

had an opportunity to access me, but also being asked to do additional things that others

saw of my role."

As a Black female leader working within a Predominately White Institution,

Angela has had to find systems of support along her professional journey. She has been

intentional about finding social and cultural affinity spaces, professional development

opportunities, and community engagement as a way of self-care. Angela has a network of

professional women outside of the institution. She has been able to utilize this network as

a space of processing, affirmation, and strategy. Angela believes this space has been very important, because as a Black female academic dean she did not have a large network of other Black women deans to access. As Angela remarks, "I would say as a dean I had that network as a dean, not as a Black woman dean, there weren't enough Black women deans. And then even in terms of in the broader a Black administrator." In response to countering the absence of community on her campus, Angela participated in an informal network of Black staff and faculty members. This group would get together to socialize, support each other through issues on campus, and strategize on how the collective group might navigate campus political issues. Angela states,

> Informally, there was a group of us that would get together, women in particular, informally and sporadically and we do a range of things. Sometimes it was social, sometimes there were actually strategy meetings, like I'm interested in doing this and this is what I need and everybody's talking about the way we're supported and these conversations we needed to have in private so people wouldn't know that we had actually strategized how we were going to be moving through these spaces.

Over the years Angela has found this space to be a great source of support especially during difficult moments at the institution. She believes in reciprocating the support she has received to the next generation of Black staff, faculty, and leaders.

Having a strong internal and external professional network has also been a space that has helped Angela through her career. Angela has been active in various boards, committees, groups, and organizations. These professional networks helped to make Angela visible and accessible as a leader in the university to the extended Black

community. As Angela states, "It was important for me to again, as I moved up into spaces, especially as a dean . . . it's important that you know you have a Black woman dean." Angela's professional network and community involvement has not only been a space of support for her, but a way to make the institution accessible to more people.

Angela believes in finding work-life balance as a means of self-care. She describes herself as a "strong faith person" and is very involved in her faith community, she enjoys being physically active and spending time with her adult children as self-care strategies.

Main Themes Across All Participants' Experiences

This section presents the results from the interpretive analysis of the collected data. I approached the participants' experiences first through the lens of Black Feminist Thought, which ideas served as *a priori* categories that guided the creation of my first codes. Some of these *a priori* categories were Black Women Administrators, overcoming stereotypes of Black women, Black women's professional experiences, and Black women support networks. The *a priori* categories were derived from concepts in Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and known research on Black women working in administrative positions in higher education (Haywood, 2004; Scott, 2016; Mainah, 2016). In synthesizing codes to develop themes, these *a priori* categories helped me to listen for themes that emerged in this study.

Three major themes emerged from the interview transcripts and reflective journals of the four study participants. The three large themes work together to capture the lived

experiences of Black Women Deans at Predominately White Institutions. The themes touch on both these women's professional and personal experiences. The themes and their respective subthemes include:

- Battle Fatigue of Black Women Deans

    o Navigating Microaggressions

    o Questioning of Professional Competence

    o Navigating Stereotypes

- A Call to Justice

    o Leading From a Social Justice Ethos

    o Challenging the Status Quo

    o Navigating the Politics of Social Justice Centered Leadership

- Living Under the Pressure of The Concrete Ceiling

    o The Pressure of Being the First/Only

    o The Pressure of Perfection

    o The Balancing Act of the Black Tax

For the remainder of the section, I present each theme and its subthemes in detail, and provide excerpts from the participants to support my interpretation of the data.

Battle Fatigue of Black Women Deans

I derived the term "battle fatigue" from the term "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, 2003), which describes the physical and psychological toll taken on members of oppressed groups due to constant and unrelenting assaults, microaggressions, forms of

discrimination, and stereotyping. The Black women deans who participated in this study shared experiences with various forms of assaults based on their race and gender while serving as academic deans. As a result, as a theme, Battle Fatigue denotes an aspect of the lived experiences of these women. These women must overcome microaggressions, navigate their professional competency being challenged, and overcome the threat of negative stereotypes. As a response to these assaults these women have had to devise strategies to navigate the stereotype of the angry Black woman, for example, or how to address their professional competency being undermined by members of the academy community. This battle fatigue is situated in the intersection of race and gender.

Three subthemes emerged under the central theme of Battle Fatigue of a Black woman dean: Navigating microaggressions, Questioning of professional competence, and Navigating stereotypes. All four participants experienced overt and covert assaults that included microaggressions of diverse kinds, constant questioning of their professional competence, and negative stereotyping. The accumulation of such constant assaults created battle fatigue and helped describe these women's lived experiences as Black women academic deans.

Navigating Microaggressions

All participants reported having to navigate microaggressions throughout their professional trajectory and as academic deans. The majority of microaggression examples were based on the participants' race and gender. Recurring accounts of the participants speak of these women feeling invisible or having their professional contributions ignored by White colleagues, most often men. The participants shared incidents where their ideas

or professional feedback would be ignored unless restated by a White colleague in a meeting. Elaine reported microaggressions of being silenced or ignored in professional meetings particularly by her White male colleagues. Elaine states:

> I have experienced being in meetings among my White colleagues and sharing an idea, and the meeting moves on just like I did not say anything. Then a White male will share my same ideas and all of a sudden there is conversation and consideration. And it's like didn't I just say that? You know?

Similar to Elaine, Yolonda has also experienced her voice being ignored in professional settings such as meetings with her colleagues.

> I would be making a comment in a meeting about an issue or making suggestion, and it appears to go unheard until the guy next to you says the same thing and then everybody's like, 'Gosh that's a really great idea Jim!... and it's like, I just said that.

As most of my participants were among the first within their institution or college to hold both faculty and academic dean positions, they also experienced microaggressions that came in the form of profiling. Participants reported situations when they were mistaken for clerical or janitorial staff. In addition, there were accounts of insinuations that as Black women they did not belong in certain academic spaces as faculty and academic deans. Elaine shared an experience in her college where she was the first Black female academic holding a role in engineering previously held by White men or women.

Elaine recalled an encounter where she was racially profiled, and it was assumed that she was a student or a facilities worker. She states,

> I mean, I don't overtly recall anyone saying things or doing things to me because I was a woman, I think more than anything, it was more because I was Black and in engineering, it's like, oh, well why are you here? I remember when I first started my first faculty position, people would mistake me for a grad student or they would mistake me for being the help as opposed to being a faculty member.

Similar to other participants, Mya experienced the subtle questions or non-verbal cues that have suggested that as a Black woman she did not belong in certain spaces on her campus. These encounters have occurred most when she has shown up within her leadership role as an academic dean and others in the room seemed surprised. Mya has experienced subtle messages from White students, staff, and peers who have denoted discomfort or surprise when they have realized that she was holding a position that has typically been occupied by White men. As Mya shared, "I feel uncomfortable in some administrative settings. No one ever really comes up to you and out right says it, but it's like how did you get here? What are you doing here?"

Questioning of Professional Competence

Challenges to their professional competence due to their race and gender were also present in the participants' accounts. The Black women academic deans experienced additional scrutiny of decisions, resistance to leadership decisions, and criticism in ways that their White male academic deans did not. Amidst such experiences, the participants

often spoke of feeling hypervigilant about having to prove their competence and place in the academy as a Black female academic dean. Mya shared accounts where her professional decisions were often under surveillance by White male senior administrators at her institution. One example related to additional monitoring of the college budget of which she had direct oversight. Mya shared feelings of frustration that as a Black woman she had to participate in the additional labor of being hypervigilant over her decisions where her White academic deans had much less institutional oversight in decision making. According to Mya,

> Other deans, they may have more room to take risks. They may have more support to take risks. I know that's not the case with me. And I'm dealing with the situation right now, where there seems to be more university oversight when it comes to my budget and my decision making, then what are given to other units. And I've had some recent incidents where that is not the case. so now I'm questioning the institution and they're looking at me like I shouldn't be questioning them, but I am, because I know you're not doing the same level of scrutiny with other things.

Another example regarding challenges to their professional competence comes from Angela who described situations where her decisions were openly challenged by an employee reporting up to her. As a Black female leader who supervises a diverse staff, Angela is aware of the interplay of racialized dynamics. That is, the cultural rules that define power, privilege and oppression in workplace setting and how they show up in interpersonal relationships with people with different racial and cultural backgrounds. For

example, White people are empowered to say more, be more assertive and be more critical. While Black people are under the microscope, they tend to be criticized more heavily and they have less political power to be vocal and assertive without consequences. In this example, for Angela, her White male employee was hyper critical of her decisions and felt comfortable in being disrespectful to her. Angela described the situation as the following,

> I stepped in and I made a decision that someone in this department was not happy about. And in pushing back against that decision, this person made various offensive statements in an email unfortunately. This was really a jolt for someone to come out like that, because he disagreed with my decision. And he felt comfortable coming at me in that way. It was a very demeaning, offensive way he came at me, and I truly felt he would not have done that, had I not been a Black woman.

