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Experiences of Women of Color in Leadership Paths at Predominately White Institutions

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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MS, State University of New York College at Buffalo, 1997

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Research shows that the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at predominately White institutions (PWIs) have impacted their advancements and route to the presidency. However, there is limited research on the positive aspects of their leadership contributions or on the intersection of race and gender and mentoring in their leadership roles. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. Black feminist thought and intersectionality were the conceptual framework used to understand those experiences. Thirteen women of color in leadership roles at PWIs in the United States were recruited using purposive sampling through professional organizations, networks, and school websites. Participants engaged in 45- to 60-minute semistructured interviews. Participant interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed to identify key themes. The themes include experiences perceived as both positive and negative in leadership roles, navigating pathways at the intersections of race and gender, and having zero to little mentoring and support systems. The participants had combined roles as trailblazers and had become social change advocates on their campuses. The study may contribute to positive social change by informing boards of trustees, cabinets, leaders, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners of the importance of mentors and role models, transparent pathways for all, and support systems for women of color on the leadership track. With this knowledge, stakeholders may be able to achieve greater inclusion and contribution of women of color to leadership and research.

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Dedication

There are several individuals who I would like to thank for making this dissertation journey possible. Without my beloved parents, Richard and Lorene Lucas, and the love of God, this existence called life would lack meaning. My dad passed away 5 months before his 90th birthday and the start of this journey. Both of my parents held strong convictions about work, faith, persistence, and family while I was growing up. Every time I see my 84-year-old mom, she always asks, "Are you almost done yet?" My answer is that "I am getting there, Mom," with a smile. This journey heavily weighs because of the dedication, love, and appreciation that my husband, Dr. Dexter Johnson, has shown. He is an African American male aerospace engineer by profession, and we speak different languages. My siblings, Freddie L. Thomas, Colleen Lucas, and Dr. Richard L. Lucas Jr., have played significant roles in my development as a sister, and I admire them deeply. I lost my brother Freddie while on this journey, and all I can think about is the finish line with him there in spirit.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Dr. Leslie Van Gelder, my committee chair, for her exceptional leadership qualities. Dr. Van Gelder's insight on the subject matter was astounding. I am so thankful for technology that has enhanced communication globally. She made the learning experience motivational, fun, and engaging, helping build the confidence that I needed to move forward. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic did not interrupt our meetings or term plans due to having established Zoom and email platforms. With her constant encouragement, I completed the proposal during this very challenging time and as a caretaker for my mom. From the prospectus to the proposal and final dissertation phases, the study underwent several iterations. However, Dr. Van Gelder helped me to envision the fabric, needles, and threads undergirding this study and deepened my knowledge as a novice qualitative student researcher. Thanks for being so patient, calm, and full of compassion, and for being a great storyteller and role model. The stories that she shared of her adventures as an archeologist, social change worker, and professional woman in a leadership role were beyond my expectations. I would also like to thank Dr. Jason Ward, my research methodologist and second committee member, for his interest in this research. He provided input on the proposal, methodology, references, and oral defense.

I have read and sought the advice of village proponents regarding the significance of having a village. I am thankful for my ancestors and those who spent their days in the cotton fields wanting to read and write but were not permitted. Embedded race and gender hierarchies and economic, social, and political systems were the challenges and

barriers that prevented them from doing so. This narrative has not ceased, although I am grateful to be from a generation that had the privilege to pursue an education. I want to thank my husband, Dr. Dexter Johnson, and brother Dr. Richard L. Lucas, who have endured the narrative and were role models and had to hear countless stories of my PhD journey. I also want to thank Dr. Tiffanie Parker for her diligence in reading and reviewing my dissertation. She made the process seem effortless and provided quality suggestions through her lens.

Words cannot express the gratitude of sharing these experiences with a host of family and friends in this village. I have come to cherish them as a result of their consistent encouragement and prayers. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1 NKJV). My faith implanted that hope, and I am thankful that this PhD journey has led to attainment. The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it (Psalm 69:11 KJV).

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The experiences of women of color in leadership paths at predominately White institutions (PWIs) have not been widely explored in research. Research studies exist on the experiences and perspectives of African American women as faculty, leaders, and in corporations, and researchers have highlighted their barriers and challenges leading to advancement (Beckwith et al., 2016; Curtis, 2017; Diversity Best Practices Inclusion Index [DBPI, 2017]; Gray et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2015; Mainah & Perkins, 2015). Specific challenges and barriers for women of color in these roles have included experiences of exclusion, race and gender concerns, discrimination, and the glass ceiling (Beckwith et al., 2016; Curtis, 2017; [DBPI, 2017]; Gray et al., 2018; Johns, 2013; Jones et al., 2015; Mainah & Perkins, 2015).

The problems have been persistent for African American women and for women from other racial and ethnic minority groups working in leadership (Gardner et al., 2014; Young et al., 2015). Research shows, for instance, that Asian American, Native American and Indigenous, and Hispanic and Latina women confront similar challenges and barriers (Cheaupalakit 2014; Maranzan et al., 2013; Suárez-McCrink, 2011; Sy et al., 2017; Venegas-García, 2013). Although valuable scholarship has been conducted, it is limited on women of color in leadership and seeking advancement, with most findings substantiating the barriers with marginal successes (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Edwards et al., 2011; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Gasman et al., 2015). In addition, although researchers have documented women's inequalities on gender, pay, and sex

discrimination, they have not adequately focused on women of color (Cohen, 2013; Tharenou, 2013; Wheeler, 2017).

