2020

Vicarious Bullying and Career Progression: Narratives from African American Women Academics

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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by

Laurenda McKinney

MA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2014

BS, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

November 2020

Abstract

Intersectionality scholars have indicated that a literature gap exists in workplace bullying research on the implications of vicarious bullying on African American women's career progression. The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research approach conceived to honor a person's lived experiences as a source of valuable knowledge. Data were collected through in-depth storytelling from 5 African American women academics. Three key concepts frame this study: Miller et al.'s concept of academic bullying; Hollis's concepts of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership; and the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression. After applying narrative inquiry's two-step data analysis procedure, thematic analysis and a critical event data analysis, 11 reformulated themes were gleaned from the four coding categories: (a) witnessing workplace bullying; (b) experiencing vicarious workplace bullying; (c) academic bullying interfering with career progression; and (d) personal stories of vicarious academic bullying. Research on how intersectionality may contribute to vicarious workplace bullying may offer new theoretical directions for future research. This study may contribute to positive social change by informing human resource professionals on African American women academics' vulnerability to vicarious bullying. In turn, such information can help build ethical infrastructures to prevent bullying in academia among all groups, but particularly for marginalized populations.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends, who have been my support system from the beginning of this journey. Their love and support have kept me motivated to complete this journey and achievement. I would like to express my sincere thanks to my mother, Donna White, and the rest of my family, that made this possible for me. I would also like to dedicate this achievement to my mother, Donna. I want to take the moment to say thank you so much for all the times that I was not sure I could continue the journey and your prayers and motivation kept me going. Without those constant pushes to keep going, I am not sure I would have been able to complete this major accomplishment. Although I am not naming everyone one by one you were all equally important to completing this task.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my mentor and chair, Dr. Daphne Halkias, and second committee member, Dr. Lisa Barrow. I offer my sincerest gratitude to the both of you, I would never be able to express my gratitude in words. You have helped me to achieve my greatest challenge in life and when it seemed impossible, you helped me to get back up and keep going. I also would like to thank Dr Leah Hollis, for the contributions of your work on my chosen topic. My deepest appreciation to the participants who agreed to take part in the study. Your participation was important in order to complete this project and without you this would not have been possible. This journey has helped to magnify the importance of a good support system, and the power of prayer. I am forever grateful to have been surrounded by such an awesome circle of loving and caring people who have my best interest at heart and wanted to see me complete this goal and make my dream come true. Thank you all so much for loving me and supporting me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

When human resource departments do not address the destructive leader in an unstable environment, workplace bullying permeates an organization, affecting employee health, stress levels, and workplace employee outcomes (Barrow, Kolberg, Mirabella, & Roter, 2013; Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019). Workplace bullying in higher education may destroy self-determination and career progression for marginalized populations because these employees often do not have the dominant culture's organizational power and executive rank (Meriläinen, Nissinen, & Kõiv, 2019; Minibas-Poussard, Seckin-Celik, & Bingol, 2018). Consequently, marginalized employees, such as African American women, experiencing bullying in the higher education workplace, often make career choices that align with the need for safety instead of the goal of career advancement. Scholars have written that workplace bullying experiences may disrupt African American women's careers and hurt their aspirations to excel in their respective career paths (Hollis, 2018; Pyke, 2018).

Researchers have confirmed that bullies in leadership have support from personnel within the organizations, also known as vicarious bullies (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019; K. Einarsen, Salin, Einarsen, Skogstad, & Mykletun, 2019). Vicarious bullying is a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends a subordinate to extend the bully's rule through fear (Hollis, 2017a; McDonald, Begic, & Landrum, 2020). Scholars have confirmed that women of color, who are often on the deficient end of the power differential, are more likely to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption, yet their voices remain absent from the extant literature (Hollis, 2018; Nadal

et al., 2015). This study has contributed to positive social change by informing human resource professionals in higher education on building ethical infrastructures to prevent vicarious bullying of marginalized population groups and further support the social justice mission of building a diverse educational system (K. Einarsen et al., 2019).

This introductory chapter will illustrate the background literature leading to the problem statement formation to explain the scholarly literature gap. The demonstration of rational alignment between problem, purpose, and research questions and the study's conceptual framework will follow. Lastly, this chapter will include the significance, assumptions, limitations of the study, and definitions of key terms used throughout this document.

Background of the Study

Bullying in the workplace is usually not an isolated incident but an escalated process where the person is placed in an inferior position and targets negative social acts (Miller et al., 2019). According to Hollis (2019a), workplace bullying is often ignored as a personality conflict in American higher education. Often management is not trained to handle workplace bullying, and often the organization does not have policies defining or prohibiting workplace bullying. S. Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2011) proposed a theoretical framework on bullying in the workplace characterized by multi causality, including risk factors both at the individual and organizational level and affects both the organization and the individual. By examining personal interactions with employees to determine whether their attitudes and behavior contribute to workplace bullying, leaders can begin to address this workplace problem.

According to Hollis (2018), workplace bullying is a lot like petty theft; workplace bullying robs an organization of its resources. A petty thief may steal cash, but a bully steals productivity by causing employee disengagement. A quantitative study by Barrow et al. (2013) showed a significant relationship between employee demographics and certain bullying behaviors associated with threats to personal standing, professional status, and destabilization. Rational self-interested leaders are often a part of the workplace bullying phenomenon because they rely on behaviors that threaten them. Workplace bullying has a devastating effect on all involved, including the individual and the organization (Barrow et al., 2013).

Bullying is also known in the extant literature by the term workplace incivility, which is defined as deviant behavior to harm the target (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Namie & Namie, 2009). Workplace incivility is sufficient to determine a decrease in employees' occupational, psychological, and physical health and well-being (Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019). In particular, the group most vulnerable to the effects of workplace aggression are women (Cortina, Magley, Williams & Langhout 2001; Hollis, 2018).

African American women are sometimes forced to abandon chosen career paths and desired professional roles due to hostility, alienation, and other interactional and institutional barriers (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). Controlling images are made evident in the treatment of African American women. They face a lack of credibility, are often dismissed, and often attributed advanced ideas to others while functioning in leadership roles (Holder, Jackson & Ponterotto, 2015). Women are more likely to be the target of bullying when seeking promotion, tenure, and otherwise climbing the career ladder

(Hollis, 2018). Scholars report that more needs to be done at the human resources management and organizational leadership levels to promote antibullying strategies addressing gender equity, fairness in women's career advancement, and prevention of unsafe, bullying dynamics from establishing themselves. Employees do not trust immoral leaders, and employees also do not trust the environments these leaders cultivate (Hollis, 2019b).

Leaders identified as workplace bullies in the higher education sector use manipulation and coercion to maintain their political power in a complex and abusive social structure (Hollis, 2019b). Toxic leaders engage in those behaviors that benefit their positions without much concern for the institution they are employed by using vicarious bullying to act out their unethical and opportunistic abuse of power on targeted employees (Pelletier, Kottke, & Sirotnik, 2019). Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik (2010) defined vicarious bullies in the workplace as those employees who, as accomplices to bully leaders, abuse personnel within toxic environments that tacitly allow for abuse to continue. The vicarious bully in the academic workplace borrows the original bully's power and uses coercion, deception, and psychological abuse to control the staff (Hollis, 2019b).

The topic of the accomplice and the vicarious bully remains an unexplored avenue for research across industry sectors (Chen & Liu, 2019). As noted in Westhues's (2006) seminal paper, vicarious academic bullying and mobbing are insidious processes within higher education institutions. Several scholars noted that vicarious bullying or mobbing was probably experienced more in academia than in any other workplace (Duffy &

Sperry, 2012; Minibas-Poussard et al., 2018). Academic bullies maintain their political power through coercion and manipulation through vicarious bullying of marginalized populations in the higher education sector (Hollis, 2016). Black women's careers are affected by power differentials in the workplace, making them more vulnerable to workplace bullying and career path disruption. Black women are faced with unfair demotions, threats of job loss, high job turnover as a result of workplace bullying, and being subjected to gendered racism due to their intersectionality (Felmlee, Rodis, & Francisco, 2018). An intersectional perspective is fundamental to the study of gender and race because it emphasizes that an improved understanding of these socially constructed distinctions arises from considering how multiple social categories, such as gender and race, interact with each other (Shields, 2008).

According to Mithaug (1996), self-determination is an inalienable right. Power is not accessible for everyone; those with power have access to the in-group status, and those with less power have compromised access to this privileged group of employees. The person that holds the most power sets the stage for access, fairness, and career advancement. Vicarious bullying of women remains a subtle and insidious behavior in the academic workplace, which leads to other colleagues becoming embroiled in the conflict and abuse (Saxena, Geiselman, & Zhang, 2019). Studies have not addressed how the increasing intersectionality among African American women academics may contribute to these women's propensity to experience vicarious workplace bullying (Hollis, 2018).

Research on how intersectionality may contribute to the targets' propensities to experience vicarious workplace bullying may offer human resource scholars new information on this topic within American workplace sectors beyond higher education (Hollis, 2018). Future studies using a qualitative approach that queries targets from marginalized populations to gain a deeper understanding of how vicarious bullies operate within the higher education sector may provide critical knowledge and inform practice for human resource professionals in higher education settings (Hollis, 2017b; Penttinen, Jyrkinen, & Wide, 2019).

Problem Statement

A pathway often used to create employment opportunities for women of color within higher education can be eroded by workplace bullying (Penttinen et al., 2019). Hollis (2018) wrote that as women of color climb the career ladder and seek promotion, supervision, budgetary responsibilities, and tenure, they are more likely to report being the targets of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is defined as the repeated, health-harming mistreatment of a person by one or more workers and includes cyberbullying (Farley, Coyne, & D'Cruz, 2018; Yamada, Duffy, & Berry, 2018). A compelling behavior that destroys self-determination and career progression for those in marginalized populations, workplace bullying often targets employees who do not have the dominant culture's organizational power and executive rank in higher education (Meriläinen et al., 2019; Minibas-Poussard et al., 2018). Consequently, marginalized individuals may endure compromised self-determination and often make career choices that align with the need for safety instead of the goal of advancing. The general problem is that workplace

bullying experiences may disrupt African American women's careers and hurt their aspirations to excel in their respective career paths (Hollis, 2018; Pyke, 2018).

Researchers have confirmed that bullies in leadership have support from personnel within the organizations, also known as vicarious bullies (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019; K. Einarsen et al., 2019). Vicarious bullying is a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends or inspires a messenger, acts as a henchman, barks orders, diminish staff accomplishments, and extends the bully's rule through fear (Hollis, 2017a; McDonald et al., 2020). In the higher education workplace, a vicarious bully is a subordinate to the primary bully, such as an administrative assistant or an entry-level colleague, often gaining favor in additional pay or privilege for doing the leader's bidding (Shier, Nicholas, Graham, & Young, 2018). The findings of several studies confirm that women of color, who are often on the deficient end of the power differential, are more likely to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption, yet their voices remain absent from the extant literature (Hollis, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015). Intersectionality scholars have indicated that literature gaps exist on women's multifaceted positionality in workplace bullying research and the implications of vicarious bullying on African American women's career progression (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b). The specific management problem is that African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying may interfere with their career progression (Felmlee et al., 2018; Hollis, 2019a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression. A narrative inquiry approach was used to collect data through storytelling to meet the study's purpose and provide data for the literature gap on the role of vicarious bullying on African American women's academic career progression (Hollis, 2019a). The narrative approach originated from constructivists such as Gergen (1998), who wrote that narrative highlights the contextual construction in social relations and daily life experiences (Slembrouck, 2015). To ensure the data's trustworthiness, a narrative analysis of critical events was used due to the openness and transparency in gathering and highlighting the full description of events within the story (Clandinin, 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Although triangulation is often used for validity and reliability checks when conducting qualitative research, Webster and Mertova (2007) stated that triangulation is not feasible or necessary in narrative studies since it is "almost impossible to achieve" (p. 91).

Research Question

What do African American women academics' stories reflect about their daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression?

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by three key concepts that focus on the connection between African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progress: Miller et al.'s (2019) concept of *academic bullying*; Hollis's (2017a, 2019) concept of *vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership*; and Hollis's (2018) concept of *the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression.* Since 2000, scholarly literature in the human resources management area has proliferated on workplace bullying and the difficulties faced by human resources personnel to manage this widespread organizational phenomenon (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; JoMarcus, 2019; Salin & Hoel, 2011). In recent studies, employees from marginalized populations within the higher education, particularly women of color, have increasingly identified their workplace as led by unethical leader bullies using subordinates as vicarious bullies (Dar & Salmon, 2019; Hollis, 2019a).

Academic Bullying

Though workplace bullying is being increasingly discussed and researched, few researchers have examined how and why it occurs in higher education (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014). Miller et al. (2019) wrote that due to the lack of a consistent definition of academic bullying, their research group expanded academic bullying as a continuum of violence (ranging from mild to severe) with outcomes ranging from damaged lives, careers, and institutions. Because of its precision in naming factors

that facilitate violence in various contexts, Miller et al. (2019) grounded their research on Bandura's (2016) moral disengagement theory.

Vicarious Bullying in Higher Education and Unethical Leadership

Hollis (2017a, 2019) defined vicarious bullying as a form of organizational aggression where the primary bully sends or inspires a secondary bully to deliver orders aggressively. Hollis (2019b) grounded the development of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership in Brown and Mitchell's (2010) ethical leadership theory. Researchers applying Brown and Mitchell's ethical leadership theory found respondents believed apathetic, unethical leaders are to blame for the proliferation of workplace bullying and reward cruelty as a valued organizational behavior (Bonner, Greenbaum, & Mayer, 2016; Hollis, 2017a, 2019b).

The Interface of Black Women's Intersectionality, Academic Bullying, and Career Progression

In Hollis's 2018 landmark, national survey research on how bullying of Black women academics leads to their subsequent career disruption, the author wrote that vulnerable and marginalized populations typically work in the least powerful positions within the American workplace. Intersectionality is defined as the interplay between several independent strands of inequality based on multiple social identities (e.g., racism and sexism), resulting in more extensive oppression (Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). Hollis's research work on the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression used the theoretical lens of Black feminist theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), in which intersectionality is considered an

approach to explore how Black women are affected by systemic racism in academia (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016). According to Mirza (2018), when Black and minority ethnic students managed to navigate their way into a career in the academy, they find themselves on uncertain term contracts and lower pay than their counterparts.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences have interfered with their career progression. A research method that is quantitative in nature would not have been appropriate to address the purpose of this study because the topic does not call for operationalization, manipulation of empirical variables, prediction, relationship, and testing (Harkiolakis, 2017). Adopting a qualitative research method allowed for the use of nonstandardized, interpretivist approaches to data collection that were relevant to providing answers to the study's central research question (see Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Qualitative methods also allow the researcher to grasp both the overall structure of a situation and the individual experiences and challenges that individuals within that structure face and give a narrative voice to those experiences of the problem (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The narrative inquiry approach originated through the seminal works of social constructivists such as Gergen (1973) and Burr (1998), who agreed that self-narration satisfies one's need for stability of daily relationship experiences. Narrative inquiry allows for the presentation of accurate and precise participant experiences through storytelling to gather a deeper understanding of human experiences as they are lived

daily, which includes within higher education contexts (Clandinin, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2012). Although there are other forms of qualitative research, a narrative inquiry approach is most suitable for providing support to the participants who may present discomfort while disclosing critical events of their life experiences (Clandinin, 2016; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

My narrative inquiry study participants were a purposeful sample of five African American women academics who identified as experiencing vicarious bullying in their workplaces. While the Walden IRB approved my Proposal with a minimum of six participants, my Dissertation Chair sought program approval to conduct the study with a sample size of five participants before terminating the data collection process., Instead of an absolute number, Saunders et al. (2018) and Sim et al, (2018) suggested sample size in narrative inquiry studies is ambiguous, as it depends on the answers being sought, data saturation, and which size will maximize information, even though data saturation may be less straightforward to identify in qualitative approaches that are based on a narrative approach to analysis. Supported by methodology literature, approval was received that with five lengthy interviews of approximately 30-50 minutes each, the maximum information would be collected to provide in-depth data to address the study's research question.

Sample size was also influenced in part by challenges researchers faceed with data collection due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Wolkewitz, & Puljak, 2020) and, in the case of my study, the sensitive nature of the topic. Due to the emotions surrounding the issue of vicarious bullying of African American women academics in the workplace,

completing even five interviews was challenging. Many women contacted for recruitment did not want to seek on the topic and others agreed to join the study but dropped out before the interview. Two mentioned during the recruitment process they were afraid to speak up, despite assurances of ethical standards of confidentially. Given data collection challenges, and with the supervision of my Dissertation Chair, it was a deemed that at five interviews I had reached data saturation and all participants expressed similar experiences with workplace vicarious bullying. The five lengthy interviews obtained for this study provided sufficient in-depth and rich detailed information to be characterized as an adequate sample for a narrative inquiry study.

The population met the following inclusion criteria: (a) female identifying as African American, (b) minimum age of 18, (c) employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education sector for a minimum of 5 years, and (d) able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The study sample's inclusion criteria are similar to inclusion criteria from other studies of bullying in the academic workplace (Hollis, 2017a; JoMarcus, 2019; Miller et al., 2019). Polkinghorne (1988) recognized that storytelling is the oldest form of influence and how humans choose to communicate. The narrative inquiry research approach is most suitable, as it goes beyond the potential of business research beyond the traditional options and minimizes the boundaries of fields within social sciences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). In this study, the participants' narrations of life experiences were detailed and compelling and offered great insight. I examined the participants' lived experiences by grasping the narrative's in-depth meaning to answer the research question.

The two-step critical event narrative analysis approach was used for analyzing the collected data (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). The first step of the data analysis is the process of *restorying*, a narrative data analysis method used by the researcher to gather data, analysis of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting of the data (Clandinin, 2016). The second step in the critical event analysis approach requires the researcher to cross-check cases with the event categories themes for comparative purposes. This two-stage process aims for the researcher and participant to co-construct meanings, themes, and images and produce a participant-guided transcript (Polkinghorne, 1988; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Definitions

Academic bullying: This term refers to workplace bullying executed against faculty at higher education institutions (Miller et al., 2019).

Bullying: This term refers to an aggressor's "personal agenda of controlling another human being," typically via "a combination of deliberate humiliation and the withholding of resources" required to perform a job (Namie & Namie, 2009, p. 1).

Intersectionality: This term refers to the interplay between several independent strands of inequality based on multiple social identities (e.g., racism and sexism), resulting in more extensive oppression (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016).

Systemic racism: This term refers to the pervasiveness of white supremacy within legitimized spaces of knowledge production, in the form of racist and sexist microaggressions (Mizra, 2018).

Vicarious bullying: This term refers to a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends or inspires a messenger, henchman, to bark orders, diminish staff accomplishments, and extend the bully's rule through fear (Hollis, 2017a; McDonald et al., 2020).

Workplace bullying: This term refers to the repeated, health-harming mistreatment of a person by one or more workers, which takes the form of verbal abuse, conduct, or behaviors that are threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; sabotage that prevents work from getting done; or some combination of the three. Workplace bullying is a form of psychological violence that mixes verbal and strategic assaults to prevent the target from performing work well (Yamada et al., 2018).

Workplace cyberbullying: This term refers to a situation where, over time, an individual is repeatedly subjected to perceived hostile acts conducted through technology (e.g., phone, email, web sites, social media) related to their work context (Farley et al., 2018).

Workplace incivility: This term refers to employees' deviant behavior at the workplace with the intent to harm another targeted employee (Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019).

Workplace mobbing: This term refers to nonsexual harassment of a coworker by a group of members of an organization to remove the targeted individual(s) from the organization or at least a particular organization (Duffy & Sperry, 2012).

Assumptions

Qualitative research can be assessed with reference to specific, broad criteria of quality including methodological assumptions about the study (Tracy, 2019). Methodological assumptions consist of the assumptions made by the researcher regarding inductive procedures used in the process of collecting and analyzing data in a qualitative study (Mays & Pope, 2020). This qualitative narrative inquiry study had the following assumptions: (a) that there are employees who have been victims or have witnessed workplace bullying, (b) that the participants will feel comfortable sharing their workplace bullying experiences, (c) that the interview questions will be apparent to the participants so that they can answer each question clearly and thoroughly and honestly, (d) that data saturation will occur, and (e) that each participant understands what the study is about and how the information could help future research. Honesty by each participant allows the researcher to conduct the study's data analysis on responses that encompass the true daily experiences and belief of the participant. This also allowed for greater reliability of the data collected. Feeling comfortable and willing to offer honest responses to the interview questions allows experiences, responses and motivations to serve as firm foundation for deep and trustworthy analysis. Finally, it is assumed that the data collection method allows the participants to give a sufficient account of their experience in their place of work. It is necessary to have a level of understanding of the workplace conditions in order to gain a proper context of the participants' responses regarding their experiences with vicarious bully8ng in the higher education workplace.

Scope and Delimitations

This research used participants' daily experiences, collected through a qualitative narrative approach, to provide a deeper understanding of African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression. The study's scope included a range of five female participants, all from U.S.-based academic institutions, who shared experiences with the phenomena under study. While the Walden IRB approved my Proposal with a minimum of six participants, my Dissertation Chair sought program approval to conduct the study with a sample size of five participants before terminating the data collection process., Instead of an absolute number, Saunders et al. (2018) and Sim et al, (2018) suggested sample size in narrative inquiry studies is ambiguous, as it depends on the answers being sought, data saturation, and which size will maximize information, even though data saturation may be less straightforward to identify in qualitative approaches that are based on a narrative approach to analysis. Supported by methodology literature, approval was received that with five lengthy interviews of approximately 30-50 minutes each, the maximum information would be collected to provide in-depth data to address the study's research question. The five lengthy interviews obtained for this study provided sufficient in-depth and rich detailed information to be characterized as an adequate sample for a narrative inquiry study.

The inclusion criteria of the study population from where the sample was recruited are as follows: female identifying as African American, minimum age of 18, employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education sector for a minimum of 5 years, and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The study sample's inclusion criteria are similar to those in other studies of bullying in the academic workplace (Hollis, 2017a; JoMarcus, 2019; Miller et al., 2019).

The study's scope excluded classical career theory when developing the conceptual framework, literature review, and interview protocol because those theories were developed from research primarily conducted with samples of White males. The conceptual framework of this study and the study's research design is grounded within the scope of Miller et al.'s (2019) concept of academic bullying; Hollis's (2019b) concept of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership; and Hollis's (2018) concept of the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression.