Similar to Angela, Elaine experienced situations where her leadership decisions have been challenged by members of her college. Elaine believes that because she was the first Black woman to hold a position as academic dean, many White faculty and employees in her college were critical of her decisions and resistant to her leadership. She goes on to describe the ways that her professional competence and qualifications were challenged frequently in her college as she tried to address critical issues. Faculty and other administrators in her college challenged or questioned changes in the budget and the curriculum as well as programmatic decisions. As the first Black female academic dean, Elaine's professional competency was called into question and her leadership was

often met with resistance. A group of faculty questioned if Elaine had the scholarly experience required to be dean, whereas another group questioned if she had the administrative acumen for the role. As dean, when Elaine tried to propose substantive changes to functions such as budget, curriculum, and programmatic structures she often met obstacles to implementation. When working across her college to build consensus and trust, Elaine often felt as though she had no support from her Provost or allies within her college.

> I don't know if you remember, there was a toy called the Weeble back in the day. Weebles wobble but they don't fall down? So, I equate what happened to me with like a Weeble. I got knocked down and before I got a chance to get back up, I got knocked down again.

A different kind of experience, however, came from Yolonda who shared accounts that differed from the others. As Creswell (2013) pointed out, divergent accounts such as this one is an example of negative case analysis, namely elements of the data that do not support or appear to contradict patterns that are emerging in data analysis. While other participants experienced challenges to their leadership as academic deans, Yolonda's experiences at her current institution were somewhat different. While Yolonda acknowledged experiencing some microaggressions in her current role, she also did not believe that her leadership as an academic dean has been challenged based on race and gender. Yolonda spoke of having a supportive network of academic deans and senior leaders.

Navigating Stereotypes

As academic deans navigating higher education through a Black female lens, the participants encountered stereotypes associated with controlling images of Black women such as Sapphire, Mamie, and Jezebel (Collins, 2000). These controlling images often replicate servitude and hypersexualization as opposed to a place of empowerment and a positionality of leadership for Black women.

The study's participants reported that they had to regularly spend energy on defying the damaging effect of negative stereotypes associated with controlling images of Black women and redefining what it meant to be a Black female leader in predominately White spaces.

The controlling image of Jezebel can often be used to create stereotypes that negatively exoticize Black women. As a light complexioned Black woman, Mya believed that her lighter skin tone had been viewed as more acceptable to assimilate into White culture particularly at Predominately White Institutions. As Mya explained, "I'm a light skinned Black woman, and so I know that White people feel more comfortable with my light skin and my straightened hair. I know that. I've known that my entire life." Mya has navigated assaults of being exoticized based on her physical appearance and hair texture in professional settings. Mya shared that when she has chosen to wear more Afrocentric attire and her natural hair texture in professional settings, she has had to address assaults such as comments and physical touching of her hair. As she stated,

I have had an experience of my White female department chair touching my hair on at least three occasions. And me having to tell her that, 'I'm not an animal at the zoo' and I would appreciate you not trying to pet me. And her getting offended and trying to explain herself. This happened three times. So, the first time you're like, 'Wait a minute, did this bitch just touch my hair'? And then it's like, you're kind of dazed like, 'I know she ain't just touched my hair'. And so I didn't respond because I was shocked. And then the second time I was like, 'Please don't touch my hair'. 'Oh, oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It's just so pretty'. 'Okay, don't touch my hair'. And then the third time I was like, 'Okay, I'm pretty sure I asked you not to touch my hair and just so you know, I'm not an animal at the zoo. You don't get to pet me.'

Sapphire is a controlling image that often portrays Black women as angry, loud, or emotionless. Participants recounted experiences where they were perceived as angry in professional settings where they exercised their leadership as academic deans. Participants mentioned being careful to monitor their tone, messaging, and or delivery in conversations as a strategy to minimize the likelihood of being perceived as angry or hostile by their White colleagues. According to Yolonda,

We often joke sometimes about how we have to practically whisper because if we do anything more than a whisper the exaggerated racial stereotype profiling gets laid on us. It's like, 'Oh, she was so angry'. So, we have to speak always conscious of how we speak to people, how the tone we use because you got to be super careful.

Similar to Yolonda, Elaine also feels the need to be conscious of how she communicates so as not to be perceived aggressive or angry by her peers. As she shared,

> Me and my friends talk through the frustrations of being seen as the angry Black women in meetings. Whereas others have the freedom to be passionate… to be emotional… and even downright thoughtless in their communications, Black women will always be seen as angry in the most professional of conversations.

The controlling image of Sapphire also perpetuates the negative stereotypes of Black women as stoic, strong, and void of feeling emotions. Yolonda and Mia have had experiences where their emotional vulnerability was not well received by their White colleagues. Mya shared a situation where she became emotional in a deans' meeting as the group was processing some racialized incidents involving students on her campus. In her words,

> …last month I cried publicly for the first time in front of the other deans. I was so upset in the situation, that I couldn't even get my emotions under control to be able to express to them why I was so upset. We were in a deans' meeting, deans and campus leadership, and we viewed a video from focus group interviews with Black students on campus, telling us about their trauma and what it meant for them to be on this campus and how isolating they felt. And I was triggered in all kinds of ways. Once I collected myself and felt like, 'Okay, okay, I think I can do it this time', I said what I needed to say, and I could tell that many of my colleagues were very uncomfortable. Because number one, I think women in leadership in general, feel as though they can't be emotional in workplace settings,

and then let alone not the stereotypical "strong Black woman," right? You're not supposed to be crying and doing that sort of thing. But I did have two colleagues who were sitting near me who spoke very kind words to me and offered some emotional support in the moment.

Yolonda also spoke to how as a Black woman leader she does not have the same privilege to be emotionally vulnerable as White women in professional work settings. According to Yolonda,

There are some people that have the privilege of bursting out in tears anytime. And that can be used as a weapon against Black women, frankly... Because there's a lot more... we're not seen as vulnerable as some other women are in the academy and so there's a lot more space for that and a lot less space for us to be seen as vulnerable, in need of help or support. It's really complexed the ways in which race, particularly race and intersectionality with gender, create the experiences for African American women leaders in the academy.

A Call to Justice

The theme, a call to justice, captures the participants' recurring accounts of leveraging their leadership roles to advance equity and justice within the academy. As Black women, all the participants experienced inequities throughout their career trajectory. Due to their lived experiences, they all expressed feeling a connection between their own experiences and the responsibility as academic deans to advance social justice. Three subthemes comprise the main ideas under the central theme of a call to justice.

These subthemes include leading from a social justice ethos, challenging the status quo, and navigating the politics of social justice centered leadership.

Leading from a Social Justice Ethos

The study's participants spoke to ongoing efforts to center social justice at the core of their leadership style within the role of academic dean. Many of the participants saw the role of academic dean as a vehicle to make changes within their academic fields as well as within their respective institutions. Earlier in her interviews, Elaine spoke to the historical inequities in the field of engineering that she witnessed as an engineering student attending an HBCU. Elaine recognized the underrepresentation of female engineering faculty as well as students. Later in her career at Predominately White Institutions, Elaine lead pipeline programs designed to address disparity gaps and increase the representation of underrepresented groups within the engineering. As an academic dean, Elaine saw this leadership role as an opportunity to influence both the field of engineering as well as her college by making lasting changes to remove historical barriers and increasing access. As Elaine stated,

> As a dean, I can create programs. I can create initiatives. One of the things I always tell people is engineering has been studying itself for a long time. The first report calling for reform and engineering education came out in 1990. So, we know a lot about what needs to be done and I see it as I can make those changes. I can bring forth the best of the research literature around educating students and try to create a space where engineering is becoming more accessible to those who have historically been underrepresented.

At her current institution, Elaine highlights achieving such accomplishments as improvement in retention rates and six-year graduation rates of first-generation college students under her leadership as dean.

Yolonda strongly believes that higher education should serve the public good and be available to everyone regardless of economic or social status. Yolonda is committed to impact equity and access through policies, practices, and resource allocation as an academic dean. She leads her college in important equity work such as diverse faculty hires, student access and retention programs, and diversity training to add to the broader efforts of her institution. As Yolonda shared, "When I got to the University and I really understood the impact that public higher education has on the lives of working families, low-income families and families of color. I was really all in." Yolonda went on to say,

> I mean, I really then understood that the place to do the work that was most important to me in the context of social justice was to do it as an academic dean administrator, because I had the opportunity through that type of position to make sure that students were getting a high-quality education, to make sure that students... from... Different backgrounds were being recruited. To make sure that I oversee hiring as an academic dean. So, my values around making sure we had diverse faculty…. I could actually move the dial and so I really became very passionate about higher education as a critical institution to a democracy.