Research is also needed on women of color's experiences and perspectives in locating role models and mentors for support (Hill & Wheat, 2017; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Several studies emphasize that mentoring can play a significant role in women of color's success and advancement in higher education (Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011). Yet, even though the support of women of color in leadership paths is vital to their advancement in higher education (Hannum et al., 2015), few researchers have studied the unique experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. Studies are needed to clarify their unique challenges, barriers, and successes (Baltodano et al., 2012; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Krumm & Johnson, 2011; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007).

As noted, few studies have revealed the unique experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths in higher education institutions. Researchers have concurred that there is more to understand about the experiences of women of color in leadership in education institutions (Curtis, 2017; Gray et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2015; Mainah & Perkins, 2015; Nakitende, 2019). In particular, more needs to be understood about their cultures, beliefs, values, and successes while working in predominately White male-controlled institutions (Curtis, 2017; Jones et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2016). Furthermore, few scholars have studied the intersection of race and gender in leadership at PWIs (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Lewis et al., 2016)

.

Therefore, exploring the intersection of race and gender, power structures, and the social identities of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs will help extend the scholarship in this area. In conducting this study, I sought to address that gap in the literature by exploring women of color's experiences in leadership paths at PWIs and capture their individual voices, as called for by Jean-Marie (2011). Extending the research to include the voices of women of color in leadership may positively impact their pathways and improve diversity outcomes at PWIs. The advancement of women of color in leadership roles and paths may also secure representation on par with that of women students of color in higher education. Only 5% of women of color advance to the presidency even though students of color have increased in undergraduate and graduate programs (Espinosa et al., 2019). The population of women of color in the United States is projected to increase by 2060 and in the labor market (Catalyst, 2021). Suárez-McCrink (2011) reported that education institutions had not adapted well to change and lacked planning for the future. This study may provide insights that administrators can use to achieve greater inclusion and contribution of women of color to leadership, which, in addition to furthering equity, may offer powerful role models for an increasingly diverse student body.

In Chapter 1, I will provide an overview of the study. I begin by providing background information, stating the problem and purpose of the study, and presenting the research questions (RQs) for the investigation. I then discuss the conceptual framework and nature of the study; define key terms; and discuss the assumptions, scope and

delimitations, limitations, and significance of this study. This chapter will conclude with a summary of key points and a transition to Chapter 2.

Background

Women of color in higher education leadership paths in the United States have experienced exclusion as administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Studies have confirmed the perpetuation of excluding women of color leaders in post-secondary institutions (Baca-Zinn & Zambrana, 2019; Collins, 2009; Evans, 2007; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011; Jones et al., 2015; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Maranzan et al., 2013; Parker, 2015; Razzante, 2018; Valverde, 2011; Wingfield, 2019). Historically, higher education institutions have limited access to women seeking career pathways that require professional licensure, certifications, training, and as faculty. These fields have given preferential treatment to White men in earnings, status, and power. However, women have been allowed in the teaching and social science professions (Evans, 2007; Parker, 2015). Suárez-McCrink (2011) stated that the history of women's exclusion in higher education has held true in most civilizations. Research scholars have also studied the role of Oberlin and Antioch colleges in the acceptance of women and minorities (Parker, 2015; Suárez-McCrink, 2011). For example, researchers found that in the 19th century, women's colleges were developed in response to women's non-acceptance in higher education roles such as deans, faculty, staff, and students (Evans, 2007; Parker, 2015). Overall, women and minorities historically have faced enormous challenges and barriers to post-secondary education.

The exclusion at mainstream institutions impacted Black students, college graduates, and those seeking advanced degrees to become faculty; these students faced multiple challenges and barriers accessing PWIs in the Southern states (Evans, 2007). The historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) created in the 1800s provided education for these excluded Black students (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Jean-Marie, 2011). In addition, the historic legislation in the 1800s and the 1960s granted equal access and opportunities to African American women (Alexander, 2010; Collins, 2009; Jean-Marie, 2011). For Asian Americans (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017), Hispanics and Latinas (Suárez-McCrink, 2011), and American Indians (Krumm & Johnson, 2011) in the United States, these legislations helped to remove sanctions against women in higher education (Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007). Nonetheless, obstacles remained after the civil rights movement (Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2011; Krumm & Johnson, 2011; Lindemann & Boyer, 2019; Parker, 2015; Valverde, 2011; Wingfield, 2019). Researchers have diverse perspectives on civil rights and how the classification of Asian Americans as model minorities was potentially created to diminish the barriers of other minority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Hune, 2011; Keum et al., 2018; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Valverde (2011) investigated the challenges and barriers of women of color from the civil rights movement to affirmative action and found that access has more recently shifted for them in higher education leadership roles.

Several researchers have studied the experiences of women of color faculty in higher education. A range of researchers has examined the challenges and barriers

women of color experience in higher education as faculty (Conner, 2016; Edwards, 2015; Hune, 2011; Jones et al., 2015; Vargas, 2011). Conner (2016) examined the narratives of women of color faculty from doctoral students to tenure at a PWI and found the need for mentoring, race and gender interventions, and behavior management (p. 104). Jones et al. 2015 studied African American women's faculty roles in a PWI and found similar findings to navigate the tenure process successfully. Research shows that Asian American women working in PWIs perceived their challenges to be the same and, in some ways, different from Whites and minorities based on dialect, faculty, and student approvals (Hune, 2011). Regarding Latina women, faculty at Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) were more representative of their student bodies and cultures than at mainstream institutions and served as role models and advocates (Hune, 2011). Lastly, Native American faculty at Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) reinforced the students' tradition and culture in teaching and administrative practices more than at PWIs (Krumm & Johnson, 2011).