Scholarly literature in the areas of human resources management and career development have proliferated since the year 2000 on the issues of workplace bullying and the difficulties faced by human resources personnel to manage this widespread organizational phenomenon (Hoel et al., 1999; JoMarcus, 2019; Salin & Hoel, 2011). Further extending the study's conceptual framework with empirical evidence from a workplace setting with African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying may provide a renewed theoretical understanding of how

individuals from marginalized populations perceive workplace bullying as a barrier to career progression.

Limitations

A researcher is required to identify limitations to the study design to foresee any possible problems that may compromise the trustworthiness of the study results (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this study, certain factors may pose limitations. A range of five female participants was included in the sample from U.S.-based academic institutions, who share the experience with the phenomena under study. The sample size of the final study was determined by data saturation. Because of the small sample size in narrative inquiry studies, there is a chance that the participants' views cannot be generalized across various population groups. Such a limitation was overcome by purposefully selecting women participants through criterion and network sampling to meet the study's inclusion criteria. Purposeful sampling is preferred because it yields information-rich cases for in-depth study (Tracy, 2019).

Another study limitation relates to transferability, in which findings from a situation can be transferred to another particular situation (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, & Elo, 2020). The study's findings may not be generalized as the primary aim of qualitative research is not to generalize the research findings but the depth of information. The decision on transferability is left to the reader after the researcher sufficiently and clearly describes the research design (Stake, 2010). To ensure the issue of dependability, I strictly adhered to narrative inquiry method standards for the collection, analysis, and reporting of the research data (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

Scholars confirm that as academic women's intersectionality becomes increasingly complex, the likelihood of facing vicarious workplace bullying increases proportionally (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b). As a result of vicarious workplace bullying of Black women in higher education, career progression may be related to unfair demotion, threats of job loss, or frequently changed jobs (Hollis, 2018). Changing jobs to escape a bully hurts job longevity, a quality many employers consider when looking at the stability of a job candidate within higher education (Hogh et al., 2019). When human resource departments do not address the destructive leader in an unstable environment, a dynamic reported by several researchers, workplace bullying permeates the organization, affecting employee health, stifling morale, creativity, and loyalty (Barrow et al., 2013; Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019).

As noted in Westhues's (2006) seminal paper, vicarious academic bullying and mobbing often go unchecked and is a *cloaked* process within higher education institutions. Because vicarious bullying of women remains a subtle and insidious behavior in the academic workplace, other colleagues can quickly become embroiled in the conflict and abuse, often causing their victims to leave employment and thwarting their career progression (Saxena et al., 2019). Future studies using a qualitative approach that queries marginalized populations' targets to gain a deeper understanding of how vicarious bullies operate within the higher education sector may provide critical

knowledge and inform practice for human resource professionals in higher education settings (Hollis, 2017b; Penttinen et al., 2019).

Significance to Theory

This empirical investigation aims to advance knowledge on vicarious bullying of women of color within the higher education workplace and contribute original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework. Although various management and leadership theories can be applied to improve knowledge on the multifaceted development of bullying behavior in the workplace (Meriläinen et al., 2019; Mills, Keller, Chilcutt, & Nelson, 2019), intersectionality theory can elucidate how the well-hidden process of vicarious bullying evolves in the world of work for women of color (Felmlee et al., 2018; Lavaysse, Probst, & Arena, 2018).

A context-rich interpretive approach to meet this study's purpose can offer distinctive contributions to the theory and extend understanding of the vicarious bullying/career path interface among African American women academics (Nadal et al., 2015; Hollis, 2019a). Extending theory through empirical research on how intersectionality may contribute to the targets' propensity to experience vicarious workplace bullying may offer human resource scholars new theoretical assumptions to pursue future studies on this topic within American workplace sectors beyond higher education.

Significance to Social Change

As a result of workplace bullying of women of color in higher education, their quest to seek terminal degrees, tenure, and career advancement can be compromised

(Hollis, 2016). In a sector that has become increasingly competitive with fewer full-time tenure-track positions and continuous budget cuts, those facing bullying and abuse may leave the higher education sector (Hollis, 2015; Meriläinen et al., 2019). The loss of diverse faculty and staff cripples the educational mission of an increasingly diverse educational system. This study may contribute to positive social change by informing human resource professionals in higher education settings on African American women academics' vulnerability to become workplace bullying targets. In turn, such information helps build ethical infrastructures to prevent workplace bullying in the academic workplace and may further support the educational and social justice mission of building a diverse educational system (K. Einarsen et al., 2019).

Summary and Transition

Within higher education, a pathway that is often used to create social equality, employment opportunities for women of color can be eroded by workplace bullying. The specific problem is that the connection between African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression remains poorly understood. The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences have interfered with their career progression. A narrative inquiry approach was used to collect data through storytelling to address the study's purpose and provide data for the literature gap on the role of vicarious bullying on African American women's academic career progression. Using the conceptual framework to ground this study, I presented theoretical

propositions that further explain the problem facing the sample of participants under study. This chapter also presented the study's nature, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations while identifying its significance to theory and positive social change.

Chapter 2 provides the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework upon which the research rests. To present knowledge within a narrative literature review on topics related to the specific problems, I will review the extant literature on further challenges faced by African American women academics with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The specific problem is that the connection between African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression remains poorly understood (Felmlee et al.,(2018); Hollis, 2019a). Workplace bullying is defined as the repeated, health-harming mistreatment of a person by one or more workers and includes cyberbullying (Farley et al., 2018; Yamada et al., 2018). Vicarious bullying is a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends or inspires a messenger, henchman, bark orders, diminishes staff accomplishments, and extends the bully's rule through fear (Hollis, 2017a; McDonald et al., 2020).

In the higher education workplace, a vicarious bully is a subordinate to the primary bully, such as an administrative assistant or an entry-level colleague, often gaining favor in additional pay or privilege for doing the leaders bidding (Shier et al., 2018). The findings of several studies confirm that African American women are often on the low end of the power differential in the academic workplace and are more likely than their other peers to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption (Hollis, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015). Scholars have stated that literature gaps exist on women's multifaceted positionality in workplace bullying research and the implications of vicarious bullying on African American women's career progression (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b).

Chapter 2 provides the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework upon which the research rests. I then present a synthesis of knowledge within a narrative

literature review on topics related to the study's problem and purpose, including African American women's unique experiences. Finally, I offer a critical analysis of the literature in which this study is grounded.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review process is valuable to research as it assists with refining research questions and exposing inconsistencies throughout the literature (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008). The literature should always be consistent with the central topic being analyzed and consist of methodologies across studies while elaborating on the conceptual framework (Cronin et al., 2008). This literature review will present information applicable to vicarious bullying and career progression that align with the central research question. The literature review consists of peer-reviewed journal articles and additional research from the Walden University Library database, Google Scholar, and ProQuest. The literature selection was focused on those documents that generated the highest impact based on citation data. With 389 million records, Google Scholar is currently the most comprehensive academic search engine (Gusenbauer, 2019). Given Google Scholar's popularity as a search engine for academic literature, this means that the data presented in this literature review is indicative of publications accessed from most library databases, including EBSCO (Leung, Xie, Geng, & Pun, 2019).

The keywords used in the searches included *workplace bullying, vicarious bullying, intersectionality, career progression, organizational power, aggression, higher education,* and *social equality.* Combinations of terms were used to yield better results, such as *bullying in the workplace, African American women in academics, African*

American women in leadership roles, career ladder for women of color, workplace bullying targets, diverse educational system, and *building ethical infrastructures.* For this conceptual framework, *narrative inquiry, vicarious bullying,* and *African American women academics* were the search words used.

Some of the peer-reviewed journals used throughout this study were *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management, Journal of Educators Online, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, World Journal of Management, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Management, Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships, Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education* and *International Journal of Educational Management.*

In preparation for this literature review, I will provide previous inquiries concerning the conceptual framework of academic bullying, vicarious bullying in higher education, unethical leadership, and the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression. Chapter 2 will also present a synthesis of updated scholarly knowledge on African American women being targeted for workplace bullying in higher education and the implications of vicarious bullying on marginalized populations' self-determination and career progression.

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by three key concepts that focus on the connection between African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progress: Miller et al.'s (2019)

concept of academic bullying; Hollis's (2019b) concept of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership; and Hollis's (2018) concept of the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression. Over the past two decades, scholarly literature in the human resources management area proliferated on workplace bullying and the difficulties faced by human resources personnel to manage this widespread organizational phenomenon (Hoel et al., 1999; JoMarcus, 2019; Salin & Hoel, 2011). Employees who report their bullying experiences in the workplace report abuse stories, retaliation, unethical leadership, and career disruption to the extant literature (Barrow, 2015; Hollis, 2018; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). In recent studies, employees from marginalized populations within the higher education, and particularly women of color, have increasingly identified their workplace as being led by unethical leader bullies using subordinates to implement abusive directives to their targets (Dar & Salmon, 2019; Hollis, 2019a).

Academic Bullying

Though workplace bullying is being increasingly discussed and researched, few researchers have examined how and why it occurs in higher education (Cassidy et al., 2014). University-based researchers of workplace bullying have not examined bullying in academia as extensively as they have researched it in the general workplace, despite relatively higher incidences of bullying in academic settings when compared with the general population (Miller et al., 2019). Miller et al. (2019) wrote that due to the lack of a consistent definition of academic bullying, their research group expanded academic

bullying as a continuum of violence (ranging from mild to severe) with outcomes including damaged lives, careers, and institutions.

Although academic bullying theories exist, constructs that describe the specific dynamics in terms of academic violence/bullying are needed (Miller et al., 2019). Because of its precision in naming factors that facilitate violence in various contexts, Miller et al. (2019) grounded their research on Bandura's (2016) moral disengagement theory. Moral disengagement theory suggested that individuals cognitively separate the moral component of an unprincipled act from rationalizing engaging in it (Bandura, 2016; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996).

Scholars report growing evidence that workplace violence/bullying driven by unethical leaders is alarmingly prevalent in institutions of higher education and is increasing (Hollis, 2019b), mainly due to the unique work environment of higher education of contributing factors such as academic freedom, shared governance, tenure (Twale, 2017), and increased use of technology and its impact on incivility (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Ferber, 2018). Finally, Miller et al. (2019) reported that Hollis's (2012, 2018) survey research, also grounded in Bandura's theoretical work on moral disengagement, suggested that academic bullying may impact marginalized groups such as African-American women at a higher rate than the general population (Frazier, 2011).

Vicarious Bullying in Higher Education and Unethical Leadership

Hollis (2017a, 2019b) defined vicarious bullying as a form of organizational aggression where the primary bully sends or inspires a secondary bully to aggressively deliver orders, diminish staff accomplishments, and extend the bully's rule through fear

(Hollis, 2017a). Vicarious bullying is a departure from bystanders and witnesses who are also third parties to the bullying behaviors, but instead remain silent witnesses to the bullying (Jenkins & Nickerson, 2017; Quirk & Campbell, 2015). This vicarious bully in the higher education workplace is usually an administrative assistant, entry-level colleague, or a direct subordinate of the primary bully. For doing the primary bully's bidding, secondary bullies usually favor additional pay or privilege (Hollis, 2017a, 2019b).

Hollis (2017a, 2019b) grounded the development of her concept of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership in Brown and Mitchell's (2010) ethical leadership theory. Brown and Mitchell developed their theory by conducting a comprehensive review of scholarship regarding ethical leadership and the outcome of "dark" organizational behaviors due to bullying and the subsequent vicarious bullying. Researchers applying Brown and Mitchell's ethical leadership theory found respondents believed apathetic, unethical leaders are to blame for the proliferation of workplace bullying because such leaders reward cruelty as a valued organizational behavior (Bonner et al., 2016; Hollis, 2019b). Employees in academia who respond to vicarious bullying by joining in on such malicious behavior do so primarily through mental disengagement to unethical leadership practices (Byrne, 2014) or turnover (Hollis, 2017a).

The Interface of Black Women's Intersectionality, Academic Bullying, and Career Progression

In Hollis's 2018 landmark, national survey research on how bullying of Black women academics leads to their subsequent career disruption, the author wrote that

vulnerable and marginalized populations typically work in the least powerful positions within the American workplace. As women academics climb the career ladder and seek promotion, supervision, budgetary responsibilities, and tenure, they are more likely to report workplace bullying targets due to their intersectionality position (Hollis, 2016, 2018).

Intersectionality is defined as the interplay between several independent strands of inequality based on multiple social identities (e.g., racism and sexism), resulting in a more extensive oppression system (Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). Hollis's research work on the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression used the theoretical lens of Black feminist theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) that considered intersectionality as an approach to explore how Black women are affected by systemic and gendered racism in academia (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016). Hollis (2019b) recommends that future researchers consider the intersectionality of targets and report Black women's voices when studying academic bullying among women of color.

Literature Review

Workplace Bullying: Definitions and Perspectives

Bullying in the workplace is usually not an isolated incident; it is an escalated process where the person is placed in an inferior position and is targeted by harmful social acts (Miller et al., 2019). Bullying also includes behavior that seeks to exclude individuals socially or negatively affect an individual's health and safety (both physical and psychological) and their work (Fox & Cowan, 2015; O'Rourke & Antioch, 2016;

Park & Ono, 2016; Ritzman, 2016). Workplace bullying is incredibly costly, with targets of workplace bullying spending 3.9 hours a week dealing with the bully and strategizing on just how to avoid the bully or even thinking of ways to survive the interactions they may have with the bully; targets often report withstanding such an abuse longer than three years (Hollis, 2016).

Almost 30 years ago, Leymann (1990) claimed four main factors related to workplace bullying. Those four factors are deficiencies in work design, deficiencies in leadership behavior, socially exposed position of the victim, and also low moral standards in the organization (as cited in Feijó, Graf, Pearce, & Fassa, 2019). Organizations must understand and adequately address aggression and bullying in the workplace. First, the organization must understand the factors that shape whether an individual perceives a situation as aggressive or bullying in nature (Howard, Johnston, Wech, & Stout, 2016). According to Van Heugten, organizational characteristics such as stressful work environments and workplaces that encourage competition for control and respect have been linked to higher workplace bullying (as cited in Cassie & Crank, 2018).

According to Hollis (2019a), workplace bullying is often ignored as a personality conflict in American higher education. Often, managers are not trained to identify and handle workplace bullying, and many times, organizations fail to have policies and procedures in place regarding workplace bullying. As reported in some studies, women are identified as the most vulnerable group to the effects of workplace aggression. When women seek promotions, tenure, and other career advancements, they are more likely to target bullying (Cortina et al., 2001; Hollis, 2018).

Workplace bully aggressors may be different in different workplace settings (Meriläinen et al., 2019). Although many of the acts and negativity patterns are predictable, it would be risky to assume that all bullying and mobbing will be the same in all situations. Whereas some work abuse occurrences are ordinary, there are always new inventive combinations of mistreatment directed at targets (Yamada et al., 2018). According to K. Einarsen et al. (2019), researchers have consistently emphasized organizations' need to adapt their anti-bullying policies to cope with and prevent such unethical behavior. H.R. professionals are responsible for a variety of duties, including the success of an organization. For an organization to be successful, the employees have to be able to thrive in a healthy work environment free of harassment. Human resources professionals are essential to an organization's anti-bullying policies and procedures and performance improvement interventions. It is in an organization's favor to be proactive regarding workplace bullying. Workplace bullying diminishes employee and organizational performance as well as harms individuals (Ritzman, 2016).

S. Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) conducted a study to investigate the long-term relationship between being exposed to workplace bullying and mental health in the form of anxiety and depression with a period of five years exploring potential gender differences in these relationships. A cohort of 1613 employees reported their exposure to workplace bullying and their symptoms of anxiety and depression. The results revealed workplace bullying exposure to be a significant predictor of mental health problems five years on, even after controlling for baseline mental health status, gender, age, job-change, job demands, and job control, yet for men only. Baseline mental health problems in terms

of anxiety and depression symptoms did not predict exposure to bullying at follow-up among women. However, the anxiety did in the case of men.

In another study conducted by Hansen, Grynderup, Bonde, Conway, Garde, Kaerlev, and Willert (2018), the goal was to examine if non-bullied employees who work in an environment where workplace bullying exists have more long-term sickness absence than employees who work in environments where workplace bullying does not exist. There was a total of 7229 public health employees included in this study. The work units were classified into three different categories: no bullying (0%), the moderate prevalence of bullying (less than 10% bullied), and a high prevalence of bullying (more than or equal to 10% bullied). Long-term sickness absence during the following two years was obtained by linkage to the Danish register of sickness absence, compensation benefits, and social transfer payments. Employees who worked in an environment with workplace bullying had 15% to 22% more long term sickness absence than employees who worked in an environment where workplace bullying did not exist. The conclusion is that workplace bullying may pose a serious threat to long-term health and well-being. The first study revealed the need for mental health treatment and preventive measures to be in place for workplace bullying and highlighted the need for a gender perspective in these studies (Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019).

Samnani and Singh (2014) concluded that employers could incur significant workplace bullying costs (Sheehan, McCabe, & Garavan, 2018). It is estimated that workplace bullying may cost U.K. organizations as much as 13.75 billion annually. Employees being exposed to workplace bullying is associated with more than reduced

health and well-being for the bullied victims. Workplace bullying also affects performance and productivity, increased turnover, and reduced job satisfaction and engagement. With all these adverse effects that lead to a high cost for the organization, it only makes sense for employers to prevent bullying from occurring in the first place and where it does occur to reduce the adverse outcomes. Hollis (2016) agrees that workplace bullying jeopardizes the organization's employees' health, destroys morale, and cost thousands of dollars per person in employee disengagement. Organizations benefit from being proactive in addressing workplace bullying (Ritzman, 2016).

Researchers indicate that workplace bullying can be motivated by prejudices such as race, age, or sex; this is not always the case, but sometimes it may be (Dentith, Wright, & Coryell, 2015). Targets with positive characteristics such as confidence, kindliness, optimism, competent, and well-liked are seen as threats to bullies, which is why they are usually the targets. Although, at times, the bully and target may appear to be equals, the effect of bullying tends to make the target feel inferior and even powerless to change the situation (Cassie & Crank, 2018). Workplace bullying may include bias and discriminatory animism, but it typically includes a power differential (Hollis, 2019b).

With bullying at an epidemic level, it is time for organizational leaders to take steps to address this issue (Barrow et al., 2013).is it still 'epidemic'? Leaders need to start by examining their interactions with employees. By leaders taking the time to examine their interactions, they can identify if their attitudes and behaviors may be contributing to the problem. Literature has revealed that leaders who embrace rational self-interest leadership approaches appear more apt to resort to bullying behaviors than leaders who

embrace other-oriented leadership approaches. The respondents in this study pointed to leadership as the savior or sinner who impacts workplace bullying. Leaders can intervene to stop workplace bullying, or the leaders can knowingly allow abuse to continue, allowing abuse to proliferate through the campus community (Hollis, 2019b).

Bolman and Deal (2003) explain leadership in a four-frame style where the use of frames suggests a cognitive map to support managers coping with the ambiguous, complex, and turbulent nature of modern organizations (Erdemir, Demir, Yıldırım Öcal, & Kondakçı, 2020). One of the frames is the *Structural Frame*. The second is the *Human Resources Frame,* and the leader must balance the interaction between individual and organizational needs. The third is the *Political Frame,* and this frame is dominated by power, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The fourth is the *Symbolic Frame*, and this frame highlights rituals, myths, and the vision of the management. Rational self-interested leaders contribute to the workplace bullying phenomenon by relying on behaviors that threaten the employees' standing, professional status, and destabilization. Workplace bullying will continue to increase if rational self-interested leaders continue to embrace pro-social and other-oriented (Barrow et al., 2013).

Workplace Bullying in Higher Education

Although little is known about the prevalence of bullying in academia, substantial evidence exists, and more academics break the silence. Bullying occurs most often between supervisors and subordinates (Dentith et al., 2015). Workplace bullying in academia usually involves administrators targeting faculty. Due to the tenure process, administrators and other senior-level faculty can make life-altering decisions about their

coworkers. The educational sector has the dubious honor of reporting the highest level of bullying behavior across all industry sectors (Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica, 2019; Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Leymann, 1996). Academic bullying of faculty is prevalent in higher education settings, which results in damaged lives, careers, and institutions (Miller et al., 2019.

Dentith et al. (2015) suggested six categories that characterize workplace bullying, including social and workplace isolation, control/manipulation of information, emotional abuse, abusive working conditions, professional discredit and denigration, and the devaluation of one's professional role. Bullying is an issue of power, control, and abuse that is always damaging to the victim. Primary interventions aim to prevent workplace bullying before it ever occurs. Organizations need to make it a goal to prevent bullying and improve resources that increase bullying resistance if it does occur. Primary intervention gives employees and organizations lectures on bullying and courses in conflict prevention and management (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Academia seems to be a vulnerable setting for persistent aggression because of tenure. Tenure has faculty and some staff in long-term relationships with each other. There is a chance that the administrator has bullied more than one target. With that being said, the more documentation, the more likely constructive actions can be implemented to thwart this toxic behavior (King & Piotrowski, 2015). Workplace bullying may take several forms of threatening professional status or personal standing: preventing access to opportunities or withholding information from individuals (Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica, 2019).

Matsui (2005) reported that in elementary and secondary school settings, it was found that parents bullied between 22% and 36% of teachers; fellow teachers bullied 15%; the most alarming rate is the 25% that was bullied by educational administrators. These behaviors included condescending criticism, intimidation, organizational isolation, and reduced official responsibilities (King & Piotrowski, 2015). Such percentages have only increased today in the higher education workplace, and there are possible reasons why bullying incidents go unreported. Some of the reasons may be a lack of robust and easy to access institutional protocols for reporting the incidence when they occur, feelings of insecurity about their positions and dependence on their paychecks, fear of being fired and fear of being maltreated, and also concerns over receiving substandard recommendations for future jobs (Mahmoudi, 2019). Workplace bullying is a compelling element in higher education that destroys self-determination and career progression, particularly for marginalized positions (Hollis, 2018).

In a chi-square analysis, Hollis (2017a) showed that women are more likely to quit/resign from a job in reaction to workplace bullying. On the other hand, men are more likely to take more sick time in response to workplace bullying. In a study conducted by Meriläinen et al. (2019), check citation formatting please a total of 864 faculty members from nine Estonian universities answered the email questionnaire in the Spring of 2014. In the questionnaires, bullying was measured with the help of the Negative Acts Questionnaire. The study revealed that more than one-third of the respondents had considered quitting sometimes, quite often, or very often. The results show that perceived bullying is a predictor of intention to leave, whereas a favorable working environment

prevents quitting. Academic violence/bullying of faculty is prevalent in higher education settings, and this behavior results in damaged lives, careers, and institutions (Miller et al., 2019).