Similar to Yolonda, Angela believes that providing affordable and equitable educational opportunities is central to the mission of the institution which she serves. She feels a call and responsibility to utilize her leadership role as an academic dean to ensure

that her college has been intentional about moving forward initiatives that will promote

positive change in equity initiatives across campus. Because this work is so central to

Angela's leadership values, she was one of the first academic deans to lead diversity,

equity, and inclusion initiatives on her campus. She also shared that at her institution she

was behind executing the first climate survey at her university and creating and

implementing best practices for hiring and retaining diverse faculty. As Angela

explained,

> Taking our commitment to these kinds of equity initiatives beyond just talking
>
> about them and acknowledging them, to actually putting in practice some
>
> practical steps to make sure that we saw movement in those areas. Emphasizing
>
> and being clear about my expectations about what I wanted to see; using my
>
> influence to push back and to move things forward.

Challenging the Status Quo

All participants in my study shared their commitment to speaking out against

injustice and all its various forms of oppression. All participants expressed a need to

challenge the status quo of the operations of their institutions by calling out various forms

of injustice within institutional policies and practices at their institutions. As Black

female academic deans, the participants often found themselves in spaces with senior

leadership where they faced critical decisions that impacted resources, policies, and

practices of their institutions. The participants often took on the role of being the

conscious of senior leadership when important decisions were made. As a part of serving

in this way, the participants boldly asked hard questions; spoke out against the status quo;

and used their positions as academic deans to influence changes. Pushing back against the status quo for many of the participants began with using their agency as deans to engage in difficult conversations. Participants expressed a responsibility to ask the hard questions of senior leaders as it pertained to institutional commitment and actions related to equity and justice.

Angela's strong convictions as the only Black female academic dean in spaces with White senior leaders in administration has often caused her to engage in the hard conversations around equitable practices related to policy, budget, confronting and addressing institutional injustices. Angela knows that as a dean, she holds a position within the university that affords her the ability to push back on policies and practices that continue to perpetuate various forms of oppression. As a leader who is committed to removing barriers to equity for students, staff, and faculty at her university, Angela does not hesitate in speaking truth and holding other leaders accountable for change. As Angela shared,

> As a dean, you're often in spaces. As a Black woman, you could often be the only Black person in those spaces. And so, knowing that there was nobody else, there was no other voice there, no one else was going to speak up, I had to be the one to do it, and did it willingly. And doing so knowing that it wasn't always the popular thing to do.

Similar to Angela, Mya felt a responsibility to be vocal and challenge the perspectives of her fellow deans to influence more equitable decision making. In her words,

When you're in the position of dean and you start seeing the inner workings of the university, and you start seeing what's behind closed doors and you start having access to conversations that you don't have access to as a faculty member, and it's a different...One of the challenges that I've been having is-how far do I push my fellow deans? How far do I say things like, 'What you going to do about your low faculty diversity?' I don't know.

Elaine sees her role as academic dean as a vehicle to represent the voices of the historically underrepresented both within the field of engineering and at the college level. For Elaine,

Serving as dean puts me in rooms and at platforms where I can discuss and advocate for others. I can be the one who says, oh no, we need to do this differently, because it's not attracting certain types of people. They're being omitted from this experience or conversation. So now I have that happen.

Elaine also recognizes the importance of lifting up the voices of some of her historically underrepresented graduate students who want to bring forward critical research within the field of engineering. Elaine utilizes opportunities as a dean to advocate for her students and raise the issues with the research initiative among her professional body. As Elaine reported,

The engineering deans meet regularly, and we've got this recognition program for recognizing diversity in engineering schools. And some of the young scholars who study a lot of race and racial equity, they did some research around this

initiative and they said, 'Hey Elaine, here's some problems with this thing.' And it's like, okay, well y'all write it up and I'll take it to the next meeting. So now I can broker my position of being a dean and bringing the voice of people who are not included.

Navigating the Politics of Social Justice Centered Leadership

Leading from a social justice centered ethos can also mean having the ability to skillfully navigate complex politics associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Mya navigates various narratives around her college as they are undergoing a transformation process and are grappling with how to become a college that is grounded in anti-racist practices. There is often interpersonal conflict as members of the college engage in their own journey around unpacking privilege, power and oppression and the application of these concepts. Because this particular college is undergoing transformation in its practices and policies as they adapt an antiracism philosophy, organizational conflict arises because this college's work might look different than the structures and operation of other colleges and departments within the institution. As an academic dean, Mya aims to be skillful in reputation management when external stakeholders may not understand the processes her college is going through. Mya's college is undergoing transformation in their own learning around issues of social justice – unlearning antiracism practices and individual transformation and growth. This process of transformation often leads to interpersonal conflict between members of the college: for example, operationalizing antiracist work often varies in different academic departments or, it creates controversy among campus members on what the college of

education is going through to anchor this work. Mya is able to broker the positive growth and changes of her college to engage the campus community. In her words,

> Our unit has a reputation of being focused on issues of social justice. Social justice and anti-racism, anti-oppression. So, with that, we have done... faculty have done a lot of work internally. There's been lots of tension, lots of uncomfortable points to get to a point where, collectively, we all buy into this mission. Well, externally people have seen the conflict and tension that the unit has experienced as a negative thing. And it's like, 'Oh, there they go in that school of education, they all fighting over there. They're doing this.' And so, it's like, well, it's not an easy row to tow, when you're trying to disrupt institutional racism and White supremacy. And so, there's going to be some discomfort. There's going to be some knockdown, drag out fights, that people who are in the unit may hear about and perceive negatively. And so, when I came into the role there, I think there definitely was a negative perception from other people on campus, about the faculty in the school of Ed. And one thing that I have done in my role as dean, and as an ambassador for the unit, is to tell our story and to help people understand that there was a means to an end. And to help people understand that there was a means to an end. And it's still an ongoing process. And to reposition us from being a problem unit on campus, to being a leader on campus.

Mya's willingness to advocate for the work in her college and retell their transformation story helped position her college to lead this important work at one of our nation's most critical times during the civil unrest of the global pandemic. The murder of

George Floyd as well as several other acts of racial violence across the country during the global pandemic led to an awareness that there were fractures within the higher education system. This call to justice demanded that we move beyond surface level change to address deeply rooted structural inequities in higher education.

The Pressure of Breaking Through the Concrete Ceiling

The theme, the pressure of breaking through the concrete ceiling, expresses the participants' experiences in navigating as Black women the pressure associated with their careers and the position of academic deans. It is often stated that women experience a glass ceiling when trying to move up the career ladder. The glass ceiling is hard to penetrate but it can be shattered. Black women, however, must traverse a concrete ceiling, an impenetrable barrier that is almost impossible to break when you are trying to move up the career ladder (Griffith, 2015). For Black women in the academy, the concrete ceiling creates an insurmountable obstacle that significantly impacts their ability to move up to senior level leadership. All participants shared initiatives and experiences that placed them in positions as trailblazers and often the first or among the few to hold positions of leadership, including that of the academic dean. Participants provided many examples that described the pressure associated with being a leader or the first. Three sub themes capture the main ideas in this theme: The pressure of being the first/only, the pressure of perfection, and the balancing act of the Black tax.

The Pressure of Being the First/Only

All participants shared experiences related to the challenge of being the first or only Black woman to hold critical positions within their institutions or even fields of study. Those experiences spanned their entire careers including their current academic deanship roles. Yolonda's example provides an illustration of the toll and isolation she experienced while moving up the career labyrinth and noticing the few Black women professionals along the way,

> I am routinely the only African American woman in a room and often, I'll be the only African American in my department, only tenured African American full professor in an institution for a while. I'm the only tenured African American woman academic dean in the state. All of those things are just examples where the further you go up the more isolated it can get. But when you talk about race, there's still a lot of barriers, a lot fewer people of color, particularly African American, Latinx people who are at positions of leadership in higher education. It can be lonely.

Similarly, Elaine reflected on her trajectory of often being the first or only Black faculty and ultimately one of very few academic deans in the field of engineering. For her, it became clear early enough what an impact a Black female leader could exert, as well as what difficulties such a leader would face without the access to a political and social network of other Black female leaders to support her in moving through academic spaces. As Elaine stated,

Again, a Black woman in engineering. You're so used to being a Black woman in engineering and an only one because as an engineering person my community is all White, right? I mean, I'm at a Predominantly White Institution. So, there might have been some other Black faculty around, but there were no Black women leaders for me to observe, study, emulate, whatever.