In 2009, the National Center for Education reported that less than 1% of Native American women faculty were at research universities (Mackey, 2011). The number of minority faculty in top-tier universities has been disconcerting. For instance, in 2014, the United States Education Department indicated that 14.1% of minorities were faculty. These numbers suggest that they remain underrepresented as faculty in higher education institutions (Razzante, 2018). Research studies have explored the institutional culture of HBCUs' diversification of leadership and staff and found that they represented the student demographics and were more welcoming than at PWIs (Esters & Strayhorn,

2013; Jean-Marie, 2011). While HBCUs have a welcoming presence for students of color, gender dissonance in promotions for faculty and earnings was an identified barrier (Edwards, 2015). The barriers between males and females continue to pose challenges for women seeking tenure and salary increases at HBCUs.

Recurrent themes in the literature on the experiences of women of color faculty at PWIs include increased student and work-loads, debates over research topics, tenure and promotion, and service (Jones et al. 2015). Researchers have also explored similar experiences of women of color faculty trajectories in education (Conner, 2016; Edwards, 2015; Hune, 2011; Jones et al., 2015; Vargas, 2011). For example, research findings on the experiences of African American faculty at PWIs involved developing success strategies for retaining, mentoring, and having transparent tenure processes (Edwards et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2015). In 2009, the University of Denver Women's College Benchmark study reported that these strategies help advance women of color from faculty to chief academic officers, provosts, senior executives, and the president (Johnson, 2017). Thus, the advancement of women of color faculty is a prerequisite to senior executive roles in higher education institutions and involves the use of informative measures.

Few scholars have explored the racial and ethnic backgrounds of women in higher education leadership challenges and barriers as individuals or as groups; however, there is limited research on the distinctiveness of minority women in higher education leadership (Alexander, 2010; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Gasman et al., 2015; Gray et al., 2018; Jean-Marie, 2011; Nakitende, 2019; Oikelome, 2017; Razzante, 2018; Vargas, 2011; Wheat & Hill, 2016; Woollen, 2016). Gasman et al.

(2015) examined literature reviews, higher education associations, councils, governmental documents, and the social media of Ivy League colleges and universities in the United States. They found that presidents, provosts, deans, and faculty were not representative of their student population. The senior executives at these colleges and universities were predominately White males, except for a few females, and not diverse (Gasman et al., 2015). In general, women and minorities' inclusion in higher-level positions at post-secondary institutions has been lacking.

The lack of women and minorities at education institutions has been due to their race, sex, and cultural backgrounds. Scholars have explored the factors that hinder women from advancing to different levels in post-secondary institutions and found experiences of institutionalized race and gender biases, and sexism, and opposition to culture dynamics (Vargas, 2011). Valverde (2011) concluded that overcoming these societal barriers depends on minority women's self-efficacy to succeed.

Several studies have focused on the experiences and perspectives of women in administrative, president, and senior executive roles in higher education as African American (Alexander, 2010; Harris et al., 2011), White and African American (Oikelome, 2017; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), Hispanic and Latina (Suárez-McCrink, 2011; Vargas, 2011), Asian American and Pacific Islanders in student affairs administration at mid-levels (Maramba, 2011), and Native American (Krumm & Johnson, 2011). Some studies have captured the experiences and perspectives of women of color in higher education leadership paths in the United States (Gray et al., 2018; Mainah & Perkins, 2015; Vakalahi & Davis, 2015; Valverde, 2011). For example, Wolfe

and Freeman (2013) and Razzante (2018) focused on cases of administrators of color and Savala (2014) on the experiences of Hispanic executives in PWIs. Furthermore, Killough et al. (2017) examined 16 male and female African American professional faculty and staff at 10 PWIs in three regions of the United States and found that race and cultural identities affected interactions and communications with their White colleagues. The channels of communication between PWIs and constituents of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds require much improvement, such as transparency in career advancement.

Some of the challenges and barriers to the advancement of women of color in leadership in higher education roles include instances of the glass ceiling (Beckwith et al., 2016; Curtis, 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gray et al., 2018; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Johns, 2013; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mainah & Perkins, 2015; Nakitende, 2019). Federal lawmakers have described the glass ceiling as the unseen behaviors and biases that prevent women from advancing to higher-level leadership roles in organizations (Beckwith et al., 2016; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Johns, 2013). Howard and Gagliardi (2018) stated that the 2016 American College Presidents Survey reported that approximately 30% of women were presidents and less than 5% of racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, the glass ceiling and limited policies and practices have impacted women seeking tenure, promotions, and board appointments in higher education, who comprise over 50% of the population at colleges and universities (Johnson, 2017). According to de Brey et al.'s (2019) report on the status and trend of racial and ethnic minorities in 2015 and 2016, more females than males received masters and doctoral degrees across all categories. Women of color received more postgraduate degrees in

education programs (Valverde, 2011). Nevertheless, the acceleration of women of color in higher education degree programs has not influenced their mobility to leadership.