If not given an immediate solution, any form of conflict in a workplace may hinder the organization (Apipalakul & Kummoon, 2017). Conflict management is essential in organizational practice, and it remains critical that employees believe that interpersonal conflicts are generally managed well and somewhat in their organizations, and those general procedures are fair. Conflict management may play an essential role in preventing isolated conflict episodes from escalating into persistent bullying. Work environments characterized by a healthy conflict management climate are characterized by fewer bullying behaviors and a lower risk of bullying. The direct negative relationship between conflict management climate and bullying may mean that environments with less bullying behaviors contribute to the perception of a healthy conflict management climate (Zahlquist, Hetland, Skogstad, Bakker, & Einarsen, 2019).

Consequences of Workplace Bullying and Mobbing Behavior Among Academics

Work is a core ingredient to psychological health, and working meets the human needs for survival, relatedness, and self-determination (Miller et al., 2019). Workplace bullying is often brushed off and ignored as a personality conflict in American higher education (Hollis, 2019b). Although workplace bullying is being discussed and researched more, few researchers have examined how and why it occurs in higher education. Particular characteristics facilitate workplace bullying in university culture, such as hierarchy, evaluation processes and criteria, institutional codes of conduct, peer-

reviewing, debating, numerous committees, control issues, and the competition for funding, publicity, and tenure (Meriläinen et al., 2019).

Unethical administrators contribute to academic mobbing, initiating patterns of bullying, intimidation, and the commission of personal and career damage on undeserving faculty members (McDonald et al., 2020). Downward academic mobbing differs from the general form of academic mobbing because it is initiated by a superior, whereas, with general mobbing, it may be initiated by another faculty member, a staff member, or even a student. Scott (2018) published an article revealing that workplace bullies' personality traits and characteristics were remarkably similar to male batterers in domestic violence situations (McDonald et al., 2020). Combating workplace bullying and mobbing at a legislative level is the most systemic way to address these problems. Compliance with a state or national law would be a more substantial inducement to avoid bullying for unethical mid-level academic administrators than following an internal policy. Downward academic mobbing appears to be the most common form of workplace bullying in existence. When employees speak up about this behavior, it can help the organization investigate potential problems and improve the work environment (Chen & Liu, 2019). Karatuna (2015) revealed in previous studies that when organizations have successful intervention against bullying behavior in place, it has been found that it can help to reduce the occurrence of bullying (Chen & Liu, 2019).

Workplace abuse creates more stress than all other workplace stressors combined (Hollis, 2019a; Wilson, 1991). Without any intervention, toxic workplaces develop, which allows for deviant behaviors. The parallel organizational construction is the leader

or supervisor, who, by status, has power over the underlings. When individuals in these positions are not disciplined for aggressive behavior, the culture will normalize this behavior. Employees learn the cultural norms by watching which behaviors and languages are accepted and or rejected. Longstanding administrators and faculty who have built their careers in higher education may have been lulled into an accepting nonchalance that bullying culture remains common in higher education. Bullies in the academic world are often described as those who have or are linked to power (Meriläinen et al., 2019).

Lester (2013) stated that organizations, including higher education institutions, find increased workplace bullying instances. Workplace bullying refers to a pattern of frequent and intense maltreatment within workplace relationships, typically across a power differential (as cited in Miller et al., 2019). Keashly and Neuman (2010) made note that university-based researchers of workplace bullying have not examined bullying in academia as extensively as they have researched it in the general workplace, even though there are higher incidences of bullying in the academic settings when compared to the general population (as cited in Miller et al., 2019). Leaders can intervene to stop workplace bullying, or leaders can knowingly allow abuse to continue and allow abuse to proliferate through the campus community (Hollis, 2019b).

Researchers point out that aggressive behavior, repetition, duration, lack of power balance, and visible hostile and destructive aim are common characteristics of mobbing. Researchers also propose a different criterion to label workplace aggression as mobbing (Minibas-Poussard et al., 2018). Individuals experiencing mobbing may not be aware,

and they may not be aware of what behaviors represent mobbing. Leymann (1996) determined 45 types of mobbing behavior in five categories: towards the communication possibilities of mobbees, towards the maintenance of social contacts of mobbees, toward the maintenance of personal reputation of mobbees, towards mobbees' occupational situation, and towards mobbees' physical health (as cited in Minibas-Poussard et al., 2018). Mobbing is a stressful experience for victims. Mobbing is not only harmful for the organization as well as the victims. These kinds of abusive behaviors cause severe and long-lasting effects on both the academic and personal lives of targets and their families (Mahmoudi, 2019).

Bullies in Leadership Roles and Unethical Leadership

Despite the adverse effects of bullying, research does indicate that positive leadership in the organization can mitigate the behavior (Mills et al., 2019). According to Goodboy, Martin, Knight, and Long (2017), supervisors who allow workers some control over task completion, seek ways to reduce work strain and provide appropriate levels of work-related support can reduce perceptions of workplace bullying. Not all leadership is good leadership. Negligent leadership can lead to workplace stress and divisive worker relationships, such as isolating and excluding coworkers (Olsen, Bjaalid, & Mikkelsen, 2017).

There are three primary leadership types: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and management by exception (Mills et al., 2019). Transformational leaders are inspirational and challenge their employees to do their best. Their employees trust and respect them, and employees feel their emotional needs are

met. Transactional leaders are not as influential as transformational but are more common in organizations. These leaders provide rewards for good performance (Lee & Ding, 2020). Management, by exception, is not technically leadership but more like imperfect management. With management by exception, there is no initiative or goal setting. Interventions promoting a new management and leadership framework, increasing democratic values, and promoting employee participation in work decisions, should be implemented and evaluated to provide better parameters (Feijó, Gräf, Pearce, & Fassa, 2019).

Because leaders directly influence their followers' ethics, unethical leaders are problematic (Bonner et al., 2016). Leaders within organizations have considerable leverage to influence their followers' perceptions of ethical standards and subsequent behaviors. Morally disengaged supervisors are not seen as ethical leaders, and they do not see the benefit of ethical leadership practices. Organizations need to invest more time and energy in developing leadership because mobbing is profoundly affected by leadership changes, resource shortages, and uncivil culture in the workplace (Erdemir et al., 2020). Their language and actions are not consistent with those of an ethical leader.

Ethical leaders provide role modeling behaviors (Bonner et al., 2016). Employees will notice that these leaders will treat the organization with respect, honesty, and fairness. When there is a mismatch between supervisor and employee moral disengagement, it can produce unfavorable outcomes for an organization. Along with workplace bullying, many issues of social equality and justice, taking action to decrease the occurrence of these behaviors are not just about being ethical; this is also good for

business and providing a positive work environment where spirit and good energy can flow (Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica, 2019). Future research would benefit from examining the context that renders ethical leadership ineffective in producing desirable employee outcomes. Future research would also benefit from investigating other outcomes resulting from the mismatch between employee–supervisor moral disengagement. Regardless of how workplace bullying occurs, leaders who refuse to intervene and show deliberate indifference by knowingly allowing abuse to continue. Self-centered leaders who allow aggressive behavior to take root in the workplace also allow oppressive work environments to arise (Hollis, 2019a).

According to Bandura (2016), there are four loci of moral disengagement that human beings use to maintain their complimentary views of self while engaging in terrible behaviors toward others. The four loci are behavioral, agency, effects, and victim. Behavioral is how people justify their behavior. Agency is blamed for the behavior (Bjärehed, Thornberg, Wänström, & Gini, 2020). Effects are the explanation of the effects to disregard/distort/deny them. The victim attempts to blame the victim. Each of the above categories involves at least one of the eight specific moral disengagement mechanisms. Moral disengagement's behavioral focus consists of three main mechanisms: moral justification, euphemistic language, and favorable comparison (Fehr, Fulmer, & Keng-Highberger, 2020). The agency focus has two mechanisms: displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility. Effects have one mechanism, which is disregarding or distorting consequences. The victim has two mechanisms: dehumanization and attribution of blame (Miller et al., 2019).

Emotional workplace abuse is practice and behaviors enabled and fostered in toxic working environments (Penttinen et al., 2019). Abusive behaviors and practices can be normalized as part of a competitive and individualist organizational culture or dismissed as pertaining to particular difficult personalities or stressful times. An organization must examine organizational conditions, including organizational culture, management, and leadership, to prevent and tackle EWA. Employees' well-being should be at the core of HR functions; however, it seems as though it is seldom included in the organizational strategies. Emotional abusive behaviors can include direct or indirect acts, such as making fun of and publicly humiliating someone or degrading them. Kampen and Henken (2019) noted four primary interventions in daily organizational life aimed at all employees' levels. They tackle transgressive dysfunctional behavior, restoring work routines, normalizing interactions at work, and rebuilding basic structures and functional relationships. Most employees in their working lives will encounter incompetent colleagues, managers, leaders, and some in positions of power who systematically bully, victimize, and abuse their colleagues and other staff members (Forster & Lund, 2018).

Cyberbullying in the Workplace

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has revolutionized the way people communicate and how people form relationships with one another (Kowalski, Limber, & McCord, 2019). Direct cyberbullying refers to aggressive acts limited to just the perpetrator and victim. Indirect cyberbullying can occur on multiple media platforms and has the potential to involve a larger audience than just the victim and perpetrator. Although there are similarities between cyberbullying and

traditional bullying, it is essential to remember distinctive features in the behaviors. One of the critical features of cyberbullying that differentiate it from traditional bullying is anonymity. The fact that cyberbullies seem anonymous to the victim makes the victim feel powerless. In a survey conducted by Kowalski, Toth, and Morgan (2018), 20% of 3600 adults in the United States reported that their cyberbullying experiences occurred in adulthood. Cyberbullying is a distinct phenomenon with its specific characteristics. While Information and Communication Technology helps with productivity and profitability for organizations, it can also include cyberbullying if it goes unregulated and unmonitored (Keskin, Akgün, Ayar, & Kayman, 2016).

Face-to-face work processes have now been replaced by computer-mediated communication (Vranjes, Baillien, Vandebosch, Erreygers, & De Witte, 2017). Many employees are now confronted with some form of ICTs in order to complete their job tasks. Working with ICTs raises the opportunities for exposure to employees to become victims of harmful online activities. To fully understand this phenomenon, it is critical to consider additional factors that compound the electronic environment in which cyberbullying occurs. Whereas victims of traditional bullying can manage to escape the bullying incidents from coworkers and supervisors at home, cyberbullying has a more intrusive nature because online communication can be done anytime and anywhere. In online scenarios, targets can foster repetition by revisiting the online behavior directed at them, causing the target to become quasi-perpetrators (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2018). Work environments are evolving from a physical to more of a virtual one, and it is believed that workplace cyberbullying will continue to grow in importance. Concerning implications

for prevention and intervention, data suggest that policies and programs be attuned to developmental differences in the nature and prevalence of cyberbullying, as well as the risk and protective factors (Kowalski et al., 2019).

The majority of workplace bullying research has focused on describing the behavior and identifying the outcomes (Kowalski et al., 2018). Working adults find that workplace bullying is moving online due to the changes in organizations where work is moving online. The dominant communication is no longer landline phones or paper memos where ICTs are available and highly used. Employees are now able to access emails from just about anywhere at any time. Even though employees may not be experiencing the bullying within the confines of their physical office or workplace, the bullying may be now moving to the online environment. The definition of workplace cyberbullying is not about where and how it occurs, but to the extent to which it results in an enduring, ongoing situation (Farley et al., 2018). When workers perceive high job demands with few resources to cope with demands, they experience adverse personal and workplace outcomes. Bullying and incivility, both face-to-face and online, increase perceived demands in the workplace, perhaps to different degrees. Any form of bullying represents a direct, indirect, or reputational cost for an organization; however, cyberbullying can increase these costs to the organization when enacted on the internet (Coyne et al., 2017).

Vicarious Bullying in the Workplace

Leaders identified as workplace bullies in the higher education sector use manipulation and coercion to maintain their political power in a complex and abusive

social structure (Hollis, 2019b). The vicarious bully controls the staff by the use of coercion, deception, and psychological abuse. Toxic leaders who are narcissistic and self-aggrandizing engage in behaviors that benefit their positions without much concern for the institution. Vicarious bullying creates a widespread impact on the organization, given the multiple onerous characters abusing the staff. Faculty bullies may withhold information and denigration academic accomplishments as they engage in a battle of the minds of workplace bullying. According to Hollis (2017a), vicarious bullying is a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends or inspires a messenger, henchman, bark orders, diminish staff accomplishments, and extend the bully's rule through fear. Workplace bullying harms individuals and diminishes employee and organizational performance (Ritzman, 2016).

Toxic leaders engage in those behaviors that benefit their positions without much concern for the institution that they are employed by using vicarious bullying to act out their unethical and opportunistic abuse of power on targeted employees (Pelletier et al., 2019). Academia presents opportunities for violence and or bullying through different avenues such as student evaluations, subjective or ambiguous criteria, and peer review personnel decisions within the higher education setting (Miller et al., 2019). According to Forster and Lund (2018), it appears that tenured faculty in higher education are more likely than nontenured to be involved in direct aggression toward junior faculty, administrative staff, and students.

Bullying does not only demotivate but also demoralize and alienate employees (Forster & Lund, 2018). Psychopathic personality traits are commonly associated with

murderers, serial killers, violent criminals, and gangsters, and these traits are also found in less extreme forms and many respectable professions, including those in higher education. Academic violence and faculty bullying are prevalent in higher education settings, resulting in damaged lives, careers, and institutions (Miller et al., 2019). There is a difference between the two groups. The difference is that functional psychopaths in business and other mainstream professions do not usually engage in acts of physical violence, and often they avoid getting caught when they commit white-collar crime or fraud or engage in other forms of abusive behavior toward others. Universities are willing to ruin their reputations and alienate their alumni to protect bullies and abusers (Dumitrescu, 2019).

Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik (2010) defined vicarious bullies in the workplace as those employees who, as accomplices to bully leaders, abuse personnel within toxic environments that tacitly allow for abuse to continue. Additional aggressors can be categorized as active accomplices, and passive accomplices can include upper management, HR, the bullies' peers, and even the targeted persons' peers (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). When there are no interventions such as policing through shared governance, ethical and humanitarian leadership, or other checks and balances suppressing such toxicity, the bullies prevail utilizing their accomplices (Hollis, 2019b). Targets can find it challenging to end the abuse if bullies have accomplices regardless of whether they are publicly or privately participating behind the scenes. It is essential to know the particular form of bullying and a favorable working environment if we want to

prevent bullying and maintain a desirable psychosocial working environment preceding an employee's intention to leave an organization (Meriläinen et al., 2019).

The accomplice and vicarious bully topic remain an unexplored avenue for research across industry sectors (Chen & Liu, 2019). As noted in Westhues's (2006) seminal paper, vicarious academic bullying and mobbing are insidious processes within higher education institutions. Abusive supervision has a considerable negative impact on the abused employee at the workplace and those who do not directly experience abuse but may hear about it or experience it second hand. By human resource managers intervening promptly, they can mitigate vicarious abusive supervisors' adverse effects on bystanders. To help the organization investigate potential problems and improve work environments, employees must be willing to speak up. Organizations need to create anonymous reporting procedures for bystanders, ensuring that bystanders feel safe when reporting such behavior. Uncorrected behavior sets the tone for what the organization finds acceptable and appropriate. If no one intervenes, it is less likely that the correction of destructive and harmful behavior will occur (Hollis, 2019b).

Several scholars noted that vicarious bullying or mobbing was probably experienced more in academia than in any other workplace (Duffy & Sperry, 2012; Minibas-Poussard et al., 2018). Although researchers have pointed out all the typical mobbing characteristics, they proposed different criteria to label workplace aggression as mobbing. Individuals experiencing mobbing may not be aware or even realize that the behaviors represent mobbing because everyone in every workplace carries a different meaning throughout the mobbing process. Organizations need to understand and need to

address aggression and bullying in the workplace adequately. Organizations must understand the factors that shape whether an individual perceives the situation as aggression or bullying first (Howard et al., 2016).

Scholars have made various propositions as to what the causes of mobbing may be. A single case of mobbing can cause much damage to an organization. Mobbing is profoundly affected by leadership changes, resource shortages, and uncivil culture in the workplace. Organizations need to invest more time and energy into developing their leadership staff (Erdemir et al., 2020). The explanation for the frequency and level of mobbing in public universities is the limitation of officially open positions for faculty in departments and the relatively higher job security than private institutions. The only way to fire faculty from a public university is to make them resign with their consent. Policies set the standard for behavior and actions, which will allow for evaluations to be conducted to determine if these policies are effective (Faucher, Cassidy, & Jackson, 2015).

Vicarious Bullying of Marginalized Populations in Academia

Academic bullies maintain their political power through coercion and manipulation through vicarious bullying of marginalized populations in the higher education sector (Hollis, 2017b). Vicarious bullying occurs when a more powerful person uses a subordinate at his or her disposal to dispatch in this henchman/henchwoman capacity. Vicarious bullying is a complex issue, and it involves two aggressors: the bully and the henchmen. This subordinate could be jockeying for power, a raise, a promotion, or influence, and serves as the bully's abusive extension, or the henchman may be a

reluctant participant and a target as well. All incivility and bullying episodes should be taken seriously by academic administrators, and the administrators should act fast to intervene and resolve this behavior. By the administrators acting expeditiously, it sends a message to all university personnel regarding the seriousness of matters of incivility and bullying (King & Piotrowski, 2015). Henchman or henchwoman can be a coordinator, an administrative assistant, or even a direct report to the bully. Unlike bullies in other workplaces, bullies in academia may be intelligent enough to leave minimal evidence of their inappropriate actions to exercise power over a bullying target (Mahmoudi, 2019).

Workplace bullying can be difficult and complicated for human resources personnel to manage (Hollis, 2017b). Without organizational leadership taking proactive actions in curtailing all types of bullying, the organizational culture can normalize employees' abuse, creating a costly behavior pattern. When the bully uses subordinates to implement abusive commands and directives on behalf of the bully, workplace bullying becomes increasingly convoluted. Bullies in the academic world are often described as those who have or are linked to power (Meriläinen et al., 2019). The bully is usually acting from weakness or perceived threat. Human resource professionals expressed that even one mistreatment incident can diminish employees' attention and effort for several weeks. When human resource managers overlook the effects of vicarious abusive supervision on bystanders, bystanders can lose their work engagement, and this can increase their turnover intentions (Chen & Liu, 2019).

Workplace bullying creates demoralizing situations for employees who often find themselves powerless to correct the situation (Hollis, 2017b). One of the effects of

workplace bullying is employee disengagement. Victims of workplace bullying are likely not to trust the organization and revert to focusing on self-defense instead of focusing on the organization's business. Higher education employees spend time strategizing how to avoid the bully or think of ways to survive any interactions with the bully. The employee disengagement results in five weeks a year of wasted time per person. Verbal abuse, unfair treatment, public ridicule, and other bullying behaviors increase someone's awareness and drain one's energy in preparation for the next potential attack. Exposure to bullying is a significant predictor of increases in mental health problems (S. Einarsen & Nielsen, 2015).

When a target faces workplace bullying for an extended time, they become candidates for battle fatigue or post-traumatic stress (Hollis, 2017b). When the body experiences chronic threats to safety, regardless if they are perceived or real, the sympathetic nervous system becomes overrun with a stimulus, especially if the body has never had a chance to regroup. Workplace aggression in an academic setting has different antecedents, consequences, and dynamics, and it may affect the well-being of the person and the organization's performance (Erdemir et al., 2020).

Higher education institutions have intentions to eradicate workplace bullying (Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica, 2019). Patterns of bullying at work persist despite a raft of legislation. Previous research confirms that workplace bullying is still prevalent and entrenched in all workplaces, especially in higher education. Most institutions have been aware for some time that such patterns of behaviors exist and have established extensive policy structures with well-coordinated management and committee networks with a

variety of established procedures for staff. Every higher education organization is unique and requires its own culturally tailored program. Institutions can play a crucial role in reducing academic bullying by designing a fair and thorough reporting system. One way to combat bullying for the institution and other stakeholders is to implement a strategy to create a team of expert investigators to examine documentation to ensure no signs of coercion or inaccuracy (Mahmoudi, 2019).

Bullying behavior is socially, ethically, and commercially detrimental to a higher educational environment (Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica, 2019). Without an associated and ongoing strategy for culture change, anti-bullying policies may be only the first stages in changing higher educational cultures and excluding bullying behavior. Performance improvement professionals need to design performance interventions to help their organizations address workplace bullying (Ritzman, 2016). Educators often enter the field for the love of serving students, academic stimulation, and the opportunity to connect with rising scholars. Educators do not usually enter the field, anticipating making wages comparable to corporate sectors. Leadership can stem the abuse through proper training, explicit policies prohibiting bullying, and additional personnel such as having an ombudsman. Without the intervention from leadership and support from those with more power, junior faculty members are left defenseless in a very competitive and stressful field (Hollis, 2017b).

Intersectional Microaggression in the Workplace

Microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination, often unintentional and unconscious, which send hostile and denigrating messages to various individuals and

groups (Nadal et al., 2015). Perhaps one of the main reasons why there is a dearth of qualitative literature on intersectional microaggressions is that previous qualitative studies do not consider multiple identities in their analysis. Microaggressions deliver a message that marginalized group members are undesirably different, and this tends to reveal underlying prejudice (Fattoracci, Revels-Macalinao, & Huynh, 2020). Microaggressions identify, quantify, and qualify covert discrimination, an otherwise nebulous phenomenon that could not be readily studied otherwise. Microaggressions for people of color and LGB individuals alike are prevalent. Microaggressions seem to significantly influence racial/ethnic and sexual minority group members' cognitive, emotional, and physical functioning. Microaggression content and imagery can cut across a person's identities, triggering traumas associated simultaneously with racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, xenophobia, and ableism (Sterzing, Gartner, Woodford, & Fisher, 2017).

Minority stress theory posits that minoritized individuals face minority-related stressors in addition to general stressors (Sterzing et al., 2017). Minority stressors are derived from stigma, prejudice, and discrimination and reflect underlying systems of oppression, such as heterosexism, misogyny, and cisgenderism. Intersectionality theory offers critical theoretical insights into understanding and investigating intersectional microaggressions and their impact on health disparities. Uncovered knowledge of microaggressions integrates mind, heart, and body and recognizes the individuals' complex intersectional identities at a particular cultural and sociohistorical moment (Yep & Lescure, 2019). The more prominent or central the minority identity is to the

individual, the more significant potential impact the microaggression can have on well-being. Often children are exposed to sexism, heterosexism, and cisgenderism in their familial setting first. Some racial microaggressions are automatic, indirect, stunning, or seemingly innocuous messages that are both verbal and nonverbal and which devalue the lives of people of color (Corbin, Smith, & Garcia, 2018).