While each of the participants have had to face the isolation of being the only or one of the very few Black female leaders at their institutions, they have to be strategic about building support for themselves. As an example, throughout her career, Mya chose to work with an executive coach in her first year as an academic dean. This coach was also a Black female leader and was able to provide support and strategy unstratified on how Mya could navigate the political terrain in her role as dean. The support of this executive coach was important because Mya did not have access to the social and political networks of other Black female professionals to navigate the institution in the same manner as her White academic deans. As Mya reported,

When I came into the interim dean role, the vice chancellor asked me if I wanted a woman of color as my coach. And I said I absolutely do, and preferably a Black woman. And I got that. And I credit her, I mean, she was a former provost, a former dean, a former department chair... she's held many executive leadership positions at different universities. And I credit her to helping me navigate these racial and gendered spaces of the academy as a dean. She was my safe place. I could just say, 'Okay, this is what's going on, and this is how I'm trying to deal

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with it'. I mean, I cried with her. It was heavy. It was so heavy because the learning curve was so high, and I didn't want to do it.

Similar to Mya, Angela has experienced isolation in her role as academic dean. Often times she reported being made to feel as she was "back doored" into key positions within the university. Angela has experienced being promoted or afforded opportunities by White colleagues who might have held alternative motives using the promotion of a Black woman to show that they are not racist. As Angela reported,

> Of what I've experienced is that having a Black woman in a leadership position also gives them some sense of credibility. Again, I have found that academia is a really funny place because people believe that it is an institution in which categorically people hold these very open, liberal ideas. There are just a lot of spaces where people, who don't reveal themselves to be that way, who get into the institution, also really kind of have antiquated ideas. It's always a surprise when they come up and they can come up. So, I would say on the one hand, for an institution to bring in and provide opportunities and promote Black women, I've experienced that, those opportunities are there. But also, they're wrapped in paternalism and the motivation sometimes isn't pure. What I have found in my experience is people who want to encourage you and push your name forward and provide opportunities for you, sometimes those people, their motivation is to be your White savior.

The Pressure of Perfect Performance

Participants expressed feeling that their performance as administrators and particularly academic deans were often under a microscope. Participants felt pressure to over-perform or strive for perfection in their roles because they were the only Black women holding such positions of leadership within their institution.

When discussing the pressure to perform as an academic dean, Yolonda reflected on her upbringing. She was raised to believe that she has to work harder to be professionally on par with her White peers. As Yolonda shared,

> My mother used to tell me when I was a kid, that you're going to have to always be two steps ahead. And so really, you're going to have to be two steps ahead, because you're a woman, and you're going to have to be two steps ahead, because you're African American, just to be seen as on par. I think that it puts a lot of stress on me and on African American women in general in the academy. I think there's a lot of pressure to be excellent in higher education and it doesn't seem to be much room for average Black women. You really have to be like a superwoman with all the expectations and accomplishments in order to just get to similar levels.

When Mya spoke to the pressure of being perfect or over performing, she reflected on a conversation with a mentor early in her career. In this conversation, her mentor made it clear that as a Black woman professional she always had to work harder and over-perform to be seen as acceptable. According to Mya,

One of my Black colleagues who was tenured, she said to me, she said, 'Look, they like Megan. They're going to do whatever they can do to make sure she is successful.' She said, 'So you just need to stay on par or one step ahead of whatever she's doing. If she put out two publications, you put out three.' So, she said, 'Because you guys are going to go up at the same time and they want to tenure her. So, you make it so that they cannot help but to tenure you.'

Mya shared that she utilized this advice from her mentor throughout her career, and that she still feels the pressure to over-perform and be perfect or be at risk of being replaced. In her words,

I always go back to what I told you earlier about my colleague, Megan, they wanted her to be successful. Didn't nobody give a shit about me. It's like they wanted her to be successful because they want the portfolio of the university to look well. And so, I try to leverage that to my advantage, but I also know that they still see me as replaceable, and they will do a Beyonce to the left on me in a minute.

Because of this pressure to over perform Mya over performs by taking on additional task as referenced in a prior theme.

The Balancing Act of the Black Tax

Participants also faced the exhaustion of cultural taxation. All participants reported that they were often asked to address issues on behalf of the Black community

as the only Black female academic leader in their colleges. Angela spoke to this form of cultural taxation in the following way,

> The tendency to seek out Black people when it was a Black issue. So, I would say again throughout my career, and even as a Dean called upon to either step in when there were incidents or crises involving Black people, or to sit on committees or task force or tenure promotion or those kinds of things.

Similarly, Yolonda spoke about the balancing act of serving on various committees as well as being the leader that other Black professionals sought for advocacy or mentorship. As Yolonda stated,

> If there's only one person of color at an institution, then that person becomes a person that any other person trying to strive for professional or academic advancement, they reach out to….If you're a Black woman trying to talk to a Black woman administrator and there's one, I'm going to get like 30 calls. And so, the responsibility around mentorship of other academic leaders, of other faculty, of other students, is significant.

Mya too expressed the sentiment of balancing the needs of being needed as a leader and mentor within the Black community with her other work responsibilities. She described the expectation of Black women to carry so many responsibilities by saying, "Black women…. we do it all." Mya believes that as a Black woman, she has to take on additional work not only because there is a lack of other Black leaders to step in, but she

also feels the need to be a step ahead of her other deans in her professional contributions. According to her,

> You got to be better than everybody else. And as a dean, I still have my research, I have two major grants, I'm supporting research teams, I'm writing with junior scholars, doctoral students. I got eight advisees right now, all of them Black. Mostly Black women. Other deans are not doing none of this shit.

Chapter Four Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. It retold the narratives of the research participants as a means of allowing the reader to gain perspective about the unique personal and professional journeys of each participant. Further, the narratives allowed the reader to understand both individual and collective experiences across the participants as they defined what it means to be a Black female academic dean working at a Predominately White Institution. The chapter also offered an overview of the thematic findings that resulted from data collection and analysis processes. Three main themes emerged from the study: Battle Fatigue of Black Women Deans, Call to Justice, and Living under the Pressure of the Concrete Ceiling. These three themes capture the lived experiences of Black female academic deans.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to uncover the lived experiences, both professional and personal, of Black female academic deans across Predominantly White institutions (PWIs), and to draw out commonalities and differences among them. Through phenomenological inquiry, the study aimed to examine how Black female administrators made meaning of their personal and professional experiences as academic deans at Predominately White Institutions. This interpretive phenomenological approach allowed me to capture rich descriptive data of the participants' lived experiences and identify themes that capture the essence of what it means to be a Black female academic dean. This chapter provides a discussion of the research findings. It also includes recommendations for practice and future research. The chapter ends with concluding remarks about Black female academic deans across PWIs.

Key Findings

The following research question guided this study: What are the lived experiences of Black female academic deans at Predominantly White Institutions? Three key findings emerged from the interviews with the study's participants. Together, these findings capture the essence of the lived experiences of the participants in the study. The first finding reflects both the underlining fatigue that Black female deans battle on a daily basis as they navigate constant assaults related to their race and gender as well as their resilience that define their leadership in the face of such assaults. The second finding captures these deans' commitment to channel their leadership oversight towards holding institutions accountable for their inequitable and unjust philosophy and practices. And

finally, the third finding reflects Black female deans' struggles to reimagine the norms and standards of the academic deanship position to embrace historically under-represented members such as themselves.

These findings suggest that Black female academic deans forage a unique experience as they chart a leadership path that remains under-represented and understudied within the academy. The paucity of research and the lack of critical mass of Black women within the academic deanship necessitate a deeper exploration into these women's unique challenges experienced as a result of both their race and their gender. In the face of the difficulties they face as Black female leaders, these women persist to develop and demonstrate a sense of resiliency and authenticity. In the process, they are redefining the academic deanship through a Blackened female lens. Further, they emerge as social change agents who possess a leadership ethos that is visible in and beyond the Black community. In essence, they serve as conduits of change.

The participants' narratives offered rich descriptions of their experiences. Facing insurmountable pressures as they traversed their career pipelines, these women relied on networks such as mentorship, sister circles, professional networks, and affinity spaces. These spaces of mentorship and cultural affirmation equipped these Black female academic deans to lead from a place of empowerment, despite their outsider within status. They themselves used their lived experiences to reimagine, guide, and cultivate the next generation of Black female leaders in higher education.

Detailed Discussion of the Key Research Findings

In this section, I discuss each key finding in detail and its alignment with existing research.

First Key Finding: Underlining fatigue that Black female deans battle on a daily basis as they navigate constant assaults related to their race and gender, as well as their resilience that defines their leadership in the face of such assaults.

The first and most important key finding of my study points to the Black women deans' relentless exhaustion with discriminatory practices encountered while serving as academic deans – practices associated with both their race and their gender. The finding speaks of exhaustion with the daily battles Black female academic deans navigate that are not always overt or easily defined by legal definitions of discrimination, but typically come in more as covert forms of assaults. For the study's participants, these forms of assaults often came in the form of microaggressions or invalidations, or stereotype threats, or challenges to their leadership.