Educational attainment was considered the rationale behind women not advancing in leadership pipelines, although they have consistently shown increases in bachelor and post-baccalaureate degrees (Johnson, 2017). Studies have shown that minority women are progressing from mid-level to senior executive roles in higher education (Nakitende, 2019; Vargas, 2011). Jean-Marie (2011) studied the advancement of women of color presidents and found most were in two-year institutions and fewer in number overall, compared to White women, suggesting future reviews of leadership pipelines. Jean-Marie further found that minority women were not likely to advance because of race, gender, and cultural barriers (Jean-Marie, 2011). The achievement of women of color in leadership will depend on education institutions' commitments to understanding these barriers and their differences rather than as a homogeneous group (Curtis, 2017; Valverde, 2011).

While research studies have found that most African American women are in presidencies at HBCUs, Hispanic HSIs, and Native Americans TCUs (Valverde, 2011; Vargas, 2011), only a few have focused on how women of color advance to senior executives in PWIs, leaving their contributions to the research literature on leadership scarce. Furthermore, those few have not focused on the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs, the intersection of race and gender, and the impact of mentoring and sponsorships. This research study helped fill this gap by specifically exploring the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs.

Problem Statement

Women of color in leadership paths in higher education face a number of obstacles. According to recent research (Gray et al., 2018), only 5% of women of color in higher education roles advance to senior executive roles. The percentage is the same in corporate senior executive positions in the United States (Beckwith et al., 2016). Women of color's representation as leaders continues to decline as they advance in higher education (Nakitende, 2019; Oikelome, 2017). Furthermore, women of color with aspirations for advancing along leadership paths have found that these paths are complicated and lack transparency to navigate in institutions (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Cohen, 2013; de Brey et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2018; Teague, 2015). The complex experiences of women of color require further understanding to clarify the difficulties that group members face in advancing in their careers in higher education.

According to the 2018 National Center for Education Statistics Status and Trend report, which compared the number of men and women attaining master's and doctoral degrees across all races and ethnicities, women surpassed the men in two consecutive years 2015-2016 (de Brey et al., 2019). According to (de Brey et al. 2019), Black females surpassed all other racial and ethnic groups' master's and doctoral degree attainment. For instance, in 2015-2016, 70% and 66% respectively. All other racial and ethnic groups ranged from 56%-65% and 53%-57% for master's and doctoral degrees earned (p.149). The percentages were similar in 2013-2014 for Black females and all other racial and ethnic groups (de Brey et al. 2017, p.117). However, the doctoral attainment of women in higher education does not necessarily lead to their advancement (Johnson, 2017; Johnson

et al., 2015; Mainah & Perkins, 2015). Women of color with advanced degrees, expertise, and performances in leadership paths have not been sought-after candidates for senior executive roles in higher education, government, and industry (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Cohen, 2013; Teague, 2015). Rather, they have experienced adverse paths to leadership across institutional sectors (Chisholm-burns et al. 2017). The willingness to accept women as leaders is still problematic in most sectors.

The leadership paths of women of color may be affected by their race and gender. Women of color in leadership paths are more likely to be questioned because of their race and gender, research shows (Lewis et al., 2016; Vargas, 2011; Wheat & Hill, 2016). This may also be true at PWIs. Researchers have uncovered evidence of stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice when analyzing the experiences and perceptions of workers and students from marginalized groups at PWIs (Gardner et al., 2014; Young et al., 2015). Women of color pursuing leadership roles at these institutions may also face barriers on account of their race and gender.

The modest research on the experiences of women of color in leadership roles in higher education institutions has focused on their barriers and not their successes, which also merit consideration. Several researchers have explored how mentors and sponsors can positively impact the leadership advancement of women of color in higher education (e.g., Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011). Also, Davis and Maldonado (2015) discussed that most studies on women of color in leadership have focused on how they get along and not on their development at PWIs. More research on the intersection of race and

gender in higher education leadership is merited. This study helped fill this gap by focusing on the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The participating women of color included African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Latina, and Native American women in leadership roles in higher education. The participants included administrators, chairs of departments, deans, directors, presidents, vice presidents, provosts, and chief executive and academic officers. This qualitative research may help senior cabinet leaders at PWIs, policy makers, and boards make informed professional development decisions. In this qualitative study, women of color in leadership paths shared their experiences and perspectives on race and gender intersections and mentoring at PWIs through interviews.

Research Questions

The three RQs that I sought to answer in this qualitative study were

RQ1: What are the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs?

RQ2: How do women of color describe their experiences with race and gender in leadership paths at PWIs?

RQ3: How do women of color in leadership roles describe their mentoring experiences working at PWIs?

Conceptual Frameworks

I used Black feminist thought and intersectionality as the conceptual frameworks in this qualitative study. Black feminist thought conceptualizes Black women's experiences from the position of building awareness about their social identities, economic disparities, and institutionalized and structuralized political impediments at the intersection of the matrix of domination (Collins, 2009). Black feminist thought has enabled women of color to join forces due to their similar confrontations with marginalization, oppression, and discrimination, institutional and structurally enforced (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). The exclusion of Black women has prevented them from sharing their perspectives and having a voice in social, economic, and political activities, including involvement in White feminist groups that shared similar concerns (Collins, 2009). Black feminist thought as a conceptual framework focuses on helping women become aware of their knowledge, consciousness, and self-empowerment at the intersection of multiple identities such as race and gender (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). These intersections can play a role in understanding women from diverse backgrounds in education and as leaders.