Workplace Bullying and Career Disruption Within Marginalized Groups

Workplace bullying destroys self-determination and career progression for marginalized populations and often targets employees who do not have the dominant culture's organizational power and executive rank in higher education (Meriläinen et al., 2019). Consequently, the marginalized endure compromised self-determination and often make career choices that align with the need for safety instead of the goal of advancing. When there are underlying forms of bullying in a university context, it may cause person-related disappointments and other negative feelings related to the working environment, and it may further decrease working engagement and increase leaving (Minibas-Poussard et al., 2018). Workplace bullying is a behavior that will increase an employee's intentions to leave an organization. HR must establish workplace practices that contribute to fulfilling employees' intrinsic motivational needs and subsequent flourishing, helping an organization decrease their turnover rate. To decrease their turnover rate, the organization has to be aware of the workplace's bullying behaviors (Coetzee & Oosthuizen, 2017).

Hush harbors are considered academic sanctuaries that minority members of the academy create to feel safe and supported (Pyke, 2018). Hush harbors are like domestic violence shelters, providing a welcoming and safe environment for those facing

workplace abuse. They provide psychological support as well as intellectual sustenance to those pushed to the margins of mainstream academia. Here they are openly able to share their experiences working and studying in academic settings that are diverse but may not be inclusive and often downright hostile to their presence, their perspectives, and their research, rendering these work environments as not healthy for individuals, for departments, for the students, or the production of knowledge (Davis, Ofahengaue, & Scales, 2015). Academia does not provide a safe work environment for many racial, sexual, and gender minorities. Faculty and graduate students describe the adverse effects of working in unfriendly or openly hostile environments, such as sweaty palms, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, insomnia, depression, anxiety, anger, guilt, and low self-confidence (De Welde, 2017.)

Diversity is supposed to mean inclusion, integration, and equity—not marginalization, segregation, denigration, and discrimination (Pyke, 2018). However, hush harbors' need points to academic institutions' fundamental failure to live up to claims that diversity is embraced. At times, leaders of universities and colleges look the other way and fail to respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment on their campuses; instead, they are protecting the harassers and rapists. Unfortunately, if administrators fail to address these most glaring of wrongs, they do not address the more mundane, everyday forms of discrimination, such as bullying, mobbing, and retaliation. A more diverse faculty could ease the burdens on individual faculty; there is also the hurdle of administrative recognition of this work (De Welde, 2017).

Employees may feel obligated to stay with the university due to the benefits and circumstances; however, employees can mentally disengage from the university setting while producing their scholarship (Hollis, 2019b). The individual may stay until tenure is granted; often, productive faculty members leave the organization once earning tenure if they successfully secure the same financial benefits elsewhere with tenure. Abetting and vicarious bullying confirm that workplace bullying often evolves beyond one-on-one toxic experience, with primary bullying hurting the target. Callous and apathetic leadership styles and noncompliance with policy lead to these expensive and deleterious work environments. Although supervisory coaching motivates employees to perform better at work, the difference lies in the degree to which the leadership style displays the behavior (Lee & Ding, 2020).

African American Women Academics, Bullying, and Career Disruption

Scholars write that workplace bullying experiences, including vicarious bullying, may disrupt African American women's careers and diminish their hope to excel in their career path. The findings of several studies confirm that women of color, who are often on the low end of the power differential, are more likely to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption, yet their voices remain absent from the extant literature (Hollis, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015). In Hollis's 2018 landmark, national survey research on how bullying of Black women academics leads to their subsequent career disruption, the author wrote that vulnerable and marginalized populations typically work in the least powerful positions within the American workplace. Looking at workplace bullying with a perspective on intersectionality acknowledges that targets may be harassed by powerful

others from the dominant culture and sets the stage for access, fairness, and career advancement (Mirza, 2015). Several scholars using the theoretical lens of Black feminist theory and intersectionality report that academic bullying experiences continue to affect Black women's careers through disruptive career paths, the threat of job loss, or turnover intention (Corbin et al., 2018; Jordan-Zachery, 2019).

Mass media plays a critical role in helping society construct meanings and understandings of people and places that we may have little to no interpersonal actions with (Corbin et al., 2018). Popular mass media continually mark Black women as uncontrollable, abusive, unpredictable, sassy, irrational, intense, and angry. The pervasive depictions in the media often lack nuance and ingrain simple constructions, so they appear to be truthful and holistic representations of Black women. Leadership development is often touted as the solution to help women "break through the glass ceiling"—invisible systemic work barriers that impede advancement for women and marginalized people (Dickens, Womack, & Dimes, 2019).

Historically and predominantly White colleges and universities, Black women's dearth on campus exacerbates entrapment and silencing (Hollis, 2018). Racial battle fatigue, experienced at both the individual and group levels, can directly result from being part of a racially oppressed group. Racial battle fatigue explains the psychosocial stress responses such as frustration, sadness, anxiety, hopelessness, helplessness, irritability, defensiveness, shock, and anger faced in anti-Black misogynistic environments. The dominant and problematic mass media perpetuated the angry Black woman's controlling image who structure Black college women (Hollis, 2017b). Many

women of color, religious minorities, and gender/sexual minorities experience how those in power frequently suppress and coerce marginalized populations. Racism and sexism are not the only demographic markers that potentially intersect for Black women striving through the dominant culture (Hollis, 2018).

Workplace bullying experiences affect Black women's careers, which hurts their aspirations to excel in their respective career paths (Hollis, 2018). The person with more power controls the dominant culture and sets the stage for access, fairness, and career advancement. Black women face unfair demotions, threats of job loss, or changed jobs due to workplace bullying. Changing jobs to avoid dealing with workplace bullying jeopardizes job longevity, a quality many employees consider when looking at a job candidate's stability. Individuals may rely on the social support provided by their coworkers to help buffer the consequences of bullying. However, there is a difference between the quality and quantity of such relationships for African Americans to help buffer workplace bullying and job stressors. The impact of workplace bullying on perceived job stressors and psychological distress is more significant for women and persons of color (Attell, Brown, & Treiber, 2017). Workplace bullying harms victims at the physical, psychological, moral, and occupational dimensions (Ngalellongo, 2015).

Individuals of historically disadvantaged groups are entitled to civil rights protections codified in state and federal laws (Namie & Namie, 2018). The protected status groups include women, minority races, older workers, or disabled individuals. This group of individuals is also eligible to file a complaint with their employer when nondiscrimination policies are believed to be violated. Women and people of color often

are in the least powerful positions, and they are more likely to face workplace bullying (Hollis, 2018). Targets sometimes will try and figure out if they may have done something to have caused their bully to behave in such a way. Often, the target's coworkers and family will convince them that the behavior is not healthy or acceptable. When bullying is allowed to run rampant in companies that ignore the issue, they will see an increase in employee absenteeism, grievances, turnover, and in a more extreme case, workers' compensation claims and litigations (Curry, 2018).

According to Davis (2016), all of the African American female leaders in this study believed that differential treatment based on their race and gender in their specific organizations influenced their leadership development. This study was designed to determine how the intersection of race and gender identities contributed to leadership development elements as perceived by eight African American female executives in academia and business. A phenomenological research method was most appropriate for this study to capture individuals' lived experiences from their perspectives and develop themes that challenged structural or normative assumptions. Women have been entering the workforce in higher numbers and making progress in professional positions; however, access to senior leadership ranks remains limited for African American women (Pyke, 2018). The researcher interviewed African American women in academia and business who were top senior-level executives. The participants confessed that being a Black woman meant that they would always be challenged, rendered invisible, and realized that things are different for them than for others. For the African American women in this study, their race and gender have negatively affected their careers. Some participants

reported feeling invisible, voiceless, discriminated against, isolated, undermined, mistreated, oppressed, challenged, and demoted. These negative experiences dominated the conversation when participants reflected on their past experiences (Davis, 2016; Hollis, 2018).

In a survey conducted on bullying and intersectionality, Hollis (2018) collected data from participants in all types of higher education institutions. Four-year and 2-year institutions were both included in this sample. This survey confirmed that 58% of the higher education respondents reported being affected by workplace bullying. Firstly, all respondents were tabulated, and then secondly women, then Black women, and then Black women who are religious minorities. In this study, Black women who are gender/sexual minorities were analyzed as well. There were 386 respondents affected by workplace bullying. For all women respondents, 295 reported being affected by bullying, which was 2.4% higher than the expected count. For Black women who were also a religious minority, 22 reported being affected by bullying, which is 25 % higher than expected. For Black women who are also gender/sexual minorities, all seven reported being affected by bullying, which is 40% higher than expected for this sample. Workplace bullying experiences affect Black women's careers, hurting their aspirations to excel in their respective career paths (Felmlee et al., 2018). These data show that American citizens' social contract falls short in the higher education sector for women with complex intersectionality. Even though hostility and bullying are a behavior faced by most higher education professionals, this power differential and the resulting intensified abuse disproportionally hurt Black women's careers (Hollis, 2018).

Literature Gaps on Experiences of African American Women With Vicarious Bullying

A significant limitation of research that focuses on single identity forms of microaggressions in isolation is that they typically ignore other systems of power and oppression, and this results in research that primarily reflects a dominant group experience of sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity microaggressions (Sterzing et al., 2017). The impact of microaggressions on individuals with a single marginalized identity is qualitatively different from intersectional microaggressions that target a more wondrous totality of the individual's identities. Microaggressions are also part of a more extensive system of oppression that undermines marginalized groups' health and well-being. Research shows that for people of color and LGBT people alike, microaggressions have real correlates and consequences (Fattoracci et al., 2020). Based on an intersectional standpoint, the effects of systemic racism's singular processes are not the only considerations but more a specific blend of the two that goes beyond merely adding racism and sexism together (Felmlee et al., 2018).

Hollis (2019b) recommends that future researchers consider the intersectionality of targets and report Black women's voices when studying academic bullying among women of color. Academic bullies maintain their political power through coercion and manipulation through vicarious bullying of marginalized populations in the higher education sector (Hollis, 2017b). As academic women's intersectionality becomes increasingly complex, vicarious workplace bullying incidents increase proportionally (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b). Due to vicarious workplace bullying in higher education,

Black women reported unfair demotion, job loss threats, and unexpected career disruption (Hollis, 2018). Changing jobs to escape a bully hurts job longevity, a quality many employers consider when looking at the stability of a job candidate within higher education (Hogh et al., 2019).

When Human Resource departments do not address the destructive leader in an unstable environment, workplace bullying permeates the organization, affecting employee health, stifling morale, creativity, and loyalty (Barrow et al., 2013; Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019). The accomplice and the vicarious bully topic remains an unexplored avenue for research across industry sectors (Chen & Liu, 2019). Vicarious bullying behaviors of marginalized populations in the higher education sector signifies the expansive bureaucratic influence academic bullies use to maintain their political power through coercion and manipulation (Hollis, 2017b). Extending theory through empirical research on how intersectionality may contribute to vicarious workplace bullying may offer human resource scholars future research directions on how vicarious bullying experiences may disrupt African American women's career paths (Hollis, 2018; Pyke, 2018).

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter reviewed workplace bullying literature, vicarious bullying in higher education, and career progression amongst African Americans in higher education. There is a gap in the literature on African American women's experiences with vicarious bullying, and this gap needs to be addressed by understanding how vicarious bullying affects African American women's career progression. Research indicates that African

American women's career experiences in higher education are affected by vicarious bullying. The conceptual framework focuses on African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progress. The purpose of the literature review for the current qualitative, narrative inquiry is to understand African American women in higher education and their daily experiences with vicarious bullying. Vicarious bullying is a form of organizational aggression that causes career path disruption among African American women.

The literature review section for Chapter 2 summarized the synthesis of knowledge and critical analysis of the literature on Black women academics and their intersectionality as targets of academic bullying and vicarious bullying of this demographic group. Scholars write that workplace bullies in academia maintain their political power through coercion and manipulation through vicarious bullying of marginalized populations (Hollis, 2017b). As academic women's intersectionality becomes increasingly complex, vicarious workplace bullying incidents increase proportionally (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b). Due to vicarious workplace bullying in higher education, Black women reported unfair demotion, job loss threats, and unexpected career disruption through changing jobs to escape a bully (Hogh et al., 2019). Previous American studies have not tackled how increasing intersectionality may be a contributing factor in the targets' propensity to experience vicarious workplace bullying (Hollis, 2018

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research method for this qualitative, narrative study. The procedures I used for recruitment, participation, and data collection will be

presented. The data analysis plan will also be addressed, as well as issues of trustworthiness in the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences have interfered with their career progression. To address this study's purpose and consistent with the qualitative paradigm, a narrative inquiry approach was used to collect data through storytelling by African American women academics about their daily work experiences with vicarious bullying (see Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). In this study, a narrative inquiry research design allowed for gleaning detailed participant descriptions from African American women's voices on workplace bullying's ramifications on their career progression (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

This chapter provides detailed information on the research method and rationale for utilizing the narrative inquiry approach to meet the study's purpose and provide data to answer the central research question. I will also present a rationale for the participant selection strategy, data collection strategies and data analysis, the researcher's role, evaluation methods for the trustworthiness of data, ethical considerations, and a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research design where the researcher captures participants' stories to gain a deeper understanding of their daily life experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This qualitative research design supports the connection between participants' storytelling and daily lived experiences (Clandinin, 2016).

Researching African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression using a context-rich interpretive approach to meet the purpose of this study can offer distinctive contributions to the theory and extend understanding of the vicarious bullying/career path interface among African American women academics (Hollis, 2019b; Nadal et al., 2015). In aligning with this study's purpose, the central research question was as follows: What do African American women academics' stories reflect about their daily work experiences with vicarious bullying, and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression?

Previous researchers indicated that as women of color climb the career ladder and seek promotion, supervision, budgetary responsibilities, and tenure, they are more likely than their White counterparts to report workplace bullying targets (Hollis, 2016). However, intersectionality scholars have indicated literature gaps exist on women's multifaceted positionality in workplace bullying research and the implications of vicarious bullying on African American women's career progression (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b). To align the central research question with its outlined purpose, these narrative experiences gleaned from the participant sample provide empirical data information from within a marginalized population to gain a deeper understanding of how vicarious bullies operate within the higher education sector. Such data may be utilized to inform practice for human resource professionals in higher education settings (Hollis, 2017b; Penttinen et al., 2019).

Besides narrative inquiry, other qualitative research designs were examined for goodness-of-fit in providing data to answer the study's central search question, such as case study, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Phenomenology was not chosen because this study's purpose was not to expand on a phenomenon but rather to investigate the daily experiences of those whose phenomenological viewpoint of the problem they face is already established (Freeman, 2016). A case study was the second choice but was not selected because the review of how previous studies in workplace bullying used this method was not pertinent to exploring these daily lived experiences (Slembrouck, 2015).

In grounded theory, the disclosure of significant events is excluded from generating an overall understanding of a specific topic and develop the foundation of a new theoretical perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). On the other hand, a narrative approach is a precise method for identifying critical events resulting from a distinctive analysis of participants' stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Therefore, a narrative inquiry was the closest methodological fit for meeting this study's purpose to gather data through storytelling. This qualitative research approach's data collection process supports the researcher in developing a trusting relationship with the participant during the narrative interview process and allows the emergence of significant critical lived events (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Narrative inquiry is used to understand and inquire about research participants' lived experiences, using temporality, sociality, and places to serve as specific guidelines for extending the study's conceptual framework (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The accomplice and the vicarious bully topic remains an unexplored avenue for research

across industry sectors (Chen & Liu, 2019). As noted in Westhues's (2006) seminal paper, vicarious academic bullying and mobbing are insidious processes within higher education institutions. The critical event data analysis approach used in this study to analyze African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying may support developing new ethical infrastructures to prevent workplace bullying of marginalized populations in the academic workplace to support the educational and social justice mission of a diverse educational system (K. Einarsen et al., 2019).

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to interview African American women academics who have had vicarious bullying experiences about these experiences and their implication on their career progression. I have documented these participants' experiences as they relate to the central research question. I explored only the replies to the study research question, and I have not embellished my role in any other way during this research. Participants did not have any personal or professional affiliation or personal dealings with the researcher. I did not express any form of authority and management over the participants. To ensure trustworthiness and diminish the possibility of research biases, I made reflective journal notes throughout the research study (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). If any personal biases were detected, I stated them openly when responses were being transcribed and analyzed to minimize their effect on the participants' stories (see Tracy, 2019).

Conducting interviews and relating with participants requires professional collaboration and should not present ethical issues (Webster & Mertova, 2007). To develop understanding and trust, ethical issues or concerns may be shared. Trust is fundamental to qualitative research interviews to obtain the utmost accurate data. Shared trust between the interviewer and the participant is significant to collect accurate data in a narrative research study, as the researcher anticipates that participants share deeply personal experiences. The unveiling of these experiences may negatively affect many individuals, organizations, and groups, which is why participant confidentiality and trust must be kept within the highest standards within the data collection process (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I did not use incentives to recruit candidates for the study sample. There were minimal impediments between the participants and me, and I had not had any transactional dealings with any of the participants, personal or professional, before the study. If requested, participants could exit from the study at any time of their choosing without explanation or penalty (Tracy, 2019).

Methodology

Narrative inquiry was well suited for this study because it is a process by which, through the stories that African American women academics share, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of their specific challenges through the individual perspective of their daily business experiences, transactions, relationships, and the higher education institution context (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2016). The strength of the narrative inquiry approach rests on the epistemological premise that individuals will inherently attempt to make sense of their experiences through the storytelling experience.

As such, stories perpetually restructured within the timeline of recent events as they do not exist in a static environment but are informed by fluctuating personal narratives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Using a narrative inquiry approach allowed me to share the stories and experiences of African American women academics with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression in a manner that is holistic in all their complexity, depth, and richness (see Nolan, Hendricks, Williamson, & Ferguson, 2018). There was no attempt to revamp the participants' experience, but instead, I provided interpretations through the restorying technique of how the participants personally perceived their experiences (see Webster & Mertova, 2007).

This question of personal perception is a vital element to a narrative inquiry because it shows how participants reconstruct their memories through the worldview of reality shared by individuals of a particular group, showing their core assumptions and concepts (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Given that the narrative approach includes aspects of the individuals' culture and life story, researchers must share participants' culture to capture and analyze their stories' meaning (Nolan et al., 2018). Within this context, I, also an African-American professional woman, sought to understand, verify, and convey the underlying cultural and intersectionality challenges that shape African American women academics' experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression.

I conducted online, individual interviews with a purposeful sample of five female participants, all from U.S.-based academic institutions, who share the experience of the phenomena under study. The sample size of the final study was determined by data

saturation. More than five participants were recruited if saturation was not reached at the minimum requirement of five interviews. Instead of an absolute number, Saunders et al. (2018) suggested that sample size in narrative inquiry studies is ambiguous, as it depends on the answers being sought, data saturation, and which size will maximize information, even though data saturation may be less straightforward in the narrative approach as compared to other qualitative designs. The population met the following inclusion criteria: female identifying as African American, minimum age of 18, employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education sector for a minimum of 5 years, and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The study sample's inclusion criteria are similar to those of other studies of bullying in the academic workplace (Hollis, 2017a; JoMarcus, 2019; Miller et al., 2019).

Using open-ended interview questions, I understood the participants' experiences from their individual perspectives, clarified their interview statements, and inquired for further information (see Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Utilizing the format of open-ended questions within a semistructured interview protocol while personally interfacing with the study conversation participants allowed the capturing of essential information using reflective journal notes and personal observation (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry-aligned interview questions based on the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space helped identify the critical events based on the participants' essential life decisions and how they impacted a person's daily life (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Clandinin and Connelly's (1987) three-dimensional narrative-inquiry space approach involves writing about (a) the personal and social (the interaction); (b) the past, present,

and future (continuity); and (c) the place (situation) to strengthen the research design and confidence in the research results. In this approach, the researcher compiles and analyzes the participants' responses in a written, detailed narrative covering the scene, plot, character, and events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The three-dimensional space narrative approach suggests that interaction involves understanding participants' personal experiences through stories of their interactions with other people (Wang & Geale, 2015).

The concepts of continuity and temporality are central to narrative research; the researcher incorporates the participants' past and present actions as expressed through their stories, given that those actions are likely to occur again in the future (Bruhn, 2019). In relating to the setting, situation, or place of the African-American academics' work environment, experiences also need to be considered as specific locations in their environment that may lend meaning to their narratives, strengthening the research design and giving credibility to the research results. Relaying and relating the story of African American women academics' experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression incorporated the themes, rich details, and beliefs about their settings in sharing their personal experiences (see Wang & Geale, 2015).

Participant Selection Logic

Population. This qualitative study, applying a narrative inquiry, intended to generate a deeper understanding of African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression. In the United States, workplace bullying of marginalized populations

is a compelling element in higher education that can destroy the bullies' target's self-determination and career progression (Hollis, 2018). Some researchers have documented difficult life and career choices that face women who simultaneously seek family and career advancement. As women of color climb the career ladder of academia and seek promotion, supervision, budgetary responsibilities, and tenure, they are more likely to report being the targets of direct workplace bullying and vicarious bullying instigated by academic leaders. Women of color faculty in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are more likely to be employed in less prestigious settings than their White female and minority male counterparts (Liu, Brown, & Sabat, 2019).

Despite numerous discussions and programs to advance faculty diversity, the overwhelming majority of full-time faculty in the United States identify as White, and approximately 20% are Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska, Native, and Multiracial. It is essential to highlight barriers that hinder the success of women of color. However, it is crucial to give voice to women faculty of color’s experiences in their everyday work life (Chancellor, 2019).

In the higher education workplace, a vicarious bully is a subordinate to the primary bully, such as an administrative assistant or an entry-level colleague, often gaining favor in additional pay or privilege for doing the leader’s bidding (Shier et al., 2018). The findings of several studies confirm that women of color are more likely to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption, yet their voices still are absent from the extant literature (Hollis, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015). Intersectionality scholars state that more empirical research is needed on women's positionality in workplace

bullying research and the implications of vicarious bullying on African American women's career progression (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b).