In this study, all the participants experienced the battle fatigue associated with the labor of proving their existence as Black women who were redefining an academic role historically held by White men. All the participants recognized and experienced various forms of microaggressions and invalidations. The majority of these microaggressions were expressed in the form of disrespectful behavior, silencing in meetings, racialized and gendered comments and overcoming negative stereotypes about "the angry Black woman." One of the more exhausting challenges faced by several of the participants was navigating the invalidations that implied they "did not belong" or "were mistakenly in the

wrong place" as Black women academic deans. Participants reported struggling around the awkward verbal and non-verbal communications that expressed shock when they entered spaces as the dean of their college. In combination, the deans' narratives suggest that Black women academic deans constantly endure exhaustion and stress known as battle fatigue associated with the unrelenting assaults based on race and gender. Navigating the assaults of race and gender adds to the stress and ambiguity that is associated with many of the functions of the academic deanship.

Notwithstanding these issues and experiences, my research participants also developed a sense of resilience while serving in their respective deanship positions. They were not afraid to question their institutions when colleagues tried to hyper-surveil them. Likewise, they countered colleagues who questioned their presence at the institution and in the deanship roles. When their leadership and expert skills were doubted, from skills to devise and manage budgets, through complex human resource issues, to abilities to engage their faculty, at each situation they were able to find creative ways to overcome the challenge. They also learned to navigate campus by building relationships and moved their academic disciplines forward. They achieved these feats and reimagined their ability to lead, all the while maintaining their identities as Black women deans of high personal and professional integrity.

This key finding of the study aligns with prior research on the challenges Black women administrators face, as well as contributes to research with its specific insights into the lived experiences of the Black female academic deans. Navigating the dual oppression of race and gender presents unique challenges for Black women seeking positions such as the academic deanship. As Taylor (2007) shares, that oppression based

on race and gender is very present, but its new forms of assaults and discriminatory behaviors are ambiguous and can be challenging to identify. Many of these forms of assaults come in the form of microaggressions faced daily by Black women administrators. Similar findings come from Howard-Hamilton's (2003) and Nixon's (2017) studies on the experiences of women of color holding the position of chief diversity officers. Nixon (2017) found that the participants in her study reported having to navigate the impact of microaggressions and that facing negative stereotypes weighed on the chief diversity officers.

As another form of assault, Black women leaders often report experiencing challenges to their professional competence as a result of their race and gender. The early work of Ramey (1995) sought to understand obstacles and coping strategies of Black female administrators working at Predominately White Institutions. As one of the key findings of this study, the participants reported lack of needed authority to do their jobs. Dowdy and Hamilton (2012) studied the career path of a Black female faculty member who ultimately became a department chair and associate dean. They identified challenges such as management and challenges of being Black and female in this administrative role. Similar to the findings of the present study, Dowdy and Hamilton (2012) determined that the assaults faced by the participant such as stereotype threat, microaggressions, and challenges to professional competencies further complicated the role of dean. More recent studies continued to note the challenges faced by Black women senior academic leaders. Townsend (2021) interviewed five participants to understand the retention of Black female administrators at public institutions. Townsend's findings attributed the Black tax, microaggressions, and lack of ability to show up as their authentic selves as

contributing factors to the low retention rates of Black women administrators at Predominately White Institutions. More compelling throughout the study, participants reported feeling negatively impacted, silenced, and devalued in their identity as Black women administrators working at Predominately White Institutions. Banks and Landau (2021) sought to understand the cognitive effect of microaggressions on Black college women. Their study found that for participants who identified race as central to their identity, there was an immediate negative impact to their cognitive function.

These studies speak to the devastating impact of racial and gendered microaggressions and other forms of assaults that Black female administrators confront daily. They also document the physical trauma as evidenced by diminished cognitive function that can happen when Black women administrators face such types of assaults. Understanding the impact of various assaults is important to understanding the leadership and coping strategies adopted by Black female leaders. A few studies have enhanced our understanding in this respect. Cook's (2022) study of Black female senior academic leaders' styles of leadership revealed that participants valued the following attributes as a part of their leadership: transformation, qualities from parents, mentorship, and understanding and connecting with people (to better understand their leadership style). The administrators in this study noted how the duality of race and gender shaped their experience as administrators as well as their leadership style. Most importantly, administrators in this study noted feeling the need to code switch in certain spaces due to their identities as Black women in predominately White spaces.

Chance (2021) studied the leadership development of Black women senior leaders through adversity or crucible experiences. For the participants in this study, advice or

crucible experiences were significant events that happened within their personal and professional lives. These experiences helped them find resilience by examining their values, questioning their assumptions, and sharpening their judgment. This study found that the participants' adversity or crucible experiences strengthen their resilience and ability to lead their organizations at Predominately White Institutions.

Recent research findings thus align strongly with the findings of the present study both in identifying assaults as daily challenges for Black female deans as well as in navigating assault such as micro aggressions and micro invalidations. Existing research has also illuminated various coping strategies and self-definition of leadership adopted by Black women in administrative positions. Similarly, accounts from participants in my study have echoed the application of strategies to persist and define their own leadership ethos. For the participants, strategies have emerged in the combined context of the complexity of the deanship position and the daily assaults they needed to navigate. The academic deanship is challenging because the individual is accountable to both the culture of academia as well as the corporate administration associated with senior leadership (Gallows, 2002). Due to the growing complexity of the role and the tensions between faculty and administration, there are stresses such as administration issues, faculty, fundraising, and pressures from senior leadership associated with the academic deanship (Gmelch et al., 1999). For Black women academic deans, the dual oppression of race and gender add additional challenges that further create obstacles and stress within the deanship.

There continues to be a paucity in the literature that informs our understanding of the experiences of Black female academic deans. This current study adds to existing research insights into the unique leadership experiences of Black female academic deans. Further, this study fills gaps in the literature on the ways in which the duality of race and gender impact the role and responsibilities of the deanship and add to a dean's stress.

Second Key Finding: Black female deans' commitment to channel their leadership oversight towards holding institutions accountable for inequitable and unjust philosophies and practices.

The second key finding of this study contributes to the essence of what it means to be a Black female dean with its emphasis on the deans' strife to fight injustice daily. The finding thus captures the participants' accounts of leveraging their roles as academic deans to influence priorities related to equity and social justice at their respective institutions. The commitment of these participants to uplifting equity and justice as one of their key priorities comes from their own lived experiences as Black women navigating academic spaces. This finding demonstrates the leadership values, intentionality, and risk the participants take in order to ensure that social justice work is central to how they define their academic deanship.

For all participants in my study, social justice anchored their leadership values. Three of the participants felt influenced by their own racialized and gendered experiences and one participant was influenced by their world view as opposed to race and gender. All participants recalled various accounts of the inequities and ways in which institutions of higher learning continue to perpetuate injustices which limit equitable access.

Likewise, these participants also had their own experiences with navigating barriers within higher education due to their race and gender. These lived experiences have shaped their values and commitment to seeing the academic deanship as important in ensuring that equity and social justice are prioritized.

Given the participants' unanimous commitment to integrate social justice and equity within their role as academic deans, it is not surprising that the data revealed a similar commitment to question the status quo at their institutions. Each of the participants recognized that as Black women holding positions as academic deans, they were poised to be in critical spaces where they would be called upon to be the voice for marginalized communities and conscious of their institutions. The data revealed that each of the participants was aware of the unique position they were in as the only Black female academic dean and many times one of very few Black leaders on their campuses. The participants felt it important to utilize this status to advocate as well as challenge the institution. These participants utilized their positionality as senior leaders and political acumen to be strategic in pushing their institutions towards more equitable policies and practices. Each of these participants reflected the ability to find a space of empowerment while also encountering injustices due to their own marginalized positionality within the institution.

The social justice commitment that emerged as a cornerstone of the Black female identity in the present study had found its place across findings of preceding research as well. Black women have had a long history of activism and speaking to issues of injustice. Many of these pioneering activists were early educators (Jones & Dufor, 2012). Ferguson was among the first notable Black female pioneers to uplift through the creation

of a school known as the Katy Ferguson School for the Poor (Jones & DuFour, 2012). Sarah Douglass was also an activist who contributed to the teaching profession. Among her accolades, she was known for her work to end slavery (Jones & Dufor, 2012). The contributions of these women were particularly important because they taught themselves and educated other members of the Black community during a time when Black people did not have legal rights to educational opportunities (Evans, 2007). These early teachers paved the way for many Black female trailblazers who worked to provide educational access and activism within higher education. Pioneers such as Mary Jane Patterson, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Anna Julia Cooper were among the first Black women to hold university positions, serve as principals of schools, and participate in various forms of activism (Evans, 2007). As the participation of women in higher education increased after the Civil War, there were more formalized positions to support the matriculation of women students on college campuses (Evans, 2007). Lucy Diggs Slowe was the first Black woman to serve in the role of dean of students (Evans, 2007; Parker, 2015). Slowe served as dean of women at Howard University in 1922 (Evans, 2007; Parker, 2015). Slowe assumed the position of dean during the era of new Negro womanhood and used this new social and political platform to advocate for the rights of college women at Howard. During Slowe's tenure as dean, she was known to make an impact on improving social equity for women and shifting the role of dean to advocacy through institutional policy (Lindsey, 2016). Slowe's work and advocacy as the first dean of women at Howard was inexigent because the dean of women role typically had a focus on parental guidance rather than being valued as passionate work to align institutional practices to support the college experiences and matriculation of women.