The second conceptual framework that I applied to describe and understand women of color's experiences in leadership paths at PWIs was intersectionality. Intersectionality helps explain how the intersection of multiple identities, such as race and gender, impedes individuals' progress in society and institutions (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Crenshaw (1989) was the first to provide language to intersectionality in response to legislation that provided guidelines for race and gender

work-related discrimination cases in the courts. Essentially, the courts set standards based on Black men's and White women's experience. Crenshaw, a Harvard legal scholar, introduced the terminology of *intersectionality* 2 decades ago due to her experiences working in social justice advocacy, although the term had earlier roots (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The conceptualization of intersectionality has progressed based on the input from research scholars.

Intersectionality can function as an analysis tool and lens to interpret women's experiences and perspectives in leadership paths and roles in higher education. Researchers have used the concept to help women of color with multiple identities understand their experiences in higher education institutions (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Oikelome, 2017). Black feminist thought and intersectionality as conceptual frameworks for this qualitative inquiry provided a platform for understanding the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The two frameworks worked mutually to address the RQs. A more thorough discussion of the frameworks appears in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a basic qualitative study to understand the challenges and barriers that women of color encounter in leadership paths at PWIs. Several researchers have focused on women as a homogenous group in higher-level leadership roles in education, not on their multiple identities and uniqueness (Baca-Zinn & Zambrana, 2019; Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). By using a basic qualitative design, I was able to capture the unique experiences and perspectives of women of color on race and gender and the role

of mentoring in navigating pathways to leadership. The basic qualitative approach serves as an interviewing tool for collecting data on participants' human experiences and problems (Patton, 2015). A purposive sampling approach aided in collecting data from 13 key informants who were women of color in leadership roles at PWIs situated in the United States. The participants engaged in 45- to 60-minute semistructured interviews to provide meaning about their experiences as leaders, challenges and barriers, and successes. The data collected from the interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed using Black feminist thought and intersectionality frameworks to interpret and highlight thematic patterns and findings.

Definitions

Leadership paths: In higher education institutions, the hierarchies and organizational structures that dictate how individuals advance from one level to another. Faculty and nonfaculty can advance to positions as chairpersons, deans, directors; and senior executive officers such as chief academic officers; chief financial officers, presidents, vice presidents, chancellors, and provosts (Gasman, 2015; Gray et al. 2018).

Predominately White institutions (PWIs): Institutions of higher learning where the majority of the student population exceeds that of minority groups. Mixed connotations exist and stem from the categorization of minority-serving institutions for federal purposes due to the Higher Education Act of 1965 to ensure that these populations were served (Bourke, 2016). According to Bourke (2016), the terminology suggests the perpetuation of mainstream and race-based structures through the perspective of critical race lenses.

Women of color: In this study, women who identified as African American or Black, Asian American, Hispanic or Latina and Native American per the categories used by the Office of Management and Budget and the National Center for Education Statistics for governmental reporting purposes on race and ethnicities (de Brey et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2019).

Assumptions

I had several assumptions in seeking to explore and understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The first is that participants, all women of color in leadership roles at PWIs, wanted to share their experiences and stories through the interview process. Second, I assumed that participating women of color would understand and articulate their experiences with race and gender issues and advancement challenges and offer suggestions on overcoming them. Third, I assumed that there would be enough women in leadership roles at PWIs to make up a pool of study participants. The assumptions were made based on the nature of qualitative inquiries and aspects of interviewing fundamental to this approach. My assumptions were also informed by my knowledge of women of color's professional status and their availability.

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative study's scope and delimitations consisted of its focus on women of color in leadership paths at PWIs and its underlying conceptual frameworks. Through purposeful sampling (see Patton, 2015), I selected 13 women of color in leadership roles such as deans, directors, chairs, and senior executives to participate in the study. The purpose outlined in this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of women of

color in leadership paths at PWIs in the United States. The key informants addressed the

research problem and questions by sharing their experiences and perspectives of their

leadership path. The challenges and barriers encountered may have prevented them from

accessing senior-level roles, discussing race and gender concerns, and gaining mentoring

perspectives. Excluded from this study were females other than non-White females and

males and those in entry-level and nonprofessional positions at PWIs and minority-

serving institutions. Furthermore, I opted against using feminist conceptual frameworks

that were not specific to women of color and did not focus on Black feminist thought and

intersectionality. The study findings reflect those of the individual participants'

experiences as women of color and may not be transferable to the broader population.

Limitations

Access to women of color in administrative and senior executive leadership roles

in the United States was a potential limitation to this study. Researchers have noted the

limited number of women of color who serve as presidents and in leadership roles at

colleges and universities (Oikelome, 2017). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and

resulting social distancing guidelines (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020),

some challenges occurred in scheduling the interviews and observing participants. Over-

the-phone interviews would have limited capturing the participant's nonverbal nuances

for this qualitative study.

Researchers have described the advantages and disadvantages of video

conferencing and have asserted that verbal and nonverbal exchanges enhance data

collection (Archibald et al., 2019). Alternative technology strategies became a necessity

for many researchers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, improving geographical access, engagements, and scheduling flexibility (Archibald et al., 2019). I used Zoom meetings and functions to coordinate participant interviews, closed captioning, and transcriptions. Archibald et al. (2019) explained that researchers need to take caution when solely using video-conferencing technologies to prevent biases in the interpretations and findings. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and listened to recordings to clarify interpretations to avoid biases based on the limitations of video-conferencing tools. Finding effective and innovative strategies to use and reach prospective interview candidates was helpful for this study, making it unique to the women sampled.