The population met the following inclusion criteria: female identifying as African American; minimum age of 18; employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education sector for a minimum of 5 years; and able and willing to provide in-depth information the phenomena under study. The study sample's inclusion criteria are similar to inclusion criteria from other studies of bullying in the academic workplace (Hollis, 2017a; JoMarcus, 2019; Miller et al., 2019). While the Walden IRB approved my Proposal with a minimum of six participants, my Dissertation Chair sought program approval to conduct the study with a sample size of five participants before terminating the data collection process., Instead of an absolute number, Saunders et al. (2018) and Sim et al, (2018) suggested sample size in narrative inquiry studies is ambiguous, as it depends on the answers being sought, data saturation, and which size will maximize information, even though data saturation may be less straightforward to identify in qualitative approaches that are based on a narrative approach to analysis. Supported by methodology literature, approval was received that with five lengthy interviews of approximately 30-50 minutes each, the maximum information would be collected to provide in-depth data to address the study's research question.

Sample size was also influenced in part by challenges researchers faceed with data collection due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Wolkewitz, & Puljak, 2020) and, in the case of my study, the sensitive nature of the topic. Due to the emotions surrounding the issue of vicarious bullying of African American women academics in the workplace,

completing even five interviews was challenging. Many women contacted for recruitment did not want to seek on the topic and others agreed to join the study but dropped out before the interview. Two mentioned during the recruitment process they were afraid to speak up, despite assurances of ethical standards of confidentially. Given data collection challenges, and with the supervision of my Dissertation Chair, it was a deemed that at five interviews I had reached data saturation and all participants expressed similar experiences with workplace vicarious bullying. The five lengthy interviews obtained for this study provided sufficient in-depth and rich detailed information to be characterized as an adequate sample for a narrative inquiry study.

Criterion and snowball sampling. Participants for this study were selected using criterion sampling for recruiting participants who can be defined as information-rich cases (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Criterion sampling uses participants to help collect target populations, often called snowball sampling (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Snowball sampling, also referred to as chain or network sampling, uses instances where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances until the appropriate sample size is attained (Tracy, 2019).

Qualitative research aims to recruit the best possible sample size to reach a data saturation level during the data collection process (Tracy, 2019). The participants for this narrative inquiry study included a range of five female participants, all from U.S.-based academic institutions, who experience the phenomena under study. The sample size of the final study was determined by data saturation. Study participants were recruited through the LinkedIn online platform by searching with the inclusion criteria as

keywords. I also used network sampling by posting my recruitment notice in professional associations of women academics and Black women academics on social media as approved by the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) (09-18-20-0562576). After a thorough investigation of sampling size, the decision to use five participants was made based on the sampling size methods of both qualitative studies and narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016; Loh, 2013). The study's aim and goals must remain consistent with the anticipated outcome when collecting stories for the study sample (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Guetterman, 2015).

This study's unit of analysis was the African American woman academic from a U.S.-based higher education institution. Purposeful selection allowed for establishing daily experiences related to the research topic in addition to providing sufficient research data, principally through criterion, network, and snowball sampling (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The study sample's inclusion criteria replicate sample criteria from other similar academic bullying studies of women within academia (Davis, 2016; Hollis, 2018).

The minimum age of 18 was chosen because it is assumed that this allows each participant adequate time to have established a fair amount of progression in their academic career. These criteria for participant selection assume that the African American woman academic who has been in their organization for a minimum of 5 years can provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Prospective candidates were prescreened according to the participant criteria to ensure participants possess the knowledge and experience needed to support the research topic. In addition to knowledge and expertise, participants should have the ability to

willingly articulate daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression. Participants who did not fit the inclusion criteria for an age range or academic experience timeframe would not be recruited into the study (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The critical events approach within the narrative inquiry methodology supports participants' mindsets by illustrating their daily work experiences. The narrative inquiry method aids in the collection of valuable data that may go unnoticed within the traditional empirical methodology (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Before beginning the research, agreement from five participants was obtained, and, if needed to aid in reaching saturation, others were recruited for participation through snowball and network sampling. For a qualitative study, a larger sample size would limit access to a wealth of rich, in-depth experiences; therefore, the typical sample size of a minimum of five participants is recommended (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Schram, 2006). Network and snowball sampling were used to minimize sampling bias and increase the results' quality by increasing transparency and uncovering viable information and resources (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

Once an adequate level of data saturation was attained, the precise number of participants was determined. Data saturation is reached when there are no new discoverable data; therefore, redundancy occurs (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Contingent on the population size, data saturation may be obtained with a limited number of interviews, with a minimum of five (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). To ensure saturation is reached, all participants were asked the same interview protocol questions. Qualitative

inquiries are more influenced by the quality of data, unlike the effects of population size. Rich data are more important than the population or sample size in qualitative studies (Mason, 2010). Scholarly recommendations were abided by and communicated to participants to strengthen data collection (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Instrumentation

To collect useful information in qualitative research, one-on-one interviews are considered to be a critical methodological tool for qualitative researchers (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this research study, I utilized an interview script (see Appendix A) to structure the interview process. Qualitative researchers often rely on themselves as the instrument for data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In narrative inquiry research, the researcher and the participant play an essential role in collaborating in the story retelling process. The participant provides the facts, and the researcher collects the facts in a storytelling format using a semistructured interview protocol (Clandinin, 2016).

Seminal narrative methodologists support a semistructured interview to reduce researcher bias and enable the participant's intentions and meaning-making to emerge in the storying process (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The story of African American women academics' daily experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression is co-constructed by the storyteller and the researcher while being conducted in a conversational style through the questions used in the interview instrument protocol.

The semistructured interview questions were developed, piloted, and validated in a mixed-methods study by Hollis (2018) on vicarious bullying of African American

women in academia and the language is the same as in Hollis's survey. The purpose of Hollis's (2018) study was to empirically investigate workplace bullying in higher education of those with complex intersectionality. The study identified how African American women academics might leave the higher education sector due to being targeted by both face-to-face and vicarious bullying in the workplace. Hollis (2017a) defined vicarious bullying as an action where the bully sends a subordinate to abuse and harass a third party. A bully may use vicarious bullying when he or she wants to dominate the target or series of targets but still be viewed positively by others in the work environment. The vehicle for this style of bullying, or henchman, is typically subordinate to the bully, in need of a favor, resources, or political and social influence. Hence, that person is willing to abuse others in exchange for the bully's favor or influence (Hollis, 2017a).

I used Hollis's (2017a) definition of vicarious bullying consistently throughout my study design development, including developing the study's conceptual framework. Hollis (2018) theorized that the social contract promised to American citizens of equal treatment falls short in the higher education sector workplace and disproportionally hurts African American women's careers. Hollis's (2018) mixed-methods study used a sample of 669 faculty and staff recruited from the Higher Education Publications (HEP), a directory of higher education professionals in the United States.

I used a purposeful, criterion-based sampling strategy to gather a heterogeneous group of participants from a national population sample recruited from LinkedIn in order to support maximum variation sampling (Tracy, 2019) and recruited participants with

diverse characteristics. Study participants were recruited through the LinkedIn online platform by searching with the inclusion criteria as keywords. In qualitative research, maximum variation sampling relies on the researcher's judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics to ensure maximum variability within the primary data collected through the interview protocol (Tracy, 2019). I also used network sampling by posting my recruitment notice in professional associations of women academics and Black women academics on social media as approved by the Walden IRB. Ensuring maximum variability to the story-based responses to the interview protocol will further support the goal of theory extension within my conceptual framework (Palinkas et al., 2015).

This purposeful sampling strategy yields important shared patterns across the participant sample and derives significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity (Tracy, 2019). Extension studies, such as this study, provide replicable evidence and extend prior study results of new and significant theoretical directions (Bonett, 2012). Hollis (2018) recommended that further qualitative studies were needed in other settings and using other research designs to address the implications of vicarious bullying on African American women's career progression (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b) to strengthen the transferability of results to groups beyond her samples.

I kept a reflective journal and recorded all pertinent information, observations, and situations within individuals' storytelling of their workplace challenges with vicarious bullying. I reflected on my understanding of what participants said to ensure accuracy and clarity. The process used had two advantages: minimizing potential

interviewer bias and providing the participants with the opportunities to correct any inaccuracies through reviewing the transcripts. Given the development and previous usage of the interview questions listed in my protocol in a prior study (Hollis, 2018), a pilot test was deemed unnecessary. Prof. Leah Hollis, associate professor at Morgan State University and author of the original protocol, corresponded with my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Daphne Halkias, on the nature of my investigation and granted permission to utilize her interview protocol material for this narrative inquiry study.

The interview questions developed in Hollis's (2018) study were designed to elicit participants' collective voices of women highlighting the power differential they feel and how their intersectionality can make them more susceptible to workplace bullying. Instead of utilizing the question and answer session, these interviews were conducted in a conversational style of the narrative inquiry. As a narrative researcher, my goals were to maintain transparency and actively listen to each participant while interjecting questions and nonverbal language (Clandinin, 2016). Readers can authenticate the findings of a study by following the researcher's trail. The audit trail allows the reader to have confidence that there is a record of the steps taken and decisions made in the research process. I have described how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Because narrative inquiry is an approach to studying human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experiences as a source of valuable knowledge and understanding, there are no hypotheses. I have achieved consistency and trustworthiness of data by

verifying raw data and audit trails. I have ensured reliability in qualitative research by thoroughly examining my data that have been collected throughout the research (Clandinin, 2016). The authenticity of stories has been maintained through the narrative data analysis techniques recommended by Webster and Mertova (2007) to gain a deeper understanding of African American women's academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences in their career progression.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To support this narrative inquiry, five African American women employed as an academic in the U.S. Higher Education sector were recruited from the LinkedIn professional platform for five years. The study began with five participants in the hope of achieving saturation. Zoom interviews and journal notes were used to collect data. Videoconferencing can be used as an alternative if the participants complete the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data collection proceeded using snowball sampling until saturation was achieved, with participant selection being no fewer than five and no more than 10 (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saturation has been achieved when participant stories and encounters are similar, and there are no new data to record (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017).

Specific opened ended questions were used, and when necessary, probing was used as well. These questions were related to the particular group of participants explored throughout the study. This allowed participants the opportunity to absorb and reply in a storytelling fashion while maintaining participant narrative integrity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019). Whenever there was a need for

elaboration or clarification, follow-up probes were used. To ensure consistency throughout the interview process, the data collection method was carefully observed while documenting each participant's questions and responses. Biases were monitored to mitigate best their influence on the outcome of the study (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Open-ended interviews are traditional data collection methods forms in narrative inquiry studies (Clandinin, 2013). If participants needed additional time to tell their stories, the participants could have requested the additional time, and it was scheduled at that time. The expectation was that data collection interviews would take anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes while being recorded digitally and manually transcribed. Each interview consisted of a minimum allocated time of 30 minutes, with no expectation for interviews to end sooner than the minimum time. The five lengthy interviews ranged from approximately 30-50 minutes each, to maximize information collected from narratives to provide in-depth data in answering the research question (see Sim et al., 2018).

I worked to ensure accurate information from the interview audio recordings when transcribing interviews. Once I had the completed transcript before me, I linked information from the participants to my journal notes. Transcript review was used to ensure data collected were validated according to what participant stories illustrated (Morse, 2015; Thomas, 2017). The member checking process of transcript reviews allows the participants to review a summary of the interview with the option to revise their ideas to ensure clarity and accuracy (Tracy, 2019).

Disengagement in the narrative inquiry is a potential negative feature (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In narrative inquiry studies, a systematic method implemented to offset disengagement includes the use of critical events, exploring and extending through alternative relevant research interests (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry research is often abundant during qualitative data collection (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Stake, 1995). I anticipated that the prolific, thick, rich details of critical events and a substantial volume of data produced would effectively meet this qualitative study's purpose. The critical event approach is instrumental in meeting the qualitative study's needs because of the considerable amount of data generated (Mertova & Webster, 2012).

Collecting narratives includes the research process procedure to see beyond collective confines and identify the story's social purpose (Clandinin, 2016). The restory research process gathers and analyzes participants' human characteristics, perceived transformation, creation, or combination of the study subject matter (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). After each interview, I (a) completed data collection, (b) informed participants of next steps within the process, (c) transcribed interviews, (d) organized setting, plot, characters, and critical events, and (e) conducted member checks ensuring participants report revisions, clarifications, and confirmation of accurate, critical events notated. Upon completion of qualitative data collection, interviews were transcribed. My next step was to commence the transcript review process, including a scene, plot, character, and event review, to confirm critical events' accuracy (Mertova & Webster, 2012). Before the interviews began, participants received an additional guarantee that this information would be used only for research purposes,

and their identities will be kept entirely confidential, followed up by the destruction of data collection materials after five years.

Data Analysis Plan

In the narrative inquiry methodology, the two central themes that propel the data collection are the complexity of human experience and human-centeredness. Research processes, negotiation occurrences, potential risks, and results preparation, and auditing are the four core parts that comprise the methodology (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Achieving a true-to-life insight into participants' stories was the purpose of the detailed, rigorous data collection method in this study. Once the data collection phase was complete, I analyzed the data and built a meticulously written narrative of participants' stories.

The first step of the data analysis was the process of restorying, a narrative data analysis method used by the researcher to gather data, analysis of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting of the data (Clandinin, 2016). Narrative analyses give the researcher a view into the "critical moments" in the participant's daily life. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) developed the three aspects of this narrative analyses approach, which include *personal* and *social* (interaction); *past, present, future* (continuity); and *place* (situation) to examine events that caused an individual's life to change (Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Known in narrative inquiry design as the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, this technique in analyzing participants' individual stories helps identify the critical events based on participants' stories and how they impact a person's daily life (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The three-dimensional space

narrative approach suggests that interaction involves understanding participants' personal experiences through stories of their interactions with other people (Wang & Geale, 2015).

Connelly and Connelly (1990) three-dimensional narrative-inquiry approach involves writing about (a) the personal and social (the interaction); (b) the past, present, and future (continuity); and (c) the place (situation) to strengthen the research design and confidence in the research results. The researcher has compiled and analyzed the participants' responses in a written, detailed narrative covering the scene, plot, character, and events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Restorying was the method used by the researcher at this initial stage of the analysis. Restorying is gathering data, analyzing the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then writing the data in a third-person narrative to interpret the meaning of experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; 2006). When the researcher analyzes the participant's story, the theme and all rich details of the setting are included to share the interview context about the participant's personal experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The critical events approach recognition delineates critical events and description of participants' experiences through details on place, time, characters, and significant events essential to the study (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In the second step of the data analysis, I used a critical event narrative analysis to model the events in the narratives, and each event was distinguished as *critical*, *like*, or *other*. A critical event has a major impact on the people involved and is characterized as an event with a unique and confirmatory nature. Critical events can only be identified after the event and happen in an unplanned and unstructured manner (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A like event is

comparable and similar to a critical event, but it does not have the same unique effect as a critical event. Like events are not as profound as critical events. Any other information such as background that is not related to critical or like events is often considered other events in the critical event analysis and is usually just descriptive of the critical or like event.

The second step in the critical event analysis approach requires the researcher to cross-check cases with the event categories themes for comparative purposes. This hermeneutic narrative approach is used to explicate meaning within stories even when these stories are not sequential and can be ordered as a singular piece of information in its own right (Polkinghorne, 1988). The *hermeneutic circle*, of moving between the parts and the whole, provides a deeper understanding of the participants' expressions (Freeman, 2016). I crafted the narratives very carefully according to narrative inquiry design methods outlined by Webster and Mertova (2007) for data analysis further to support my understanding of the participants' subjective world and not lose significant findings (Freeman, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). This two-stage process's culminating goal is for the researcher and participant to co-construct meanings, themes, and images and produces a participant-guided transcript (Polkinghorne, 1988; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Applying the critical events data analysis method to the primary data allowed African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression to emerge in the study results (Slembrouck, 2015) Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of collected data or the participant's views and their interpretation and representation by the researcher (Papakitsou, 2020). This study implemented strategies to ensure that trustworthiness and credibility are reflected in the data, such as avoiding research bias and incorporating transcript review to obtain saturation. Transcript review is part of the member checking process to enhance the research findings' credibility or validity (Thomas, 2017).

A common purpose of qualitative research is to develop a generalizable theory from interview data with multiple participants. The validity or trustworthiness of the theory constructed by the research team is determined by the extent to which the theory is generalizable to other groups and settings. Obtaining thick and rich data is more than merely obtaining useful data from one participant (Morse, 2015). Thick and rich data refers to the entire data set; data quality was obtained with the number of interviews and participants following the commendations of qualitative methodologists (Tracy, 2019; Saunders et al, 2018; Sim et al, 2019). Qualitative research methods supports the investigator to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants; this allows the development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability refers to study findings applicable to other studies, context, or groups if it appropriately fits within the research (Papakitsou, 2020). Researchers support

the study's transferability with a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and people studied and transparency about analysis and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). This criterion is met when the results of a study provide meaning to nonparticipants, and readers can relate the results to their own lived experiences. Qualitative research's primary aim is not a generalization of study results but the depth of the information (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). This qualitative research aimed to gather rich, in-depth data by providing individualized experiences of African American women who have experienced vicarious bullying in academics. Using open-ended questions and a specific sample of research participants, I gathered information and data to make recommendations for future studies.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of research findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is achieved when participants can evaluate the study findings and strategies, and its findings support the interpretation and recommendations of the study outcomes. In order to have dependability, there must be credibility of the data. The researcher needs to explain how dependability and credibility are assured and documented. Procedures for dependability include maintenance of an audit trail in process logs. Process logs are researcher logs of all the activities during the study and decisions about aspects of the study, for example, whom to interview and what to observe (Connelly, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the study findings or results can be corroborated or confirmed by other researchers (Papakitsou, 2020). Establishing confirmability proves that study results are not based on researcher bias but derived from data (Connelly, 2016). To achieve confirmability, employing strategies such as triangulation, audit trail, and reflexive journal leaves a visible trail or path taken by the researcher from process to product and confirms that the researcher took the required steps in attaining the study results. Confirmability is the neutrality or the degree findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016). During this research, I kept detailed notes of all my decisions and the analysis as the research progressed.

Ethical Procedures

This research encompassed human experiences and followed the proper protocol to ensure that all procedures were handled ethically. Ethics pertains to morally correct practice and avoiding any harm that may emanate during the study. Informed consent, withdrawal from the study, and confidentiality and anonymity are all examples of ethics that may be considered in a qualitative study (Ngozwana, 2018). The IRB is responsible for ensuring that all research conducted through Walden University complies with the university's ethical standards and U.S. Federal regulations. IRB's ethics review and approval are required before participant recruitment, data collection, or dataset access. Power and ethical issues are critical components for the researcher to be in full awareness when negotiating the participant–researcher interview (Anthony & Danaher, 2016).

The central role of human participants in research is to serve as sources of data (Yip, Han, & Sng, 2016). Researchers have to protect the life, health, dignity, integrity, right to self-determination, privacy, and personal information confidentiality of all research subjects. The Belmont Report covers three ethical principles, which include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The mistreatment of research subjects is considered research misconduct (Anabo, Elexpuru-Albizuri, & Villardón-Gallego, 2019). Guiding ethical and legal principles enable research to be conducted per the best practices. I did not use any form of persuasion, compensation, or obligation to solicit participation in this study. The decision by study participants to participate was made voluntarily, and participants could withdraw their participation or consent at any time and for whatever reason, with no fear of threats or penalties. If a participant removed herself from the study, a replacement was sought using already established recruiting methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To promote confidentiality within the study, all study participant documents with personally identifiable information, written documents, and journal notes were safeguarded in a locked and password-protected device, and only I retain all assigned codes correctly. Only authorized Walden University faculty members with the need to know, such as dissertation chairperson, committee member, or university research reviewer, will be privy to this research information. The data will be securely archived for five years and then deleted from the laptop and all other devices used for this study (see Kornbluh, 2015).

Summary

Chapter 3 presents the research design and rationale, the researcher, and the methodology's role was covered. Chapter 3 is used to layout a clear picture of what the study was about and how it was designed. I conducted online, individual interviews with a purposeful sample of five female participants, all from U.S.-based academic institutions, who share the experience with the phenomena under study. The sample size of the final study was determined by data saturation. The study population met the following inclusion criteria: female identifying as African American; minimum age of 18; employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education sector for a minimum of 5 years; and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The study sample's inclusion criteria are similar to inclusion criteria from other studies of bullying in the academic workplace (Hollis, 2017a; JoMarcus, 2019; Miller et al., 2019).

Using open-ended interview questions, the researcher understood the participants' experiences from their individual perspectives, clarified their interview statements, and inquired for further information (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Utilizing the format of open-ended questions within a semistructured interview protocol while personally interfacing with the study participants conversationally allowed capturing essential information using reflective journal notes and personal observation (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The methodology includes the rationale for participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and the data analysis plan. Chapter 3 also included issues of trustworthiness. Providing steps to ensure

credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability of the data analysis results, and ethical procedures are essential elements of any qualitative study. The issues of trustworthiness are a reflection of the quality of data that were collected from this narrative inquiry study. In Chapter 4, research results will be presented.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progressions. The central research question guiding this study was as follows: What do African American women academics' stories reflect about their daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression?

After an exhaustive review of the extant literature, I designed this question to identify literature gaps associated with the experiences of African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progressions. To address these gaps, I used a narrative inquiry design to collect data from five African American women's narratives.

By sharing their stories, these African American women participants allowed me to gain valuable insight into the realities of their daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progressions. The first step of the critical events narrative data analysis was restorying to gather data and analyze the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene; see Clandinin, 2016). The second step in a critical events approach, which was vital for identifying participants' significant life experiences and describing those experiences, provided details on place, time, characters, and significant events essential to the study (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). This two-step approach to narrative analysis allowed me to categorize and catalog critical events' incidences essential to the research's significance. I used this hermeneutic narrative

approach to capture the meaning within participants' stories (see Polkinghorne, 1988). Applying the critical events data analysis method to the primary data allowed the daily work experiences of African American women academics employed within the U.S. higher education sector to emerge in the study results (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

This chapter's study results reveal these African American women academics' daily personal and workplace experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progressions. In this chapter, I also present essential details of the research setting, demographic data, data collection and analysis procedures, evidence of the qualitative data's trustworthiness, and a composite of the study results.

Research Setting

To perform this narrative inquiry study and gather data, I conducted semistructured interviews with five African American women academics in higher education. Each interview was conducted through a recorded Zoom session. I sent out the initial request for participants through LinkedIn. This request included the research inclusion criteria and the purpose of the study. Three participants expressed interest from the initial post, and the remaining two were obtained through the network and snowball sampling technique (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). After participants indicated their interest, I requested their email addresses and sent them the IRB consent email. When I received their email reply containing an acknowledgment of consent and their telephone numbers, mutually acceptable appointments were scheduled.