While the involvement of Black women educators has been directly related to the advance of social justice movements, there is a paucity in the literature to guide our understanding of how Black female academic leaders have led engaged social justice work as a part of their administrative positions. The commitment of this study's participants to prioritize equity and social justice work as a part of their role as academic dean aligns with the early work of many of the Black female pioneers who were early education activists. The finding of this study that shed light on Black academic deans in particular contribute to our understanding of the ways these Black academic leaders also engage in issues to fight injustice. We know that Black women have been at the forefront of leading diversity initiatives particularly at Predominately White Institutions. Existing research provides little insight to inform our knowledge of the social, political, and cultural impact of Black women in higher education who are actively engaged in social justice work on their campuses. However, we know that Black faculty and administrators who take on tasks such as being representatives on diversity committees, mentoring students of color, and leading other diversity initiatives often experience cultural taxation (Reddick et al., 2020). Research has also demonstrated that there is political risk associated with Black women and other people of color who engage in diversity work on their campuses (Haynes et al., 2020). According to Cooper (2016), "There is a romantization of Black women's devotion and dedication to movement spaces and a kind of lip service that gets paid to the value that these women bring to these spaces. But when the time comes to acknowledge the labor and thinking that helps facilitate Black resistance and Black freedom, they forget our names" (Public Speech).

The experiences of the participants in this study align with existing literature on the involvement of Black women and their participation in social justice initiatives. Similar to the pioneers who were early educators and activists, the participants in this study were the first or only Black women to occupy the academic deanship at their institutions. They felt a commitment to utilize their positions to address a range of equity and social justice dilemmas to ensure that the landscape of higher education would improve for students and other minoritized educational leaders who would come behind them. These women had to also negotiate the cultural and political climate of being leaders who hold marginalized identities who are having their own experiences marginalized within the institution while advocating for others. These academic deans had to be strategic about when and how they both advocated for equitable policy and practices and interrupted injustices as leaders on their campus who themselves faced vulnerability as the only Black female senior leader in senior leadership.

This study's key finding on the Black female deans' active engagements with social justice initiatives fills existing gaps in the literature on how Black female administrators negotiate their engagement with activism and social justice within their role. Further, this study adds to existing research by providing insights into the ways in which social justice-centered priorities can shape job functions such as budgeting, faculty retention, and research within the academic deanship.

Third Key Finding: Black female deans' struggles to reimagine the norms and standards of the academic deanship to embrace historically under-represented members such as themselves.

The third key finding of this study completed the picture of the essence of what it means to be a Black female dean at a Predominantly White Institution by bringing to light the Black female deans' struggles to push against existing deanship norms that discriminate against them. This study's participants have experienced unique obstacles because of the lack of critical mass of Black women at their institutions or even within their fields of study. Only a few Black women before them have ever reached the pinnacle of academic deanship. The participants in my study had to negotiate obstacles such as isolation, pressure, and balancing multiple expectations as they defined what it meant to be a Black female academic dean.

All participants experienced isolation as they were the only Black women leaders in their institution, region, or even in their discipline. They did not have access to traditional collegial networks or mentoring to navigate their academic deanship. They felt pressure to be perfect and live under the pressure of being super women while balancing their personal and professional lives and showing no apparent failures. They felt the need to overcompensate by producing a greater amount of research than their peers, the need to support students in their college by advising their master's and doctoral theses while they led their colleges and while they were called upon to take a primary role in supporting issues of the Black community. While these experiences were challenging, these women led from a place of empowerment by creating their own blueprint of what it meant to be a Black woman academic dean.

All the participants experienced being either the first or only Black female to hold faculty and other leadership positions on their trajectory to becoming academic dean. All the participants reported feeling the isolation, pressure, and cultural taxation that was

associated with being among a very small number of Black women who had reached this level of academic leadership as Black women working at Predominately White Institutions. The positionality of these Black female academic deans placed them at the margins of their institution and limited their access to traditional cultural, social, and political networks within their institutions.

The participants unanimously reported feeling pressure as the only Black female academic dean. The pressure came in the form of feeling that they had to exceed the performance of their peers - particularly White male deans. Most of the participants reported taking on additional labor and feeling as if they did not have the ability to make mistakes within their role. Participants also expressed feeling the pressure of always having to be hypervigilant over public perception and public presentation to manage their reputation.

All participants reported struggling with the balancing act of being a representative for the Black community in various ways. The participants were aware that their leadership roles made them highly visible within their own communities. As highly visible members within the Black community, the participants were often sought after for various initiatives, mentorship of immerging Black professionals, and asked to help their institutions address issues pertaining to Black students. While the participants welcomed these opportunities, they often found themselves being overwhelmed with trying to balance serving their communities with all their other needs and responsibilities.

The participants also reported success in finding strategies to resist against the isolation, pressure, and cultural taxation they faced as Black female academic leaders. All the participants valued mentoring relationships and their professional networks as

resources that refueled them. The participants utilized these mechanisms as a safe place to process and strategize about complex challenges. These spaces were also safe spaces where they could connect with other Black women with shared experiences across institutions. These extended professional communities and mentoring relationships often provided a space for vulnerability and growth that the participants do not have access to within their own institutions.

This third key finding also aligned strongly with existing research. While educational attainment has improved significantly, there continues to be an absence of Black women within the administrative leadership pipeline of higher education. In her study, Mosley (1980) described Black women administrators as an endangered species. Mosley and other scholars noted the obstacles that Black women traversing the administrative pipeline faced due to a lack of critical mass. Mosley (1980) identified isolation, marginalization, and tokenism as major barriers faced by Black women administrators. Glazer-Ramo (2001) found that while the presence of Black women administrators was increasing, they continued to experience isolation, exclusion from informal networks, and institutional discrimination. These seemingly insurmountable obstacles faced by Black female academic leaders has also been described as a concrete ceiling (Griffith, 2015).

Despite the concrete ceiling, Black women administrators have been able to adopt strategies that have uniquely defined their leadership journey and helped them break through the concrete ceiling (Gause, 2022). Gause (2022) studied eight Black female community college presidents and sought to understand how these presidents utilized resilience to circumvent barriers within their leadership roles. The study identified

emotional intelligence, agility, and authenticity as critical elements of resiliency employed by the participants. As an example, participants utilized agility when choosing how to access social and political networks as Black women leaders working among mostly White male leaders. Chase (2021) also studied resilience as a strategy of Black female administrators navigating adversity associated with their roles as senior administrators. The researcher studied motivation factors of resilience adopted by the participants that include family, mentorship, and cultural spaces. Using a sample of four Black female administrators, Chase (2021) found that resilience through adversity shaped their leadership. The researcher found that Black women administrators undergo various forms of adversity that include limited role models, the concrete ceiling, tokenism, and navigating the intersection of race and gender.

Existing research findings align with the experiences of the participants in this study. As trailblazers, the Black female deans often face isolation and extenuating pressure and have to overcome many obstacles within their positions. Similar to findings in prior research, the participants in this study have had to create professional and mentoring networks to counter the isolation they face.

The Utility of the Theoretical Framework

Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) served as a theoretical foundation for this study. It centered the nuanced experiences associated with the Black female academic deans in this study. This theoretical framework offered critical guidance to me while collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data, as well as while synthesizing my findings. Through its use, I was able to hear the voices of the participants and center their experiences as academic deans through a Blackened female lens. Several of Collins'

(2002) concepts allowed me to enter the study with strong ideas and *a priori* categories. In addition, her ideas guided my detailed analysis of the data. Her concept of the Black Women's Standpoint pushed me interrogate the ways in which each participant in my study defined her own reality of Black womanhood, both personally and professionally. This distinguishing feature helped me to identify commonalities shared by the Black female academic leaders as well as tease out nuances in the data that were unique to each participant. Likewise, it helped me to listen and account for their resistance to the historically White norms of leadership found in academia, while redefining and reframing the academic deanship as Black women.