The transferability of qualitative studies can influence the impact of the study. Qualitative research studies' transferability may be impacted, in turn, by the purposes, contextual frameworks, and interview methods that are used to elicit the participants' experiences and perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs because those experiences may not be similar to those of other women in higher education leadership roles. I used a purposive sampling strategy to help recruit women of color in leadership roles as informants. The expectation was that these women would provide meaningful answers to interview questions to address the purpose of the study. The research process also entails reflecting on the interview methodologies to ensure dependability so that people of interest and researchers can track the processes (Patton, 2015). I followed an interview protocol when collecting data from the participants and met with my committee

members to discuss revisions to RQs and positionality concerns. Use of these measures may help to overcome some of the study's limitations and extend its transferability.

Significance

This qualitative study provided opportunities to understand better the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The study's findings may assist senior executive leaders, administrators, and management personnel in developing leadership programs for women (Madsen et al., 2012) and aid women of color pursuing advancement at PWIs (Gamble & Turner, 2015). The study provided an opportunity to elicit the voices of women of color in leadership paths who have experienced successes and inequalities. This knowledge may empower women to help shape future policies and programs to advance higher education leadership agendas.

This research may play a role in helping institutions of higher learning understand more about gender and sex discrimination. There are continuing inequities in women's performance evaluations and reviews, supervisors' and managers' perspectives on advancement, and pay equality (see Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., Inc., 2007). Knowledge on women of color's perceptions of their access to professional clubs and organizations may promote further understanding and be a basis for recommendations to promote greater equity (Flaherty & Foster, 2015). The findings may also help future executive teams interested in developing a diverse leadership pool of talent for senior management teams (Dunavölgyi, 2016). What diverse leaders and groups can bring to organizations requires further evaluation.

Summary

The scholarship on women of color's experiences and perspectives in leadership paths at PWIs is limited in scope. These women's testimonies and voices on their cultures, beliefs, and values typically have been traditionally cultivated from White males' perspectives in higher education institutions (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Hannum, 2015). More extensive studies have addressed African American women's experiences while working in higher education institutions off the leadership track (e.g., Beckwith et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2015). However, few research studies have focused on the position of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs and their accounts of their successes, developments, and gender and race barriers.

In this study, Black feminist thought and intersectionality concepts (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016) provided strategies to understand women of color individually and as a group. Both frameworks operated to help explain the complexities of the problems women of color face while working in PWIs and the analysis of the data collected from the participant interviews. The two conceptual frameworks provided more nuanced ways to capture women of color's uniqueness and experiences in leadership paths at PWIs than those based on mainstream philosophies.

This qualitative study may generate awareness about the unique experiences of women in color in higher education institutions. Women of color may be able to resist the challenges and barriers they encounter through empowerment, becoming leaders, and pursuing advanced degrees. In Chapter 2, I will review key literature on the study topic and conceptual frameworks as well as discuss the literature search strategy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers have not fully examined women of color's experiences in leadership paths in higher education. Specifically, women of color's contributions in leadership paths at PWIs have not been adequately scrutinized (Baltodano et al., 2012; Jean-Marie, 2011; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007). Although some research exists on women of color's experiences and perspectives in leadership paths at PWIs (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Lewis et al., 2016), the majority of the research does not capture their experiences in leadership roles, perspectives on mentoring, and race and gender concerns in higher education institutions (Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011). A limited number of women of color in leadership paths have successfully navigated the pipelines in higher education institutions and typically do not represent the demographics of students in the United States at higher education institutions (Baltodano et al., 2012; Espinosa et al., 2019).

The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. I was specifically interested in recruiting women of color in administrative, executive, and senior leadership roles who could share their experiences and perspectives on mentoring and the intersection of race and gender. Research on women of color's experiences in leadership roles at PWIs is limited (Curtis, 2017; Gray et al., 2018; Maniah & Perkins, 2015; Nakitende, 2019); thus, the knowledge from this study may address a gap in the literature and raise the awareness of stakeholders at higher education institutions about these women's experiences.

In Chapter 2, I describe the literature search strategy, which included navigating electronic databases to locate peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The research topics of interest also included mentoring and the intersection of race and gender. I used the conceptual frameworks of Black feminist thought and intersectionality (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989) to address the problem, purpose, and questions for this study. Black feminist thought and intersectionality are frameworks designed for understanding the uniqueness of individuals with multiple identities in mainstream structures—here, the few women of color who advance to senior executives in PWIs. After describing the literature search strategy and conceptual frameworks, I review literature relevant to this qualitative inquiry of the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. This chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

I accessed online library databases to search for literature on the research topic. My focus was on literature from peer-reviewed journals that was published in the past 5 years. The electronic databases accessed were EBSCOhost, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Education Source, and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals. I also searched Google Scholar. I used the following search terms: *women in higher education*, *women of color in higher education*, *leadership development and pathways*, *personal and professional development*, *career development*, *senior executive leaders*, *educational leadership*,

predominately White institutions, African American, Black, Asian American, Hispanic

and Latina, and Native American women, *Black feminist thought*, *intersectionality*,

women in leadership, *race*, *gender*, *diversity*, *mentoring*, and *leadership styles*. The

selected literature was stored in Zotero and later retrieved for analysis.

The literature review yielded relevant research. However, I found few studies on

the experiences of women of color in leadership roles in higher education. Because

women of color leaders in higher education may have similar experiences to women of

color leaders in other sectors, I also searched for literature on strategies for cultivating

women leaders in general.