Demographics

Each of the five African American women participants resided and worked in regions across the United States. The participants met the study's inclusion criteria, were knowledgeable, had experiences directly related to the research topic, and provided valuable in-depth research data. Their experience in academics ranged from 6 to 23 years in the U.S. higher education sector. None of the participants knew one another personally. All participants were graduates of higher education institutions, all having obtained doctoral degrees.

The demographic data I collected included participants' age, gender, race, and years employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education (see Table 1). African American ethnicity was given because it was one of the criteria for participation. I assigned pseudonyms in an XY format, such that X was the generic letter *P* standing for a *participant*, and Y was the numerical identifier assigned to each participant.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics and Characteristics

Participant	Age	Race	Yrs. Employed in U.S. higher education	On-ground/ online	Private/ public HEI	Education level
P1	47	African American	10	On-ground	Private	PhD
P2	44	African American	10	Online	Private	PhD
P3	54	African American	23	Both	Public	PhD
P4	44	African American	5	Online	Private	PhD
P5	49	African American	20	On-ground	Public	PhD

Data Collection

Once I had received IRB approval, data collection began and continued until saturation was achieved. Data saturation is achieved when similar stories and themes emerge during participant stories and interviews, presenting no new data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hennink et al., 2017). The semistructured interviews were designed to ask each participant the same questions, sustaining the ability to align interviews further, and stay within the research topic. Besides, none of the participants had participated in any research related to this topic, nor did they have specialized experience in the topic area (see Bernard & Bernard, 2012). Concise communication was used with each participant, and saturation was effectively achieved with five participants (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). After each recorded interview, I transcribed the recording and distributed the transcripts to participants.

Themes that emerged within the interviews, such as the participant's resilience in the face of bullying, further supported the evidence of data saturation. These themes appeared as participants reflected on how vicarious bullying interfered with their career progression. In these narratives of African American women academics in higher education, the stereotypes set before them did not reflect disengagement from further career aspirations. The Study Results section in this chapter will further detail the saturation process and what was exposed during participant interviews.

I set aside time each day for three consecutive weeks to recruit participants, conduct participant interviews, submit recordings for transcriptions, and review transcripts for accuracy. All participants concurred with transcriptions, with no additional information added or taken from the interview. The data collection process consisted of five Zoom interviews, all recorded, and email exchange as a follow-up of information provided. The interviews were conducted over three weeks beginning September 28, 2020, and were completed on October 22, 2020.

Throughout the duration of these interviews, I took field notes, which included my thoughts, interpretations, and reflections on the data being communicated during each interview. Interviews were recorded using a mobile application on my iPhone called TapeACall Pro. Some participants were reluctant to participate in this research because they were from a small town and were afraid their responses would pinpoint them as participants, further classifying them in a specific stereotype. Although I assured them that their name and the specific story would not be used, some participants declined participation in this study.

During each interview, participants described their experiences as African American women academics. The participants were eager to contribute and had the education and experience to understand the questions thoroughly. The questions explored their vicarious bullying experiences within their organizations and how vicarious bullying interfered with their career progression.

Initial Contact

Participant recruitment was done by publishing a request on LinkedIn. Recruitment criteria were as follows: female identifying as African American, minimum age of 18, employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education sector for a minimum of 5 years, and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The request for participation included the research inclusion criteria and purpose of the study; this information was also emailed to participants with the IRB consent form.

Interviews

After interest was established in response to the LinkedIn invitation, I requested each participant's email address and sent the IRB consent email. Within the reply with an acknowledgment of consent email, participants provided their telephone numbers, and mutually acceptable appointments were scheduled. The interviews were all collected via the Zoom platform. Each time, the participants and I were in our homes, which allowed for a quiet and tranquil atmosphere. I began each interview with a printed copy of the questions (see Appendix A), asking all questions in the order they were presented and using the back page of those questions to journal any noted information. There were

some moments where follow-up questions were necessary, but there were no difficulties presented by these additional questions.

Reflective Field Notes and Journaling

Reflective journaling and recording all pertinent information, observations, and situations ensure validation of information from the interview while ensuring trustworthiness and reducing the likelihood of research biases (Flagg, 2016). In conjunction with an open-ended interview, the personal interface allows the researcher to capture philosophical journal notes and subjective observations, allowing the researcher not to have additional information to influence the data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The journals I kept contained my immediate thoughts on the information being provided and the emotions I felt when hearing the participants' stories.

Journaling allowed me to think about the information being relayed by participants while critically understanding their experiences. During the interview, I listened to what the participants said and even followed up with questions to ensure clarification was received. The complete recruitment process was documented, and through the journaling process, it was apparent that each participant had a passion for their shared experiences.

Transcript Review

Transcript review, a process within the member checking method, was used to ensure data collected were related to what participant stories illustrated and were trustworthy (see Morse, 2015; Thomas, 2016). Each participant reviewed the transcript of our online interview. This information was emailed to them at least five days after the

conclusion of their interview, providing them the opportunity to make any additions or changes to their initial responses. No changes were made. Participants were pleased with how the process was conducted and expressed their excitement over seeing what these results will bring.

Data Analysis

Critical events have an impact and profound effect on the participant's life and are vital to the narrative data analysis of participants' stories. When developed into a three-dimensional narrative inquiry, these events usually bring about a change in the participant (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Semistructured interviews were used to gather narrative experience data from participants. According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. There are three approaches to developing themes systematically, theory-driven, prior data, or prior research-driven and inductive. Theory-driven codes are obtained from either the researcher or existing theories in other research; inductive codes are acquired from the bottom to the top from the researcher's interpretation of the data, to include prior research-driven codes. Using thematic analysis, scholars, observers, or practitioners can systematically use a wide variety of information. This manner can increase their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organizations. Thematic analysis can be useful at all stages of the research inquiry process. The thematic approach is one of the more convenient qualitative research methodologies because it allows an exclusion from a theoretical stricture (Miller, 2019). Uncovering of themes and analysis processes were used to expound on research intentions (Boyatzis, 1998).

After the data were collected, I utilized the narrative inquiry's two-step approach to analyze the participants' stories' detailed narrative. The first step of the data analysis was the process of restorying, a narrative data analysis method used by the researcher to gather data, analysis of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), code the qualitative information (Clandinin, 2016). Narrative analyses give the researcher a view into the "critical moments" in the participant's daily life, through the lens of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, analyzing participants' individual stories to identify the critical events based on participants' stories and how these events impact a person's daily life (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The three-dimensional space narrative approach suggests that interaction involves understanding participants' personal experiences through stories of their interactions with other people (Wang & Geale, 2015).

Stories impose meaning to events and meaning to "self." Through the narrative, a study participant can create a sense of belonging and discursively construct their own identity. Narratives then become an important stage for the development of meanings as they become a vehicle for the narrator to make meaning from their point of view (Kartch, 2017). Meaning can be made about events, others, or one's sense of self, and through storytelling, one may come to know one's own experiences (Lewis, 2020). Through their storytelling, participants decide the ordering of critical life events, and a particular reality is constructed (Clandinin, 2016). When the researcher analyzes the participant's story, the themes and rich details of the setting will be included to share the interview's context about the participant's personal experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) three-dimensional narrative-inquiry

approach involves writing about a) the personal and social (the interaction), b) the past, present, and future (continuity), and c) the place (situation) to strengthen the research design and confidence in the research results. I compiled and analyzed the participants' responses in a written, detailed narrative covering the scene, plot, character, and events (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The critical events approach categorizes critical events and description of participants' experiences through details on place, time, characters, and significant events essential to the study (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In the second step of the data analysis, I used a critical event narrative analysis to model the events in narratives, and each event was labeled as *critical*, *like*, or *other*. A *critical* event has a major impact on the people involved and is characterized as an event with a unique and confirmatory nature. *Critical* events can only be identified after the event and happen in an unplanned and unstructured manner. A *like* event is comparable and similar to a *critical* event, but it does not have the same unique effect as a *critical* event. *Like* events are not as profound as *critical* events. Any other information such as background that is not related to *critical* or *like* events is often considered *other* events in the critical event analysis and is usually just descriptive in the study results presentation (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The second step in the critical event analysis approach requires the researcher to cross-check cases with the conceptual framework's coding categories for comparative purposes. This hermeneutic narrative approach helps the researcher to discover meaning within stories and can be ordered as a singular piece of information in its own right (Polkinghorne, 1988). Polkinghorne discussed this approach as the hermeneutic circle,

moving between the parts and the whole, to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences (Freeman, 2016). This two-stage process's research goal is for the researcher and participant to co-construct meanings, themes, and images and produces a participant-guided transcript (Polkinghorne, 1988; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Applying the critical events data analysis method to the primary data allowed African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progression to emerge in the study's final themes and encased within the conceptual categories (Slembrouck, 2015; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The four conceptual categories grounded in the conceptual framework and 11 reformulated themes, forming the foundation for interpretation in answering the central research question are as follows:

Conceptual Category: Witnessing workplace bullying

Themes: (a) gendered racism in academia, (b) academic skills questioned, (c) sexual harassment

Conceptual Category: Experiencing vicarious workplace bullying

Themes: a) unethical leader supporting vicarious bullies, b) excluded in team projects, c) online harassment due to favoritism

Conceptual Category: Academic bullying interfering with career progression

Themes: a) Black women academics promoted at lower rates. b) Black women academics experience more bullying as career progresses upwards, c) desire to leave the job to avoid vicarious bullying

Conceptual Category: Personal stories of vicarious academic bullying

Themes: a) intersectional microaggressions, b) workplace bullying is nurtured by academia's systemic racism

Table 2 shows how the themes that shared similar characteristics were combined into a single category. The interpretations and themes were verified continually during data collection. The four conceptual categories were determined based on the study's conceptual framework that focuses on the connection between African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progress: Miller et al.'s (2019) concept of academic bullying; Hollis's (2017a, 2019) concept of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership; and Hollis's (2018) concept of the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression. The critical event approach for data analysis itself satisfies the trustworthiness of data because of its inherent characteristics of openness and transparency in emphasizing, capturing, and describing events contained in stories of experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The data analysis process is visually represented in Table 2 in coding and theme examples taken from the 11 reformulated themes gleaned from the critical events data analysis and categorized by conceptual category to answer the study's central research question. Interview excerpts from participants' narratives support these reformulated themes. Usually, qualitative researchers draw on triangulation for this purpose. Webster and Mertova (2007), however, indicate that triangulation is not feasible in story-based studies.

Table 2

Coding and Theme Examples

Participant	Interview excerpt from participant narratives	Conceptual category	Reformulated theme
Participant 1	"As an African American woman, there have been moments where white men feel entitled and often push their personal agendas on to me in the form of sexual advances and/or try to minimize my educational achievements by using my work as their own. When confronted with these situations, the white men tend to casually joke about it or play it off as if it never happened to ensure safety from legal actions being pursued. However, I have reported such actions to Human Resources and filed grievances to ensure that they do not happen again."	Witnessing workplace bullying	a) gendered racism in academia b) academic skills questioned c) sexual harassment
Participant 2	"Most of these instances are with white women. Almost always when it comes to bullying and my experience, there was one time where it was with a white man, a white Jewish male his office happened to be next to mine. And he was bullying me by trying to intimidate me, like he would walk into my office and kind of like, he was like a big guy. And so he would sort of like hover over my desk and tell me what to do, even though he wasn't my supervisor, my boss. And so there was one in that instance after he kept doing it so many times and I told my supervisor about it and nothing was done. Then I walked into his office and basically shut the door and it shouldn't have to come to that point, but I knew that no one had my back. And after I addressed that he never bothered me again."	Experiencing vicarious workplace bullying	a) unethical leader supporting vicarious bullies; b) excluded in team projects; c) online harassment due to favoritism
Participant 3	"As a faculty member, when I was going up the first time for full professor, four years ago, I was denied. I was not denied due to my research, my publications, I was denied because of my terminal degree discipline. My doctorate is not within the academic discipline. I was tenured, but she believed I should just stay at the Associate Professor level. I appealed and my appeal was based upon the university knowing what my degree status was at the point of my hiring. ABC university hired me. And in fact, not only did you hire me, you tenured me and you promoted me to now, you want to place this glass ceiling on me. You believe that, I shouldn't move forward, because my doctorate is in concentration and I'm tenured in another, But when the white colleague who I don't have an issue with, was going to be promoted, the Dean supported her."	Academic bullying interfering with career progression	a) Black women academics promoted at lower rates; b) Black women academics experience more bullying as career progresses upwards; c) desire to leave the job to avoid vicarious bullying
Participant 4	"I came to teaching with enough experience in my career outside of teaching to know when someone is being a racist, if you will. I know it I've been in a federal, federal government now 20 years. Okay. Oh, you know, I've taught in the government. I've had trainings that I would guide in the government. So I've seen it from that perspective as well I'm not sensitive to race issues, but I'm definitely aware my eyes are wide open."	Personal stories of vicarious academic bullying	a) intersectional microaggressions
Participant 5	"For example, let's say you have someone who, believes in diversity and inclusion yet when a program is brought forth for approval, they say that it costs too much money when in fact it really doesn't cost too much money. That's like an example of a microaggression and adamant about it not being approved and not going through, but in fact it should be done and it should, and it will benefit the institution."	Personal stories of vicarious academic bullying	b) workplace bullying is nurtured by academia's systemic racism

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of collected data or the participant's views and their interpretation and representation by the researcher (Papakitsou, 2020). I attempted to mitigate research bias through the transcript review process. Transcript review is part of the member checking process to enhance the research findings' credibility or validity (Thomas, 2017). Taking handwritten notes or audio recordings are two methods I used to record the participants' thoughts and experiences. Research text reflected the narrative quality of the experiences of both the participants and the researcher. The participants' stories of experiences are embedded within social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives. I have established the research's credibility by ensuring a well-referenced trail available for readers to access the results and data collected. The research was concluded when similar data were obtained and reached a saturation point (see Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability refers to study findings applicable to other studies, context, or groups if it appropriately fits within the research (Papakitsou, 2020). This criterion was met when the results of a study could provide meaning to readers in a way related to their own lived experiences. Qualitative research's primary aim is not a generalization of study results but the depth of the information (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). I collected rich, in-depth data by providing African American women's experiences of vicarious bullying in academics through their voice (direct quotes) in presenting the results.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of research findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is achieved when participants can evaluate the study findings and strategies, and its findings support the interpretation and recommendations of the study outcomes. In order to have dependability, there must be credibility of the data. The researcher needs to explain how dependability and credibility are assured and documented. I used triangulation between the interview data, my journaling notes, the extant literature, transcript review, saturation, and reflexivity to assure credibility (Simon & Goes, 2016). Procedures for dependability include maintaining an audit trail throughout the research process (Clandinin, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the study findings or results can be corroborated or confirmed by other researchers (Papakitsou, 2020). Establishing confirmability proves that study results are not based on researcher bias but derived from data (Connelly, 2016). To achieve confirmability, employing strategies such as triangulation, audit trail, and reflexive journal leaves a visible trail or path taken by the researcher from process to product and confirms that the researcher took the required steps in attaining the study results. Confirmability is the neutrality or the degree findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016). During this research, I kept detailed notes of all my decisions and the analysis as the research progressed.

Study Results

The research question was designed to provide essential data and reinforce theory using the narrative inquiry design. Current extension studies like this provide additional substantiation and support previous studies' results in a narrative theoretical direction (Bonett, 2012). The narrative inquiry method was used to establish a purpose for the study and collect data through the storytelling of Black women academics working within U.S.-based academic institutions of higher education. Transcript review and the critical event approach for data analysis were used to ensure the data's trustworthiness. I utilized the critical event approach for data analysis because of its inherent characteristics of openness and transparency in thoroughly emphasizing, highlighting, capturing, and describing events emerging from participants' stories of daily experiences. This approach allowed me to develop the following conceptual categories emerging from the critical events approach: (a) witnessing workplace bullying, (b) experiencing vicarious workplace bullying, (c) academic bullying interfering with career progression, (d) personal stories of vicarious academic bullying. In analyzing participants' stories, there were no experiences reported on workplace mobbing, as this was one of the questions asked in the semistructured interview (see Appendix A).

In objectively reporting the study results, it is significant to note that all participants mentioned within their stories experiences of resistance in the face of workplace bullying. Such experiences included stories of not backing down in the face of vicarious bullying. Participants reflected on experiences of reporting bullying incidents to supervisors or those above supervisors who were predators, relying on labor law for the

protection and legal rights in the workplace, including protection from generalized harassment and perceived as systemic racism within their higher education workplace.

The study findings are presented through narratives in scene, plot, character, and event sketches related to critical events (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). Restorying was used to gather and analyze the data through thematic analysis: a process for encoding qualitative information (Boyiatzis, 1998; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Next, the critical events narrative analysis was used to aid in analyzing the data. Stories can be categorized into critical events, like events and other events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In the narrative analysis, uncovering common themes or plots in the data is the ultimate goal. As critical events narratives were exposed from participants, themes began to appear, producing specific information within the setting and configuration of those specific experiences (see Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Through the participants' recorded narratives, a better understanding has evolved from the meaning of participants' stories (see Polkinghorne, 1998). The scene and plot display the essential components of their daily experiences with individuals within their organizations who play a vital role in their career progression (see Clandinin, 2016; Kratsch, 2017).

The human interaction exemplified in the critical events and stories told created essential narratives that conveyed depth, substance, and real-life context to participant stories (see Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). It is essential to highlight that while sociopolitical barriers hinder women of color's success in academia, it is crucial to give voice to women faculty of color's experiences in their everyday work life

(Chancellor, 2019). Hollis (2019b) recommends that future researchers consider the intersectionality of targets and report Black women's voices when studying academic bullying among women of color.

Revealed by the detailed stories from the in-depth interviews and reinforced by research from the extant literature, the following themes are presented, combined with the participant storytelling voices in response to the central research question.

Gendered Racism in Academia

Narratives from research participants revealed that both bullying and vicarious bullying in the academic workplace target Blacks and women. Hollis's (2018; 2019) research work on the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression used the theoretical lens of Black feminist theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to explore how Black women are affected by gendered racism in academia (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016). Participants felt anger and fear of watching other Black women's vicarious bullying and reported that both White men and White women initiated the bullying. Participant 2 stated,

> I think it's the intersection of gender and race. I think it's the intersection of being a woman and being black. And I think that there are a lot of underlying biases and racism that, you know, that are systemic and just the structure of higher ed. Even if someone, you know, may not think that they're a racist or, you know, may profess it, they may be a racist. I just think that there's so many biases that are like, sort of just tied into people that they've been taught their whole lives through society. And through, you know, the culture in America that, you know, a black

> woman should just, she just shouldn't, she should only be able to go so far. Like you can come into the room, but you can't sit at the table or you can join this team, but you can't lead the team.

Participant 3 shared,

> My career started off when I was a graduate student, and I secured an adjunct position at ABC University. The bullying I witnessed were more in forms of so I remember watching an older sister (colleague) and, I'm a person of African descent, the terminology that we use that I still use thought an older African American woman who I guess I call us a sister, an older sister who was an administrator, uh, in the school. So she thing. And she was really coerced and I, and I'm using form bullying certain professors if their research agenda or their philosophy was, deemed too radical or too African-centered for the, for the academic school and that came. That was my earlier experiences with watching also as a graduate student witness Black women be bullied by men. And I saw this with regards to one gentlemen really plagiarized another woman I saw their research agendas be undermined. I would see sessions telling these women what they should and should not research what they should and should not invest. And as a graduate student, I wasn't at the MSW or MA student, I was at the PhD doctoral level watching great different scenarios play out in different ways. And that was my early experiences with academic bullying, serving academic bullying.

Academic Skills Questioned

Targets with positive characteristics such as confidence, kindliness, optimism, competence, and well-liked are seen as threats to bullies, which is why they are usually the targets. Although, at times, the bully and target may appear to be equals, the effect of bullying tends to make the target feel inferior and even powerless to change the situation (Cassie & Crank, 2018). Workplace bullying may include bias and discriminatory animism, but it typically includes a power differential (Hollis, 2019b). Participants discussed during their interview how, at times, they were bullied due to their skills and education. Because of their race and/or gender, they were not expected to possess the skills they had learned or experienced as academic scholars. Two participants discussed this issue at length and reflected on others' similar experiences. Participant 2 explained,

> Sure. So I think, you know, as, as a black woman, whether you're either taught that you have to work 10 times harder, or it's just sort of something that you learn the hard way, like you have to work harder than everybody else, you know, in the workplace you have to perform at a higher level and you have to speak up more and you have to do so much more. And so as a result of that, your work is, is usually top notch and that sometimes can make other coworkers or colleagues in my opinion, jealous. So they're not used to having to work that hard to you. It's for, you know, to me it would be normal because that in my mindset, that's just what I have to do to, you know, to sort of succeed in my career. And you would get people saying, you know, snide remarks or, you know, a lot of, I felt like one of the biggest things for me with bullying was a lot of microaggressions, you

know, like, you know, how did you learn to write so well, you know, Oh, that's a great presentation skill, you know, who taught you that? Where did you learn that, you know, things like that, or I've been called an overachiever and just sort of like a lot of just snide comments and an underhanded comments to kind of make you feel bad.

Participant 4 shared the following:

And so it was always asking questions, you know, you've already proven yourself. So I teach several classes at ABC university and XYZ university. I haven't had issues at ABC university, but at XYZ university it's not in my classes that I get bullied. It is when I serve on dissertation committees. I know for me being a chair, I had this one second committee member constantly questioned me about my student's study. And I just blatently asked them one day. I was like what is your challenge? What is your issue with me lead in this committee? And he's like, Oh, it's nothing. It's nothing I said has to be something because I feel like you're always challenging me. You're always asking me the same questions over and over again. I think you're expecting a different answer. That happened probably for about seven months or so. And then we just had a very frank discussion and I told him I will not tolerate being harassed. I didn't say bullying, but being harassed in that way. Well, it's more so about the student study, where it was, you know, if it was the right approach, if it was the right conceptual framework, if the person, the student had the right references, could they do some more research, et cetera, et cetera. And I was like, you know what? We've gone through this. This

has already been addressed in the proposal. Let's keep moving. Let's move forward.

Sexual Harassment

Although only one participant mentioned sexual harassment, the literature consistently notes that there is a silence within academic institutions to live up to claims that diversity is embraced. At times, universities and colleges' leaders look the other way and fail to respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment among marginalized populations (Hollis, 2018; Pyke, 2018). Participant 1 described experiencing chronic sexual harassment of Black women by White men who feel a sense of entitlement over others in the academic workplace.