Next, the Outsider Within and the Controlling Images concepts (Collins, 2000) further allowed me to read closely my participants' experiences. I was able to capture the marginalized roles they found themselves in as well as the isolation they often found themselves in as a result of the lack of professional network and their outsider status. In addition, I was alert to the stereotypes these participants mentioned that applied to Black females and aimed to control their conduct. Finally, Collins' ideas related to the Matrix of Domination, which examined "structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power that reappear across different forms of oppression" (p. 18), guided me to explore the microaggressions and other forms of assault that these women found themselves subjected to on a daily basis. All these ideas provided me with a useful lens of analysis as I approached the data collection and data analysis in this study.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

The present study's findings carry several implications for practice and policy related to academic deans and Black women administrators at Predominately White

Institutions. These implications relate to efforts to increase the number of Black female academic deans within Predominately White Institutions, to improve campus culture and climate within institutions, to create professional development opportunities and initiatives, and to provide culturally affirming Black women's counterspace for Black women leaders working at Predominately White Institutions.

Follow Inclusive Hiring and Recruitment Practices of Black Female Faculty and Administrators

While there have been improvements in the representation of Black women in the administrative pipeline within PWIs, there continues to be an underrepresentation within senior level academic positions. Specifically, the research as well as the findings from this study reveal that the representation of Black female academic deans within PWIs is virtually nonexistent. Participants in this study noted being the only academic dean within their institutions, regions, and even academic disciplines. Further, participants in this study noted the lack of Black female administrators as they moved up the career pipeline. Finally, some of the participants noted early in their careers being the first or only Black female tenure track or full professor within their academic discipline at certain institutions. This participant feedback suggests a need for Predominately White Institutions to be more intentional and inclusive in their recruitment, hiring, and retention practices. Bennett and York (2020) suggest that continued underrepresentation of people of color in administrative and faculty positions is rooted in exclusionary systems and practices embedded in recruitment and hiring, a lack of sense of belonging, and how performance is evaluated. In order to support inclusive practices, institutions must search for ways to increase the number of Black female administrators in the pipeline.

A current model to advance these practices, particularly in faculty searches, is the participation of a Diversity Search Advocate (DSA). Oregon State University is recognized for their use of the DSA program (https://searchadvocate.oregonstate.edu), where a Diversity Advocate is assigned to each search committee to ensure training of the committee in inclusive search practices. Additionally, the Diversity Advocate supports the search committee in ensuring that all parts of the job search cycle are free from bias and upholds the values of the institution in reference to equitable hiring practices. A second recommendation under inclusive hiring is the consideration of cluster hiring when conducting faculty searches. When carried out with intentionality, cluster hiring can bring in multiple faculty within a particular discipline. This approach also allows for greater support and collaboration among the cohort of faculty who have been hired.

Finally, when considering hiring and the promotion of faculty, the retention and tenure promotion process (RTP) is vitally important. All aspects of the RTP process, including the composition of the review committee, should follow equitable and inclusive processes and practices. The retention and tenure promotion process' evaluation standards and rubrics should include areas that acknowledge specific scholarship and service often carried out by faculty of color. They, along with other factors, should be a part of the rigorous standards for tenure.

Improve Campus Culture and Climate

Similarly, efforts to address issues with campus culture and climate relate to institutionalized overt and covert practices of racism and discrimination, especially with respect to Black female administrators. As this study's findings suggest, participants experienced various assaults due to the overlapping oppression of race and gender. In

addition, the participants experienced unique obstacles associated with their identities as Black women working in Predominately White Institutions where their historical exclusion is still present. The experiences of the participants suggest that there needs to be intentional efforts to improve the campus culture and climate to increase their sense of belonging within the institution. Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) attribute transformation of campus climate to the ability to "unfreeze, move, and reset the campus culture" (p. 257). When institutions acknowledge the various forms of racial and gendered oppression facing Black women attempting to be leaders, there are greater opportunities to positively shift the campus culture and climate.

Here are some specific recommendations towards improving the campus climate for historically underrepresented groups but with a particular focus on culture and climate related to the wellbeing and retention of Black female faculty and administrators. First, institutions should regularly engage in the use of campus culture and climate surveys to identify areas of strength and opportunity. Such culture and climate surveys should happen approximately every 3-5 years and should be used to inform measurable action steps for improvement. Further, this culture climate assessment data should be utilized to inform work in the strategic plan, allocation to DEI program and its priorities, and inform allocation of budgets to support initiatives. For example, budget allocations for specific DEI training, leadership programs for Black women in academia and, mentoring and retention programs for Black women faculty and staff.

In addition to the culture and climate survey there should be assessments and focus groups to understand the experiences of historically underrepresented members of

the academic community including Black women. The data collected from these assessments should be used to guide priorities, policies, and practices related to the recruitment and retention of Black women faculty and administrators. A healthy campus climate includes policies and practices that affirm the institutional values on civility, respect, known discrimination, and retaliation. Additionally, there should be a culture that provides avenues of support and resolution of both allegations that rise to the legal threshold of discrimination as well as acts of bias or harm that may fall below the legal definition of discrimination. Finally, there should be transparent mechanisms that report ways that hold the institution accountable for resolving discrimination and other forms of harm.

Create Professional Development Opportunities

Finally, efforts to provide diverse professional development opportunities to aspiring Black female administrators for growth are strongly needed. Participants in this study pointed to professional development opportunities as an important and valuable resource for academic deans. The participants also noted the ambiguity of the academic deanship and reported that as faculty stepping into these administrative roles, they found the learning curve to be steep. Eddy (2009) suggests that most academic leaders begin their administrative trajectory through faculty ranks and then holding positions such as chair, academic dean, and provost. As a means of more effectively preparing faculty who desire to move along the academic administrative trajectory, it is important to provide educational pathways to strengthen their preparation. I am recommending faculty leadership development cohorts focused on leadership development for faculty interested

in academic administration. More specifically I am recommending faculty leadership development cohorts for Black women faculty members aspiring to administrative positions. A Black Faculty women's leadership cohort experience can focus on the nuanced needs of Black female leaders and provide resources such as community connections, mentorship by Black female academic leaders, and executive coaching.

Just as it is important to prepare faculty for the academic administrative pipeline, it is equally important to connect academic deans to professional development both within their institutions and more broadly. These opportunities provide opportunities to learn best practices and collaborate across colleges to enhance the educational experiences of students. I am recommending that institutions offer working groups and cohorts for academic deans with professional development opportunities that include professional competencies for the academic deanship including the application of DEI principles. I am also recommending networks of Black female academic deans that reach more broadly beyond the institution. These broader networks are needed because the number of Black female academic deans are so small. I am recommending that this network for Black female academic deans combine addressing professional competencies of the academic deanship along with the needed leadership strategies required to face the additional obstacles of race and gender that often define the unique experiences of Black female academic deans.

Provide Culturally Affirming Black Women's Counter Spaces

The participants in this study shared that informal networks of Black community spaces and particularly Black women spaces were important in nurturing their wellbeing.

These were often spaces where the participants believed they could show up as Black women and be vulnerable and embraced by their community(s). West (2015) described professional counter spaces as an intentionally designed cultural experience designed by Black women for Black women. This experience both nurtured and contributed to the personal wellbeing and professional development of Black women.

Many institutions offer informal Black women's networks or communities of practice. These counter spaces are created to decrease feelings of isolation by bringing together a network of Black women to build community through informal social activities, professional development, and providing a forum for Black women to collectively address institutional inequities that directly impact them as students, staff, faculty, and administrators. It is therefore recommended upper and mid-level administrators open up spaces for training newly minted PhDs, to help them think about administration in the future. This includes giving them opportunities and increasing awareness at the grass roots level so that the seed is planted early in their careers. This is especially important for Black women due to our hyper invisibility in the academy. Black women need the encouragement and opportunities early on like White male faculty often are often given as standard operating procedures in the academy. In order to increase the standing of Black women in administration in the academy, the pipeline must be opened up early and often. Black women counter spaces are critical to increasing awareness and allowing access. There are many examples of these informal Black women's counter spaces. One example of this counter space is Legacy Community of Practice at Sacramento State University (https://www.csus.edu/division-inclusive-excellence/).

In addition to my recommendation for institutions to host informal Black women's networks, I am also recommending the creation of professional summits for Black female academic leaders. These professional summits would situate the unique experiences of Black female chairs, academic deans, and provost. The summit would be designed to provide mentoring, learn best practices, and build a far-reaching network of Black female academic administrators that can thrive as leaders in the academy.

Implications for Policy

This study holds several implications for policies that ultimately hold higher education, but particularly public institutions, accountable for efforts in addressing the lack of critical mass of Black women in positions such as academic dean. Federal laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IV, and other related affirmative action and antidiscrimination laws should guide robust policies that support the recruitment and retention of Black women in the academy. Institutions should build strong policies that support recruitment, hiring, promotion, and equitable pay of Black women faculty and administrators.