Conceptual Frameworks

The two conceptual frameworks that supported this study were Black feminist

thought (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016) and intersectionality (Collins, 2009;

Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989). Black feminist thought and intersectionality

frameworks were mutually constructed in this study to understand the experiences of

women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. In this section of Chapter 2, I will describe

the two frameworks and their concepts and discuss their relevance to the present study.

Black Feminist Thought

The development of Black feminist thought espoused the need for a critical social

theory that would represent the common interests and challenges and need for community

of African American women who did not receive acceptance by White feminists and

Black men in political and societal matters. Many African American women have

expressed the need for an outlet to communicate their struggles, ambitions, and

dissonance about discrimination (Collins, 2009). The breadth of Black feminist thought

stems from African American women's stance on their sense of three referenda: (a)

knowledge, (b) consciousness, and (c) the politics of empowerment while enduring

obstacles at the intersection of race, gender, class, age, nation, disability, citizenship,

sexuality and religion (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Black feminist thought

became the forerunner for helping women of color pursue advocacy for injustice by

understanding that their experiences were similar. For instance, women of color who used

this theory found that identical oppressive structures have existed as a result of male

dominance factors. Subsequently, women of color have joined forces against injustices

while coordinating and developing coalitions, grass-root organizations, movements, and

other nonprofit organizations on a global scale (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The collective

voices of oppressed women can work to bring institutional and social change.

     I used Black feminist thought as a conceptual framework to explore the

experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs at the intersection of race and

gender. Women of color's experiences and similarities with marginalization, oppression,

and discrimination in higher education institutions, described through the lens of Black

feminists, suggest that knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment

intersect with social dimensions and forces (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). I used

these three components to interpret, analyze, and describe participants' experiences of

being women of color in leadership paths at PWIs at the intersection of race and gender.

Knowledge

The voices of marginalized groups to scholarship in higher education institutions before and after the civil war have usually been absent from the arts and sciences, economics, historical, social, and political spheres, where dominant groups mostly have provided the content. The voices of Black women on subject matters presented in scholarship typically were from a White male's perspective that perpetuated exploitation, education withholdings, and image distinctions (Collins, 2009). Dominant groups have not only excluded the voices of marginalized individuals but also developed inaccurate knowledge about their livelihoods, according to (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). The denial of these voices has had a global impact. In 1948, global leaders convened to provide their perspectives on the treatment of humans and develop a universal declaration for protection and rights (U.N. Charter art. 1-30). The declarations were translated into hundreds of languages and subsequently for treaties. The impact of this declaration and treaties remains urgent to honor voices globally.

Furthermore, Black women's history with slavery has often prevented deliberations relevant to their scholarship at colleges and universities, publishing rights, and interactions with public domains and organizations (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). The suppression of Black women's knowledge has sometimes disallowed their perspectives as academics and leaders at higher education institutions (Collins, 2009). Structures for how knowledge is formed and expressed still presents a challenge for many women in higher education institutions.

Consciousness

The conscious state describes the self-affirmation of knowledge concerning the experiences of Black feminist thinkers who have determined their rights, values, beliefs, and empowerment. Black feminist thought has characterized the consciousness of African American women and their experiences through the lens of blues singers, poets, and writers for decades; however, dominant views were pronounced (Collins, 2009). Black feminist thought later captured the experiences of women of African descent, African Diasporas, Asian Americans, Latinas, and Native Americans, who had similar trajectories at the intersection of race, class, and gender (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Women's intersectionality has crossed continents, influencing the sharing of similar stories and experiences.

Politics of Empowerment: Black Women's Descriptions

Mainstream culture has negatively influenced Black women's images and depicted "objectification, commodification, and exploitation" (Collins, 2009, p.308). White women were the standard by which society judged women of color's beauty and images (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016). Lewis et al. (2016) discussed the experiences of Black women attending a PWI. They found that such perceptions and standards influenced the intermingling of gender, race, and sexually related stereotypes. These standards repeatedly are reflected in commercial advertisements through the media and mainstream cultures. Black women's hair types and body formation has been scrutinized for decades (Wingfield, 2019). As a result, Black women, in resistance to these unwanted representations, have developed

educational magazines, books, and other social media outlets to empower women and young girls (Wingfield, 2019). The representation of Black women and girls in the media is still a concern.

Intersectionality

As a foundation, intersectionality describes how race, gender, class, and other factors come together to explore women of color's real experiences in leadership paths at PWIs. According to (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016), intersectionality refers to the convergence of race, gender, class, nation, age, disability, ethnicity, citizenship, sexuality, and religion as multiple factors in understanding how individuals, groups, and organizations make sense of their experiences. The meaning of intersectionality can be traced back to the 19th century to women feminists and activists such as Sojourner Truth and Savitribai Phule (Collins & Bilge, 2016). In the 1990s, Kimberlé Crenshaw received acclaim for intersectionality, creating some educational acceptance (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality, in this research, focuses on the impact of race and gender on women of color in advancing at PWIs. Race and gender issues continue to complicate the pathways for women of color in higher education institutions. The intersection of race and gender continually surge in the literature as the primary obstacles for women of color seeking advancement at PWIs.

The intersectionality framework's flexibility makes understanding how race and gender factors represent the similarities and uniqueness of women of color. As a critical tool for inquiry and practice, the intersectionality framework has served to understand women and gender issues and diversity in higher education (Collins & Bilge, 2016). This

tool helped describe the "Latinidades," a pivotal Black women's movement fixated on fighting against racism and sexism of women from Latin and South America (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Consequently, women of African descent, Afro-Brazilian, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Latin backgrounds understood that they shared more commonalities than differences at the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexism (Collins & Bilge, 2016). They became knowledgeable and aware of their similarities, which led to empowerment as a women's movement from the perspective of Black feminist thought.