> My life experience of witnessing workplace bullying of African American women within academia has a span of 10 years. What I have found, particularly within the scope of corporate America, are the discriminatory acts of men versus women and black versus white in the workplace. As an African American woman, there have been moments where white men feel entitled and often push their personal agendas on to me in the form of sexual advances and/or try to minimize my educational achievements by using my work as their own. When confronted with these situations, the white men tend to casually joke about it or play it off as if it never happened to ensure safety from legal actions being pursued. However, I have reported such actions to Human Resources and filed grievances to ensure that they do not happen again.

Unethical Leader Supporting Vicarious Bullying

Because leaders directly influence their followers' ethics, unethical leaders are problematic (Bonner et al., 2016). Participants reinforced through their stories that leaders within organizations have considerable leverage to influence their followers' perceptions of ethical standards and subsequent behaviors. Hollis (2019a) wrote that regardless of how workplace bullying occurs, leaders who refuse to intervene employ deliberate indifference by knowingly allowing abuse to continue. Self-centered leaders who allow aggressive behavior to take root in the workplace also allow oppressive work environments to arise (Hollis, 2019a). Participants' narratives illustrated during this research that when leaders were aware of the bullying behavior, they made it clear that they were aware but did not necessarily take action to correct the behavior. Participant 2, for example, described two such experiences:

> So long story short, this woman, I believe I don't, I'm not for sure, but I believe she was complaining not just about me, but the whole group of us that were hired. And so HR came and had a meeting with our whole team and the woman, the HR woman kept saying to me that I need to smile more. And, you know, she kept asking me how I was doing and am I feeling better about everything? And I never even expressed to her that I wasn't. And so this went on for about two years, whenever I would see her, like at a meeting or at a conference, she would say it and she would say it in front of the whole room. Oh, I'm so glad to see you. You're smiling. Now things must be going well for you. You know, things like that. So that just leads me to say that I've just never really had this confidence,

> that HR would help in situations like that. Let me backtrack a little bit. Most of these instances are with white women. Almost always when it comes to bullying and my experience, there was one time where it was with a white man, a white Jewish male his office happened to be next to mine. And he was bullying me by trying to intimidate me, like he would walk into my office and kind of like, he was like a big guy. And so he would sort of like hover over my desk and tell me what to do, even though he wasn't my supervisor, my boss. And so there was one in that instance after he kept doing it so many times and I told my supervisor about it and nothing was done. Then I walked into his office and basically shut the door and it shouldn't have to come to that point, but I knew that no one had my back. And after I addressed that he never bothered me again.

Participant 3 recounted experiencing unethical behavior by a dean during a tenure and promotion process:

> There was a colleague who was going up for tenure promotion. My committee met, we assessed that this person was ready to move forward. So the procedure, according to the faculty handbook is that the chairman was the committee's reporter. We must document the evidence that we found to support our decision. So we believed the person was ready to move forward, I made my report, and I placed everything in the Dean's office. A day or two later, the Dean calls me in her office and asked what is this? As she's pointing to the place and I'm thinking, okay, what a question? I went on and answered it. And so she retorted, Oh, I don't agree with it. You all need to go back and you need to come up with another. I

> thought that was very inappropriate. And I told her the committee met and that's the report. She said, well, no, I don't agree with that. You all need to go back and you need to you need to revisit it. So in essence, what she was revealing to me Ms. McKinney, is that she did not want this person to move forward. Well, according to the handbook, the Dean has every right to disagree with the committee. She however must put her position in writing. I quoted the handbook to her. I read to her the process, and I indicated what she could do that, but my committee had met and we completed our task. I don't regret that. I don't regret that. I don't regret that because that was the right thing to do. But after that, that Dean retaliated. There were certain committees that she decided to exclude me from, and she became very unfriendly. But that was the right position and judgement to occupy. So that's just one example.

Excluded in Team Projects

During their interviews, participants discussed how they were not treated as equal when participating in group projects and were either wholly excluded or left out of any decision-making process. Excluding team members delivers a message that marginalized group members are undesirably different, and this tends to reveal underlying prejudice (Fattoracci, Revels-Macalinao, & Huynh, 2020). At times participants believed their presence was just tolerated in a team project and that within the team, the women's opinions and ideas were not valued by their peers. Participant 1 described how she was not wholly ignored, but often she was questioned and challenged:

> As a Career Development Coordinator, I find that my field is saturated with persons of the Caucasian persuasion, which leaves minimal space for those persons of color to excel. While attending a conference, a group of young ladies and I were placed in a cohort of white men to work with on a "group "project. The men took over the project and did not ask us any questions, nor did they allow for us to participate with the project. We were excluded and not afforded the opportunity to share nor expound on what was given as an assignment. When asked why we were excluded, their response was "*your input wouldn't have mattered to us anyway*" followed by a chuckle. I am not sure if vicarious would describe what we were feeling, but we definitely felt overlooked and undervalued.

Participant 2 reported a similar experience of unfair treatment:

> So long story short, we got a new executive director and for whatever reason, she was a white woman. She just had it out for me for whatever reason. Almost immediately from the time that she came on board, she was very antagonistic to me. She talked down to me. It was very clear the way that she treated me different than the rest of the people on the team. We were onsite at a team meeting in a conference room and I forget what we were talking about, but I don't want to say I had an objection, but she asked for feedback. And so I gave my honest feedback and she, she started to sort of get everyone else on the team, like around the conference table to sort of object to what I said, but she didn't do that to anyone else. There were just little things that she would do that it was clear to me that

she, that she wanted me gone and she ultimately did get that. That's probably the best example that I have specifically.

Participant 3 shared her own experience of being excluded:

This woman would treat her role as a monarch, that, that could grant wishes to people, engage in favoritism with people. And if you, if you just went along what she was doing, then, you know, she would find favor in you. But if you didn't, and if you again, quoted the, the handbook, if she was doing something unethical and you shared where she was in error. she had a way of really diminishing you. Uh, she would for example, enter the meeting the room where we would have faculty meetings, and she would arrange herself and the room to where her back was to you. So that to exclude you physically, or more specifically ,to exclude me from the faculty meeting discussion way of quieting me. She was mean, she would do this to me. She had a way of making you an example by ignoring you when you wanted to share something talking over you, belittling you in the meeting.

Participant 4:

I've had three situations where I've had to do what I told you, what that second committee member prove myself continuously being asked the same questions as if my answer is going to change. So what that does is it's for me, are you doubting the validity of what I'm saying to you? And when we're to get this student, you know, moving forward and finished. And so I'd never let the student know that there's conflict cause that's inappropriate to do. I always try, you know, I've always handled it behind the scenes and luckily it smooth out, but it's an irritation

because I know what these white men, the issue is me being a black woman. I just know it. I mean, based on the way that they speak I wouldn't even say that it's not cyber anything like that, cyber bullying or anything like that, but I can tell by checking the tone in the emails which is perceived as a negative tone in an email. I immediately say let's follow up by phone and or zoom or whatever communication medium that we can agree to. And for me, that's a good way to gauge whether my perception is, you know, correct in the way they were trying to deliver their message. Were they trying to be contrite? And with those three situations, they in fact were trying to be contrite and negative. But when I explained to them exactly where I was coming from in terms of helping the student and telling them that I'm confident in the student, I know the student can make it. They're going to make it to the end because they understand their study. I understand their study and I hope you do too. You know, and being a second committee member sometimes the role is not taking taken seriously. As a chair, you know, the, the brunt of everything is on our shoulders. In forming the committees you have to level set meetings and this is where you tell the second committee member, I'm going to send you documents for review and express other details. For example, when I think they're almost ready to go into the system for formal approval. I send a message to the SCM that I need you to review it closely because what we don't want is for the document to keep bouncing back. And with one of those situations, I told the person, I said, look, I need you to check this because I don't want it to keep coming back, taking something out of

> (the review system). A document out of (the review system) was a nightmare. So just go ahead and, you know, review, he said, he did. I know he didn't the word doc, the document was bounced back. And so that irritated me. That irritated me for my students because I was like, this person has spent a lot of time on this document. At the very least a SCM can do is review the document closely. The review will help them move forward. The excuse sometimes is - I'm busy. My rebuttle - Well, I think we're all kind of busy and you need to take a seat and do what you were supposed to do - Do what you were hired to do.

Online Harassment Due to Favoritism

Bullying and incivility, both face-to-face and online, increase perceived demands in the workplace, perhaps to different degrees. Any form of bullying represents a direct, indirect, or reputational cost for an organization; however, cyberbullying can increase these costs to the organization when enacted on the Internet (Coyne et al., 2017).

Participant 2:

> Sure. So when I was working for an online institution, I had to give a lot of webinars to other faculty members. So I was giving the webinar. It was a course and there were other academics who were in it. And some of them were from my team or my departments. And, you know, again, it's one of those things where you can like use the chat feature and people can respond and type their comments. And again, just sort of snide comments would be put in there in front of other colleagues. So that's like one example that I can remember in terms of like online.

Another participant discussed that even though she had experienced online harassment at her university once classes went virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic, her courage and temperament in the face of vicarious bullying does not allow the perpetrator to continue in this malicious behavior.

Participant 3:

> I've been an online certified professor. I have my online certification national online certification. I have not been the victim of cyber bullying, but I have experienced bullying from a colleague, I have had that experience. And I do believe it, it really depends upon the temperament and the courage of the professor. So, uh, I just, I have, and, and even with now, we're in this moment of COVID where my face-to-face classes are online. And so I teach them, on the online at the appointed time that we meet and I have not had this issue. Nor do I think it's gonna grow. I really think it depends upon the temperament of at the beginning, what she frames or what he frames, uh, as behavior more is at the beginning of the semester.

One participant who worked at an online university saw this happen often. She discussed that one of her experiences revealed that while conducting webinars and courses online, there was still the risk of a Black woman academic being bullied.

Participant 4:

> So in terms of witnessing because I teach online, I've always taught online. It's kind of hard to witness, but I will say that just having, you know, conversations with some of my friends, colleagues who teach online who are black women, let

me clarify that. You know we share stories as to, especially when you're younger as to how white males treat you. You're always being challenged. And as a form of bullying, you know you're young, you're black, you're a woman. What do you know?

Black Women Academics Promoted at Lower Rates

Hollis (2018) wrote that as women of color climb the career ladder and seek promotion, supervision, budgetary responsibilities, and tenure, they are more likely to report being the targets of workplace bullying. Narratives from the participants exposed how Black women are promoted at a much lower rate than other women. Participants also revealed how they are even forced out of certain academics levels to not grow professionally.

Participant 2: I was laid off from my position because of the bullying. In that same example, I was telling you what the executive director, I mean they told me it was for financial reasons, but everything leading up to it, you know, told me otherwise.

Participant 3:

Another example is when it was time for me to be promoted to full professor, I was denied it. And then when I went up two years later, the same Dean, who was out on disability, supported the White colleague, but not me. My White colleague went up for promotion to Associate, while I was up a second time for promotion to Full Professor. The Dean came out of disability to support the White woman, but it wasn't going to support me. I appealed to the Provost. There was a different Provost in position. I had to show that, you know, this is racially discriminatory. I

was willing to, to take it to the state level because I work at a state university, but the provost saw the merit in my argument and decided to support my position. In fact, he really took the Dean at the time to, to task. So I say racially oriented disparity for me, because the person who was to receive the favor was white. I do think that with bullying and racial discrimination exist and can happen, even as I work at a historically black university. With regards to race, you can be white person and receive favor, at an HBCU and get favor over a black person. And it depends upon, you know, who's in charge.

Black Women Academics Experience More Bullying as Career Progresses Upwards

As women of color climb the career ladder of academia and seek promotion, supervision, budgetary responsibilities, and tenure, they are more likely to report being the targets of direct workplace bullying and vicarious bullying instigated by unethical academic leaders (Liu, Brown, & Sabat, 2019). Narratives from research participants discussed that the higher one goes in academia, the more vicarious bullying increases. Participants felt at times that they were sabotaged because of gendered racism.

Participant 2:

She would like assign a project to do, but then not give me the resources to do it, or she would leave out information so that I would run into a problem and then she could make it look like I was the problem with that. Like I didn't finish my work, even, even though up until she came to the organization, I had like perfect, perfect scores on my annual reviews. I had been nominated for an employee, uh, employee of the year award. I had all of these accolades and it wasn't until she

came that she kind of, you know, for whatever reason, I mean, I don't know the reasons I could, you know, sort of guess what they are, but she wanted me gone. And so there were plenty of times when she would assign me projects to work on. She wouldn't give me all the information and I suspected I had to work with other people in the organization. And I suspected that she had reached out to some of those people ahead of time and told them to like, give me misinformation or to not be willing to work with me. And then I would have to go back to her and say, I'm trying to get this done, but, you know, ms so-and-so in this department is, she won't set up a meeting with me. And so what do you want me to do? And then she would kind of turn that around on me. So again, it's one of those things where I didn't have proof for everything, but it was very clear that she was trying to sabotage me.

Participant 3:

But I have had experiences where a Dean showed favoritism to a new faculty member who was White. Again, this example attempted to racially punish and diminish me, Oh these examples range from being scored differently on an item on my faculty evaluation, but the White faculty member received a superior score. So yes, I have had that experience. The person who was appointed to conduct the scoring changed the scoring for the Dean who had issues with me and didn't like me. So I have had that experience. I had the experience of being given a terrible teaching schedule when I have seniority, had the rank, yet having a younger White member be provided with the teaching schedule, where she only has to

teach two content areas. And yet I want to assign to an three-four content areas of a semester to teach. I have had that experience. Yes. And those were racial experiences.

Desire to Leave the Job to Avoid Vicarious Bullying

Workplace bullying experiences affect Black women's careers, which hurts their aspirations to excel in their respective career paths (Hollis, 2018). The person with more power controls the dominant culture and sets the stage for access, fairness, and career advancement. Changing jobs to avoid dealing with workplace bullying jeopardizes job longevity, a quality many employees consider when looking at the stability of a job candidate (Attell et al., 2017). According to one participant, there were times that she just wanted to resign; however, she was not willing to just let all of her hard work go down the drain.

Participant 2:

Absolutely. There were many a times where I was like, I'm ready to leave. I wanted to change jobs. I had, you know, I'd been looking for other jobs actually and interviewing, but I just, I think what kept me there the longest is that I was getting paid very well. So while it was like a miserable, toxic environment to be in, I was just getting paid so good. And I couldn't find another job that paid at the same level. And, you know, in hindsight I really should have just left and, you know taking the hit in the paycheck, but it's so hard to climb up the ladder. Then I just, you know, I really didn't want to go backwards.

Intersectional Microaggressions

Black women are faced with unfair demotions, threats of job loss, high job turnover as a result of workplace bullying, and being subjected to gendered racism due to their intersectionality (Felmlee et al., 2018). An intersectional perspective is fundamental to the study of gender and race because it emphasizes that an improved understanding of these socially constructed distinctions arises from considering how multiple social categories, such as gender and race, interact with each other (Shields, 2008). Narratives from this research participant discussed how, at times, she was the only Black woman working in a higher education institution.

Participant 2:

> Ten years ago when I first started working at a higher ed institution interestingly enough, the four of us came on board. I wasn't the only minority. I was the only black woman. And then there was a guy who was an immigrant. He was like Iranian or Iraqi, something like that. But when we came on the job HR was sort of telling us one thing they wanted us to do, but our department was telling us something completely different. So, so some of the people that we were working with kind of didn't want us there because I think they could tell that the organization was, was trying to not so much move them out, but just change things. And they weren't really open to change. And so what I gather is one of the women, and it just so happens that she was a white woman and I have a masters from Harvard and she also went to Harvard, and when I, I don't share it a lot though. But the woman from HR who was like the head of HR, she shared it with

> this woman, like when, when she introduced us and, you know, anytime I meet someone who went to a college that I went to, it's like, Oh, Hey, you know just like a fun thing. And you ask them what they studied and who their professors were. And she did none of that. She just was like, you know, I guess she felt like, you know, she had been the only one at the institution who had a degree from Harvard that she didn't, she certainly, wasn't going to share that with a black woman.

Participant 5**:** For example, let's say you have someone who, believes in diversity and inclusion yet when a program is brought forth for approval, they say that it costs too much money when in fact it really doesn't cost too much money. That's like an example of a microaggression and adamant about it not being approved and not going through, but in fact it should be done and it should, and it will benefit the institution.

Workplace Bullying is Nurtured by Academia's Systemic Racism

So-called microaggressions are part of systemic racism and are often used to excuse rudeness, bigotry, and offensiveness toward members of traditionally marginalized groups (Barber et al., 2020; Halewood & Young, 2016). Many of the participants' stories, narratives revealed that being a minority in the Higher Education system was a factor in inviting workplace bullying. It was almost as though the behavior was welcomed. All participants' stories reflected critical events of systemic racism within the higher education workplace.

Participant 2:

Sure. So the interesting thing about that question is I've only witnessed it a few times because in most spaces I was often, you know, the only, not only the only African American woman, but in some cases, the only minority period. So you know, during my time in academia, I was most always the, you know, sort of the only black woman in that space. I would say like the first five years then for that second half when I changed to a different institution, there were more black women. And you know, I started to see, you know, not only could I see how they were treated by, other people, but also how I was treated. I definitely have seen it and have seen it happen and it's happened to me.

Participant 3:

Higher Ed's Achilles heel is the way in which it is organized. And so the hierarchical position of higher ed I think honestly hurts higher ed. So its hierarchy is you know, professors chairs or program directors, deans and, sometimes with larger universities, you have associate deans or associate provost in between. I think it renders faculty very vulnerable to not being heard, and to not have their issues, heard, because either the chairman or the deans are the only representative or the academic school, that an associate provost or provost will hear from. And so I do think that is a fault line of higher ed is higher ed itself. And its very much like a capitalistic or the organization. It functions where in many, not just an HBCU, but at historically white schools, professors are treated like, you know, working class people. I believe that's a fault line and it allows for bullying and,

and transgressions as faculty, especially faculty who are contributory pretty, who publish every year, who are serving on state commissions, who engage in research. I think if it pushes those faculty member members out the door school those distinct voices. And I also think it for those of us who may decide to take the role, that's travel, it's a power and, and not allow my soul and my spirit to be arrested by such , I'm going to use this term, evilness it, you know, it's, it's very lonely walk, but I accept the walk because once you engage in sin, I'm not going to mistreat. You're not going to get me to mistreat anyone. It is a lonely walk and only few people have the spiritual tenacity, but that's a walk you end up walking, if your university and most universities are too this way, where it's very hierarchical, people are very territorial. Um, and there's a pecking order with regards to who's, who's powerful and who isn't. And I do think uh, in academia, bullying will continue to take place because of the structure of academia. When I represented the School on the Faculty Senate, and I was younger, and an Asst Professor. You know, every university has a Faculty Senate that is supposed to somewhat serve as an academic union, be there as a voice for the larger faculty. Well, I cannot remember exactly what the issue was, but I disagreed with correspondence via email. When I offered my opinion, as everyone else was offering in the email conversation, an older gentlemen disagreed with my opinion, and decided to call out my age. He wrote, something like, "We know you just got your learning, maybe you should stand down." I had just finished my doctorate. I wrote, 'yes, I just got my learning, but here is my opinion nevertheless'. He

> asserted in the email that I just stay out of this conversation. Well, I guess maybe that's not bullying, but I definitely that was his way of telling me to be quiet, to not share my, not my opinion. And of course I wrote back that I, yes, I just got my school and one of the younger people in the school, and, but as a Senator, I had a responsibility to weigh in and I was going to do that. And it's inconsequential to me. Your personal feelings are about me.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a comprehensive view of my study method and data analysis results with a total of five participants. The results of this qualitative study provided answers for the central research question: What do African American women academics' stories reflect about their daily work experiences with vicarious bullying, and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression?

Based on this narrative inquiry study's findings, a total of four conceptual categories used for coding and grounded in the conceptual framework and 11 reformulated themes gleaned from the critical events data analysis were identified, leading to in-depth, rich stories used as data to answer the central research question. The conceptual categories were as follows: (a) academic bullying, (b) vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership, (c) the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression, and (d) personal stories of vicarious academic bullying. The 11 themes are as follows: gendered racism in academia, academic skills questioned, sexual harassment, unethical leader supporting vicarious bullies, excluded in team projects, online harassment due to favoritism, Black women

academics promoted at lower rates, Black women academics experience more bullying as career progresses upwards, desire to leave the job to avoid vicarious bullying, intersectional microaggressions, workplace bullying is nurtured by academia's systemic racism. All themes were explored through daily work experiences by all five women, with the exception of "desire to leave the job to avoid vicarious bullying" and "excluded in team projects" mentioned by three out of the five women and identified as critical events in the data analysis process.

The issue of trustworthiness in narrative research is based on having reliable access to the participants' stories by adhering to a seminal methodologist's recommendation for data collection. I used the critical event approach for data analysis because the critical event approach has substantial benefits. This approach offers inherent characteristics of openness and transparency in thoroughly emphasizing, highlighting, capturing, and describing events emerging from participants' stories of daily experiences. The issue of trustworthiness in my qualitative study was examined through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Chapter 5 further interprets the study findings regarding comparing and contrasting the literature presented in Chapter 2. I also describe how future scholarly researchers can further explore African American women academics' work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progressions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to explore African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression. A narrative inquiry approach was used to collect data through storytelling to meet the study's purpose and provide data to extend knowledge on the role of vicarious bullying on African American women's academic career progression. The narrative approach originated from constructivists such as Gergen, who wrote that narrative highlights the contextual construction in social relations and daily life experiences (Slembrouck, 2015). In their seminal narrative inquiry methods work, Webster and Mertova (2007) paraphrased Jean-Paul Sartre: "People are always tellers of tales. They live surrounded by their stories and others' stories; they see everything that happens to them through those stories. Furthermore, they try to live their lives as if they were recounting them." (p., 1).
This narrative inquiry research study documented through storytelling the daily work experiences of African American women academics with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may have played a role in their career progression. The narrative inquiry research method allowed me to collect data from lengthy, in-depth conversations with the five participants regarding their work experiences and the complexity of human understanding and experience (Clandinin, 2013; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

This study is framed by three key concepts that focus on the connection between African American women academics' daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and the implication of these experiences on their career progress: Miller et al.'s (2019)

concept of academic bullying; Hollis's (2019b) concept of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership; and Hollis's (2018) concept of the interface of Black women's intersectionality, academic bullying, and career progression. A critical events analysis of five participants' narratives revealed the following 11 prominent themes: (a) gendered racism in academia, (b) academic skills questioned, (c) sexual harassment, (d) unethical leader supporting vicarious bullies, (e) excluded in team projects, (f) online harassment due to favoritism, (g) Black women academics promoted at lower rates, (h) Black women academics experience more bullying as career progresses upwards, (i) desire to leave the job to avoid vicarious bullying, (j) intersectional microaggressions, (k) and workplace bullying is nurtured by academia's systemic racism.