In addition to federal legislation many states have certain qualifications tied to their funding models for public institutions. One of the areas that state policies hold institutions accountable for is funding allocations for student attrition and graduation rates. Research consistently links the sense of belonging and academic success of Black students to the presence of Black staff and faculty on college campuses (Harper, 2012; Strayhorn, 2008; Taylor, 2021). These state funding requirements

related to student success can be used to influence policies that promote increasing the numbers of Black faculty and Black senior leaders on campus.

Higher education accrediting entities such as the Higher Education Learning Commission (HELC) can influence policies that support the presence of Black women on college campuses. Accrediting entities have the ability to include diversity initiatives which include measures for addressing inequities in underrepresentation of Black female faculty on campus and within academic disciplines. Consistent program evaluation to ensure additional adherence to the accreditation requirements on diversity as an accountability measure.

Finally, most public institutions' missions aim to make education accessible to everyone. In order to maintain their public missions, public serving institutions have to incorporate policies that acknowledge diversity throughout the institution. The use of diversity action plans and strategic plans that articulate institutional priorities with measurable outcomes help to both inform policies, practices, and accountability. Within these diversity action plans, the recruitment, retention, and wellbeing of Black faculty and administrative women should be explicitly named as an integral part of the plan. Finally, institutions can uphold DEI policy through annual performance reviews. Institutions can require employees at all levels to demonstrate their efforts at inclusion and equality during the annual performance review process. This additional step will help tie DEI practices to HR policies that will require a demonstrable of growth and implementation of diversity action plans at all levels.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies can further expand on the emerging themes of this study as well as aim to address some of the study's limitations. First, as a qualitative phenomenological study, my project targeted a specific group of participants. Due to the lack of critical mass of Black female academic deans coupled with the multiple professional demands these women face on a daily basis, it was a challenge identifying participants for this study. Future research could aim to broaden the sample, perhaps utilizing quantitative or mixed methods approaches to provide insights into the varied and rich experiences of Black female academic deans.

Next, future research can be designed to address issues with a second limitation of the study that had to deal with hyperconsciousness of the need to protect the anonymity of the research participants. Due to the sheer underrepresentation of Black female academic deans, participants took additional risk to participate in this study. While as the researcher I made every effort to protect the anonymity of each participant, all expressed concerns about needing protection as participants during their interviews and member checking. To address the issue, future studies can utilize surveys to collect data from all academic deans thus preventing recognition but also collecting a variety of experiences.

Finally, future research can expand the scope of study to include other institution types such as private, faith-based, minority serving and community colleges. This would contribute to our understanding of how the experiences of Black women academic deans might vary by institutional context, funding and organizational structures and demographic composition. In addition, further research can also focus on understanding

the experience of Black female leaders in other administrative roles such as chair, associate dean and provost. This focus will help us understand what challenges and/or steps these women have taken to assume leadership positions.

My Journey

I show up in the world as a Black woman with a disability. The intersection of my race, gender, and disability has shaped my life and the ways in which I have experienced the academy. I was raised by a single mother and a loving family. My upbringing formed my values around education, spirituality, and a deep roundedness in my cultural roots as a Black woman born in the South. I was also raised to love all aspects of my identity including having a disability. These values shaped my being able to see myself in positions of leadership and serving my community at a very early age.

As I reflect on the first mentor who influenced my career path in higher education, I go back to my early childhood years. My mother had a close friend who had her PhD and served as the first Black female dean of women at the University of Little Rock in Little Rock Arkansas. I vividly remember going with her as she gave speeches at various churches and community events. I also remember her taking me to work with her and how excited I was to visit her workspace. What I loved at the time is that she had a job that required her to dress up, have an office, and talk to lots of people. I also noticed the pride and respect in how others engaged with her especially in Black community spaces. Through these early experiences, I begin to understand that career paths and educational opportunities such as what my mother's friend held were not typical for Black women. For this reason, I recognized that education could open up opportunities

for me, and that I not only needed to go to college, but I needed to continue on to receiving a doctoral degree.

Over the years, I had the opportunity to see my mother's friend continue to rise in her career in the academy and eventually retire as provost. She made great strides as a researcher and trailblazer in the academy. More importantly, as I began to attend graduate school and ultimately begin my career, I noticed the sacrifices as a Black woman that she encountered to move through the ranks of an academy that was not built for her. For example, she changed her geographic location to work at institutions that were more welcoming; she often worked under pressure to prove her existence and capabilities in high level positions; she balanced family and work; and she tirelessly served her community as a Black female leader who believes in mentoring other Black women.

As I began my career, I carried the lessons gained from this mentor into my professional trajectory. I also began to have my own unique experiences as a Black woman with a disability often working in spaces that were not prepared for me to show up in the identities that I held. Throughout my career, I have worked at Predominately White Institutions and often worked in spaces where I was one of few or the only Black woman. In these spaces, I have always been the only Black woman with a disability which has often placed me in unique positions as I navigate my professional career path. As a Black woman, I was very aware of the lack of community of other Black people particularly Black women. I noticed the racism and sexism that subtly impacted me in various ways. I experienced subtle racialized microaggressions or had to disprove negative stereotypes about Black women regularly. As a Black woman with a physical disability, I also noticed the ablest structures that continue to be in place within the

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academy. I have often experienced ableism which shows up in many ways especially

resistance in making environments barrier free and truly inclusive of people with

disabilities. There were also times where I did not know if the microaggressions I

experienced were due to the overlapping identities of race, gender, or disability. Due to

all of these intersecting identities, I have experienced moments of oppression and at times

outright discrimination. Despite these moments I believed that I belonged in the academy

and began to use my voice as an activist and scholar to resist the oppression that I have

experienced.

Over the years, I also came to realize that if I were going to impact the academy

and create spaces that were welcoming and allowed people from historically

underrepresented backgrounds to thrive in the academy, I had to move through a career

trajectory that would place me in senior leadership in higher education. As a young

professional, I came to realize that the systems of higher education continue to be built on

hierarchy, which meant that the greatest influence on policy and practice comes from the

top. With this in mind, I have been very intentional about the jobs I have chosen and the

types of professional experiences I have had along the way. Similar to my mentor, I have

moved across the country to experience different institutions. I have worked hard to

constantly prove that I have a place in the academy, and I have made hard choices so that

I can continue to advance within my career. I have also learned the success of being

collaborative and relational as a means for being a change agent. In every space I have

occupied I have been able to leave that space with university leaders having a new

perspective on how race, gender, and disability show up in higher education. These

experiences have slowly moved the needle on policies and practices that create more equitable and inclusive spaces for students, staff, and faculty.

While I have found success and continue to move through my career, the journey has not come without obstacles and even heartbreak. I have benefited from mentoring relationships from a variety of people along the way, especially Black women. These mentors have helped me to feel seen and heard in spaces where I have felt invisible. Most importantly, they have also challenged me professionally, and helped me skillfully navigate spaces that were both oppressive and political. Finally, many of these mentors share the values of finding affirming community spaces for my self-care. As a result, I have been very active in creating Black women's counter spaces that bring together a diverse group of Black women with many experiences to connect, support, and affirm each other. I hope to continue to use my scholarship from this study to continue to affirm the presence of Black women leaders in the academy. Further, I hope to use my professional experiences and recommendations from this study to guide institutions in being intentional about fostering a climate that supports the nuanced needs of Black women and all the intersections that we hold as we move through a career path. Finally, I believe that is my purpose to create an even better pathway for other Black women with disabilities to be able to thrive within higher education.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to uncover the lived experiences of Black women academic deans and the commonalities among them. The study also sought to illuminate the voices of Black women and share narratives of what it means to redefine the academic deanship from their own realities. This chapter discussed the

major findings of the study. Three key findings emerged from the interviews with the study's participants. Together, these findings captured the essence of the lived experiences of the participants in the study. The first finding reflected both the underlining fatigue that Black female deans battle on a daily basis as they navigate constant assaults related to their race and gender as well as their resilience that defines their leadership in the face of such assaults. The second finding captured these deans' commitment to channel their leadership oversight towards holding institutions accountable for their inequitable and unjust philosophy and practices. And finally, the third finding reflected Black female deans' struggles to reimagine the norms and standards of the academic deanship position to embrace historically under-represented members such as themselves.

These findings suggest that Black female academic deans forage a unique experience as they chart a leadership path that remains understudied and underrepresented within the academy. In the face of the difficulties they face as Black female leaders, these women persist to develop and demonstrate a sense of resiliency and authenticity. In the process they are redefining the academic deanship through a Blackened female lens. Further, they emerge as social change agents who possess a leadership ethos that is visible in and beyond the Black community. In essence, they serve as conduits for change.

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