Interpretation of Findings

Most findings in this narrative inquiry study confirm or extend existing knowledge, and each narrative presents issues confirming findings in the extant, reviewed literature in Chapter 2. During the critical events data analysis process, I observed no discrepant data contradicting the themes and theoretical suppositions presented within the conceptual framework or the extant scholarly literature. The term "extension" or "extend" refers to using qualitative study results to develop a more complicated theory (Eisenhardt, 1991). Extension studies, such as this study, provide replicable evidence and extend prior study results of new and significant theoretical directions (Bonett, 2012). Hollis (2018) recommended that further qualitative studies were needed in other settings and using other research designs to address the implications of vicarious bullying on African

American women's career progression (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b) to strengthen the transferability of results to groups beyond her samples.

I used Hollis's (2017a) definition of vicarious bullying consistently throughout my study design development, including developing the study's conceptual framework. Hollis (2018) theorized that the social contract promised to American citizens of equal treatment falls short in the higher education sector workplace and disproportionally hurts African American women's careers. I used a purposeful, criterion-based sampling strategy to gather a heterogeneous group of participants from a national population sample recruited from LinkedIn in order to support maximum variation sampling (Tracy, 2019). In qualitative research, maximum variation sampling relies on the researcher's judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics to ensure maximum variability within the primary data collected through the interview protocol (Tracy, 2019). Ensuring maximum variability to the story-based responses to the interview protocol will further support the theory extension goal within my conceptual framework (Palinkas et al., 2015).

This section presents and reviews the four finalized conceptual categories from my study results emerging from the data analysis. In each subsection below, I compare my findings with seminal authors' postulates stated in the conceptual framework and from my critical review of the extant scholarly literature. I provide evidence from the five semistructured interviews to support how the study's findings confirm or disconfirm existing knowledge or extend it.

Academic Bullying

The study results confirmed scholars' viewpoints that, as noted in Westhues's (2006) seminal paper, vicarious academic bullying and mobbing often go unchecked and is a cloaked process within higher education institutions. The study's results align with research literature that, although academic bullying theories exist, constructs that describe the specific dynamics in terms of academic violence/bullying are needed (Miller et al., 2019). Furthermore, Miller et al. (2019) reported that Hollis's (2012) survey research suggested that academic bullying may impact marginalized groups such as African American women at a higher rate than the general population.

Participants from the study confirmed experiences with witnessing Black women being bullied by men. Multiple participants mentioned how they felt bullied on different occasions, and usually, they handled it on their own. Participants from the study also confirmed that it was an intersection of gender and race. Participants in the study emphasized that academic bullying is an issue in Higher Education. The study results support the knowledge on the works of academic bullying of faculty is prevalent in higher education settings, which results in damaged lives, careers, and institutions (Miller et al., 2019.

Vicarious Bullying in Higher Education and Unethical Leadership

The study results confirmed scholars' viewpoints that Hollis (2019b) grounded the development of her concept of vicarious bullying in higher education and unethical leadership in Brown and Mitchell's (2010) ethical leadership theory. Researchers applying Brown and Mitchell's ethical leadership theory found respondents believed

apathetic, unethical leaders are to blame for the proliferation of workplace bullying and reward cruelty as a valued organizational behavior (Bonner et al., 2016; Hollis, 2017a, 2019b). The study's results align with research literature that bullies leadership support personnel within the organizations, also known as vicarious bullies (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019; K. Einarsen et al., 2019). Scholars have confirmed that women of color, who are often on the low end of the power differential, are more likely to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption, yet their voices remain absent from the extant literature (Hollis, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015).

Participants from the study confirmed that there were times when leadership was aware of this behavior and made it clear that they were aware but did not necessarily correct the behavior. Multiple participants mentioned that much of the time, their superiors were doing the bullying. Participants from the study also confirmed that leadership did not hide the fact that they targeted them and why they were targeted. Participants in the study emphasized that workplace bullying by leadership made their academic experience more stressful. The study results confirm the knowledge on the works that without the intervention from leadership and support from those with more power, junior faculty members are left defenseless in a highly competitive and stressful field (Hollis, 2017b).

The Interface of Black Women's Intersectionality, Academic Bullying, and Career Progression

The study results confirmed scholars' viewpoints that workplace bullying destroys self-determination and career progression for marginalized populations and

often targets employees who do not have the dominant culture's organizational power and executive rank in higher education (Meriläinen et al., 2019). The study's results align with research literature looking at workplace bullying. With a perspective on intersectionality, scholars wrote that powerful others might harass targets from the dominant culture, and sets the stage for access, fairness, and career advancement (Mirza, 2015). Furthermore, several scholars using the theoretical lens of Black feminist theory and intersectionality have reported that academic bullying experiences continue to affect Black women's careers through disruptive career paths, the threat of job loss, or turnover intention (Corbin et al., 2018; Jordan-Zachery, 2019).

Participants from the study confirmed that there were times when the participant wanted to resign from the position due to workplace bullying. Multiple participants mentioned there were times when another employee was promoted over them due to their race. Participants from the study confirmed that they were not treated as equal when participating in group projects during their interview. Their input was not valued as much as their other counterparts. Participants in the study emphasized how they are even being forced out of academia. The study results extend knowledge on specific management problems because African American women's daily work experiences with vicarious bullying may interfere with their career progression (Felmlee et al., 2018; Hollis, 2019a).

Personal Stories of Vicarious Academic Bullying

The study results confirmed scholars' viewpoints that as a result of vicarious workplace bullying of Black women in higher education, career progression might be related to unfair demotion, threats of job loss, or frequently changed jobs (Hollis, 2018).

Results of the study align with research literature that has shown that changing jobs to escape a bully hurts job longevity, a quality many employers consider when looking at the stability of a job candidate within higher education (Hogh et al., 2019). Furthermore, vicarious bullying of women remains a subtle and insidious behavior in the academic workplace; other colleagues can quickly become embroiled in the conflict and abuse, often causing their victims to leave employment and thwarting their career progression (Saxena et al., 2019).

Participants from the study confirmed that they were victims of workplace bullying and harassment at White men's hands. Multiple participants mentioned that they were aware that the behavior they were dealing with was due to their race. Participants from the study also confirmed that the higher you go in higher education, the more challenging it can be because of the interference. Participants felt at times that they were being sabotaged. Participants in the study emphasized that they usually had to address the bully's issues on their own because there was no support for them to handle the issues for them. The study results extend knowledge on Hollis's (2018) notion that workplace bullying is similar to petty theft in that it robs an organization of its resources, in this case, stealing productivity by causing employee disengagement.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are defined by the researcher and can affect the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Odette Wright, 2017). One significant limitation of this study was the potential misrepresentation of participants' events, as with any interview-based study, because there is no systematic way to verify that the participants' information is accurate.

African American women academics were purposefully selected to participate in this study; therefore, there is a chance that the participants' views cannot be generalized across various population groups. This limitation was overcome by purposefully selecting women participants through criterion and network sampling to meet the study's inclusion criteria. Purposeful sampling was preferred because it yields information-rich cases for in-depth study (Tracy, 2019). To improve trustworthiness and credibility during the research study, a safe Zoom interview platform was selected. This platform allowed the participants to communicate their detailed experiences in an environment that was comfortable for them.

The second limitation of the study relates to transferability, in which findings from a situation can be transferred to another particular situation (Kyngäs et al., 2020). The goal of using Clandinin's (2016) narrative inquiry approach was to interview five African American women academics and share their stories. The decision on transferability is left to the reader after the researcher sufficiently and clearly describes the research design (Stake, 2010). As the researcher, I strictly adhered to narrative inquiry method standards for collecting, analyzing, and reporting the research data (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Recommendations

A PhD-level empirical investigation addresses the need to fill a literature gap, extend theoretical knowledge, and make recommendations for policy, professional practice, and future scholarly studies (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). As academic women's intersectionality becomes increasingly complex, the likelihood of facing vicarious

workplace bullying increases proportionally (Bernard, 2019; Hollis, 2019b). As a result of vicarious workplace bullying of Black women in higher education, career progression may be thwarted by low promotion rates, job loss threats, or frequently changed jobs (Hollis, 2018). When Human Resource departments do not address the destructive leader in an unstable environment, a dynamic reported by several researchers, workplace bullying permeates the organization (Barrow et al., 2013; Di Fabio & Duradoni, 2019). Vicarious academic bullying often goes unchecked and is a cloaked process within higher education institutions. Because vicarious bullying of Black women and other marginalized populations remains a subtle and insidious behavior in the academic workplace, other colleagues can quickly become embroiled in the conflict and abuse, often causing their victims negative physical, emotional, and professional consequences (Saxena et al., 2019).

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Hollis (2016) wrote that positionality regarding race and gender drives the frequency with which employees faced workplace bullying. In a more heterogeneous workplace, like American higher education, managers and supervisors can focus on developing systems and processes to guard against this abuse, leading to costly turnover and disengaged employees. According to Pheko, Monteiro, and Segopolo (2017), in the United States, the U.S. Workplace bullying survey revealed that 37% of employees had been bullied, 72% of those bullies were bosses, and 60% were men. Women are made up the majority of the targets of workplace bullying. Within the American higher education

workplace, women and Blacks are more susceptible to be targeted in both bullying and vicarious bullying dynamics (Hollis, 2020).

Higher education stakeholders can review these recommendations to support professional practice and policy surrounding workplace bullying, harassment, and abuse aimed at marginalized populations within academia. By reviewing these recommendations and implementing appropriate policies, the quality of life of individuals will approve. According to Kakarika, González-Gómez, and Dimitriades (2017), work experiences affect how individuals feel about their life in general and their overall enjoyment of life.

Human Resource Managers in Higher Education can conduct audits to ensure equal treatment throughout the organization. These audits can be utilized to measure fairness in opportunity, pay, and promotions. By conducting such audits, the organization makes sure that their annual policies are being practiced and not just part of the written mission statement (Hollis, 2018). Hiring a trained diversity professional to manage the diverse community's concerns is an excellent way to track data and address any concerns across the university. Workplace bullying can compromise diversity initiatives (Hollis, 2017). In order to not compromise these initiatives and offer diversity in administration and the classroom, some recommendations can be implemented:

1. Consider workplace bullying as an extension of harassment and discrimination. There need to be policies that address any inequities that are associated with race and gender.

2. Avoid dismissing complaints and to take each complaint seriously, and address them all.
3. Utilize personnel as a confidential outlet for employee complaints of bullying behavior and collect data on the problem. By collecting the data, they can spot the patterns and alert the leadership to what is taking place in the university. With this on-campus personnel, the university can reduce the expensive cost that is the outcome when employees disengage, resign, or even take legal actions against the university.
4. Once these data are collected, the university personnel and administration can collaborate to devise data-driven expectations of collegiality. It requires an organization-wide commitment with leaders who are empowered to tackle such problems on an annual basis.
5. To decrease toxic dynamics, the university could implement a process to compare bullying behaviors across academic departments and analyze the faculty and students' damage. A brief anonymous survey would help provide the deans and chairs with the information they need. The survey should use broad categories; it may be the best practice to avoid using gender and department. The most critical step after collecting the data from the survey is to make sure there is follow-through. These surveys contain data to solve organizational problems. When those with the power to bring about the change do not follow through on research recommendations, systemic problems remain unresolved.

6. Graduate students' voices must be heard; their opinions and input are valuable to the organization. Bullying harms the mental, emotional and psychological well-being of graduate students. It is difficult for faculty to change behaviors without the help of legislation. In order to get the best results, federal laws will have to be passed and enforced.

Recommendations for Scholarly Research

Scholarly research into vicarious bullying needs to be conducted in the Higher Education workplace and include empirical data collected from Human Resources professionals. Some contextual factors that would include national and organizational culture and climate, such as anti-bullying legislation, could help shape the relationship between bullying and psychological contract breach. There need to be managerial interventions that aim to design and implement human resource policies and practices to prevent bullying and mitigate its effects (Kakarika et al., 2017). As scholars, we need to research how to provide a healthy work environment for all individuals to have a positive work experience for all employees. There is a long road to implement policies and laws to eliminate workplace bullying in academia. However, with research and follow-through, it is possible to reduce incidents and the damage that workplace bullying does to individuals at all higher education sectors.

The relationship between workplace bullying, culture, and leadership style may be beneficial for future research. Research has revealed that individual leadership styles may predict the relationship between organizational variables, such as how an autocratic leadership style moderated the relationship between supervisors' perceptions of

interactional justice and abusive supervision. Researchers have long verified that followers may perceive abusive leaders as heroes (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Milosevic, Maric, & Loncar, 2019). Autocratic behaviors of toxic leaders may be appealing because of the comfort provided for some of the followers' psychological needs. Subsequently, followers protect their toxic leaders, and they may be led with relative ease to vicarious bullying (Kurtulmuş, 2020).

Future studies can examine bullies and how the toxic environment helps to breed abetting bullies. Further, studies can also encompass potential reward systems that support the abetting bully. A qualitative approach that queries targets would be suited to examine 'how' vicarious bullies operate and 'why' vicarious bullies operate (Hollis, 2017b; Smith, 2015; Van Manen, 2016).

Here are some suggestions to advance research on vicarious bullying:

- A thorough investigation of the prevalence of vicarious bullying while developing anti-bullying policies and procedures in the organization. The determination could be made if the policies and procedures inhibit colluding and vicarious bullying behaviors by investigating the two. This intricate style of workplace bullying includes a primary bully and secondary bullies.
- Researchers have confirmed that toxic work environments affect the target's health. A qualitative phenomenological approach can highlight these dynamics and consider if multiple bullies worsen the abuse on women and women of color, which intensifies the targets' experience resulting in health challenges. Some may want to give credit to legislation as signs of

improvements prematurely; however, the effects are not felt in minority communities.

Implications

Positive Social Change Implications

Workplace bullying does not become an organizational problem overnight (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Leadership that chooses to ignore the malicious behavior enables workplace bullying and unhealthy behavior to grow until it can destroy the organization's potential. The application of a humane and ethical leader curtailing workplace bullying is consistent with Power et al.'s (2013) conclusion that more humane cultures find workplace bullying unacceptable. This study has implications for positive social change by giving women of color in academia a voice to publicly share their vulnerable position of being victimized, either through primary bullying or vicarious bullying (Hollis, 2019a; JoMarcus, 2019).

Vicarious bullying of Black women in academia proved to be an exceedingly sensitive and challenging subject to research. Some Black women academics who responded to my call for study participants left the study before the interview—many times without a trace. A couple of participants who did complete the interview stated that it takes courage and fear to speak up about bullying, which can have dire consequences on their daily work life. I am grateful to the brave women who shared their experiences in my study as a testament to all women's resilience and defiance in the face of abusive behavior in the workplace. I hope they know that their contribution helped take women

academics of all races one small step closer to positive social change in their work environment.

In today's competitive academic work environment undergoing a significant systemic disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, women of color with single parenting duties are at greater risk of being pushed out of academia through coercive means (Anwer, 2020; Carcdel, Dean & Montoya-Willaims, 2020). "Because the pandemic has exacerbated so many of the issues underlying abusive behaviors in general (e.g., psychological health, economic and social inequalities), one may expect to see a significant uptick in the incidence of academic bullying as well" (Mahmoudi & Keashy, 2020, p. 2). This study may contribute to positive social change by informing human resource professionals in higher education settings on African American women academics' vulnerability to become workplace bullying targets. In turn, such information helps build ethical infrastructures to prevent workplace bullying in the academic workplace among all groups, but particularly for marginalized populations (K. Einarsen et al., 2019).

Implications for Theory

This empirical investigation aims to advance knowledge on vicarious bullying of women of color within the higher education workplace and contribute original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework. As seen through intersectionality's theoretical lens and stories from the study participants, vicarious bullying loudly resonates with Black women in the academic workplace (Felmlee et al., 2018).

A narrative inquiry approach was used to provide answers to the central research question and extend scholarly understanding of the vicarious bullying/career path interface among African American women academics (Hollis, 2019a; Nadal et al., 2015). Extending theory through empirical research on how intersectionality may contribute to the targets' propensity to experience vicarious workplace bullying may offer human resource scholars new theoretical assumptions to pursue future studies on this topic within American workplace sectors beyond higher education.

Implications for Practice

Through my narrative inquiry research, I explored African American women academics' stories of daily work experiences with vicarious bullying and how these experiences may interfere with their career progression. Hollis (2020) wrote that there are times when research data help resolve organizational issues through internal policy changes, but those in the position to make the changes get distracted and do not follow through and take action on the data provided. Addressing workplace bullying through appropriate channels within an organization's system can lead to less stress and less time devoted to public lawsuits, depositions, and internal investigations if the bullied colleague decides to sue for emotional and psychological damages (Hollis, 2020).

Today, no research study can be complete without addressing the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on the various spaces of life we all occupy. Academics are expected to continue teaching excellence and enhanced productivity within the unprecedented COVID-19 situation. A recommendation for practice would be to create interdisciplinary committees tasked with addressing the pandemic's possible effects on

academic behavior and adverse outcomes, particularly on women of color. Such committees working collaboratively could create protocols that recognize the increased potential for academic bullying during the pandemic and actively manage conditions that could exacerbate it. Without such preventive action, stakeholders may expect an uptick of workplace bullying behaviors in higher education institutions that will have long-lasting effects on scientific and academic integrity long after coming out on the other side of this pandemic (Mahmoudi & Keashy, 2020).

My study's results showed that this sample of women belonging to a less powerful disenfranchised population is more likely to be the target of vicarious bullying. These findings may thus have implications for diversity management. The underrepresented groups in this study, women of color, may be more likely to face vicarious bullying. As a result, they are more likely to disengage from the work environment or leave their academic work, taking with them their scholarly contributions. Further, as the higher education sector is serving more women and people of color, diverse role models are increasingly important to serve and represent all higher education community members.

Conclusions

Workplace bullying in the higher education workplace may destroy self-determination and career progression for marginalized populations as these employees often do not have the dominant culture's organizational power and executive rank (Meriläinen, Nissinen, & Kõiv, 2019; Minibas-Poussard, Seckin-Celik, & Bingol, 2018). Consequently, marginalized employees experiencing bullying in the higher education

workplace, such as African American women, often make career choices that align with the need for safety instead of the goal of advancing. Scholars write that workplace bullying experiences may disrupt African American women's careers and hurt their aspirations to excel in their respective career paths (Hollis, 2018; Pyke, 2018).

Researchers have confirmed that bullies in leadership have support from personnel within the organizations, also known as vicarious bullies (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019; K. Einarsen et al., 2019). Scholars confirm that women of color, who are often on the deficient end of the power differential in academia, are more likely to endure vicarious bullying leading to career disruption, yet their voices remain absent from the extant literature (Hollis, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015). As a result, they are more likely to disengage from the work environment or leave their academic work, taking with them their scholarly contributions. Further, as the higher education sector is serving more women and people of color, diverse role models are increasingly important to serve and represent all higher education community members.

The qualitative, narrative approach used in the current study offered the opportunity to share each of these women's workplace experiences in their own words. The personal stories of vicarious bullying in the academic workplace reveal these African American women's real-life experiences and promote social change by providing academic stakeholders with needed information to create intra-organizational legislation that could decrease systemic racism and social injustice in the academic workplace.

Further extending the study's conceptual framework with empirical evidence from a workplace setting with African American women academics' daily work

experiences with vicarious bullying may provide a renewed theoretical understanding of how individuals from marginalized populations perceive workplace bullying as a barrier to career progression. This study's results may help build ethical infrastructures to prevent workplace bullying in the academic workplace and may further support the educational and social justice mission of building a diverse American educational system.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Number Identifier: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Race: _____

Years employed as an academic in the U.S. higher education: _____

Researcher to Participants Prologue:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I am going to be asking you questions regarding work experiences with vicarious bullying, and the implication of these experiences on your career progression. Periodically I may ask clarifying questions or encourage you to describe in more detail. You are invited to elaborate where you feel comfortable and decline from doing so when you do not have information to add. If you need clarification from me, please ask. I am interested in knowing your story and experiences and want you to feel comfortable during this process.

These are definitions that will pertain to specific phrases used in this interview:

Bullying. This term refers to an aggressor's "personal agenda of controlling another human being," typically via "a combination of deliberate humiliation and the withholding of resources" required to perform a job (Namie & Namie, 2009, p. 1).

Workplace bullying. This term refers to the repeated, health-harming mistreatment of a person by one or more workers that takes the form of verbal abuse; conduct or behaviors that are threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; sabotage that prevents work from getting done; or some combination of the three. Workplace bullying

is a form of psychological violence that mixes verbal and strategic assaults to prevent the target from performing work well (Yamada et al., 2018).

Workplace cyberbullying. This term refers to a situation where over time, an individual is repeatedly subjected to perceived negative acts conducted through technology (e.g., phone, email, web sites, social media), which are related to their work context (Farley et al., 2018).

Workplace mobbing. This term refers to nonsexual harassment of a coworker by a group of members of an organization for the purpose of removing the targeted individual(s) from the organization or at least a particular unit of the organization (Duffy & Sperry, 2012).

Vicarious bullying. This term refers to a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends or inspires a messenger, henchman, to bark orders, diminish staff accomplishments, and extend the bully's rule through fear (Hollis, 2017a; McDonald et al., 2020).

1. Please share your life experiences with **witnessing workplace bullying of African American women within academia?**
2. Please share any life experiences you have personally had with being the target of **vicarious workplace cyberbullying within academia?**
3. Please share any life experiences you have personally had with being the target of **vicarious workplace mobbing within academia?**
4. Please share any life experiences you have personally had with being the target of **vicarious bullying within academia?**

5. Please share any life experiences where being the target of **vicarious bullying has interfered in your career progression?**
6. Are there any **specific comments or final insights you would like to share about bullying in higher education?**
7. Thank you for your time and willingness to speak about these issues. Before we close the interview, **do you have any questions for me?**

Optional Probes for the Researcher: good sub questions

1. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

2. Can you explain that answer?

3. That sounds difficult; how have you worked through that?

4. I am afraid I am not understanding. Can you repeat that, please?

5. That sounds complicated…