The intersection of the two frameworks allows researchers and practitioners to provide interpretations of women's experiences whose voices have been previously unheard. The Latinidades' commonalities and differences helped shape the Black women's movement based on their African descents and shared experiences with slave trades, particularly Afro-Brazilian women (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Notably, the historical and social patterns of racial and gender discrimination, sexual violations, and politically enforced class standings, and majority control (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The women found that inequalities and unifying would advance their causes, although they did not receive support from other feminist groups. As such, they developed the most significant Black women's movements in history by forming platforms for disenfranchised women that included partnerships with colleges and universities and attracting renowned authors and speakers for their conferences and festivals. What made a difference in the Black women's movement was that men and youth attended the events. Overall, these events have constructively inspired educational discussions and learning to empower women and individuals globally.

Matrix of Domination

The matrix of domination refers to how intersectionality crosses race and gender, for example, in this particular context to explore the interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural, and domains of power at PWIs. Power structures have served as a form of institutionalization to incorporate the penetration of enslavement and colonializations to benefit capital markets, individuals, and groups (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). PWIs have replicated this penetration in their organizational structures, making it difficult for women of color to reach high-level positions. The senior executive levels in higher education typically include administrative and executives, serving as chief academic officers, chief executive officers, vice presidents, provosts, and chancellors.

Interpersonal Domain of Power

The interpersonal experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs were of interest in this study to understand how they form and their treatment. The outsider-within is a term used to describe the relationship experiences and treatment of individuals who have experienced marginalization, alienation, and discrimination and, in this context, at the intersection of race and gender in institutions (Collins, 2009). These experiences have been referenced in higher education literature as some of the most constant challenges women confront while pursuing leadership advancement. Nakitende (2019) identified similar barriers to women's development in leadership and the unequal distribution of women of color in high-level education roles and as presidents. Women in leadership roles experience many internal and external forces, characteristic of these barriers that remain gender-specific, creating missed opportunities for positioning

themselves as leaders. Nakitende (2019) concluded that such restrictions made opportunities for women to advance a highly selective process due to leadership preferences, biases, and the lack of professional development that entails mentoring and networking. Therefore, the leadership development of women of color must include specific strategies for dealing with gender and race barriers interpersonally.

Disciplinary Domain of Power

The dominant parties in organizations establish the tone and maintenance of governances that may impact subordinates. The perpetrators in organizations prescribe disciplinary actions and practices to maintain the status quo while enforcing the dominant parties' ideologies (Collins, 2009). Such methods allow dominating groups to impose preferential treatments. Collins and Bilge (2016) stated that "in essence, power operates by disciplining people in ways that put people's lives on paths that make some options seem viable and others out of reach" (p. 9). For women of color, this was enacted in the form of challenges and barriers to advancement.

Consequently, the rules may apply to men and women distinctively when seeking promotions and negotiating salaries. The criteria for advancing may lie in discrepancies regarding preferences in experience, education, skills, and gender roles. The operation of the disciplinary powers is similar to enacting "dual standards" (Valverde, 2011, p. 56) and exercising the misuse of power. The establishment of congruent disciplinary actions in an organization may positively impact individuals at all levels.

Cultural Domain of Power

The impact of culture in higher education institutions may influence the experiences of how individuals interact with one another. The patronizing sets of values, behaviors, beliefs and traditions, and culture held in institutions are orchestrated and manifested through historical, social, political, and economic governances (Collins, 2009). The culture in higher education institutions guides how people interact in organizations and determines their perceptions of individuals and people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The cultural domain also guides the institutional climate and is maintained by the status quo in the practices that dictate individuals' privileges and preferences in organizations. The institutional environment can affect individuals' experiences where traditions and norms, discrimination, stereotypes, and biases have created a hostile workplace.

Structural Domain of Power

The structural dynamics and hierarchies in institutions may not be transparent and accessible to some individuals. The levels of control operate at the top, middle, and lower ranks in organizations by individuals who develop and follow institutionalized and externalized policies and practices (Collins, 2009). The leadership pathways, for instance, leading to the presidency in higher education institutions, entail following traditional and non-traditional paths (Gray et al., 2018). Traditionally, steps leading to the president would involve holding a faculty position, serving as a department chair or dean, and advancing to a chief academic officer role and provosts (Harris et al., 2011). This is challenging because most faculty members of color are less likely to obtain tenured

faculty positions, although graduating at increasing rates from doctoral programs

(Espinosa et al, 2019; McCray, 2011). Acquiring access to these pathways would also

benefit both students and education institutions. However, structural dynamics have

impeded the paths for faculty of color desiring tenure.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

The Experiences and Perceptions of Women of Color Related to Higher Education

The negative experiences of women in leadership in higher education research

literature may impact prospective leaders' aspirations. The research studies on women's

negative experiences in leadership in education exceed the positive aspects, which may

affect their goals and development and implications for researchers (Hannum et al.,

2015). The barrage of these negative experiences may influence women in career paths

not to consider leadership and, therefore, require researchers and practitioner advocates to

focus on clarifying the benefits and challenges of becoming leaders. Hannum et al.

(2015) conducted a mixed-method study that included surveys and semistructured

interviews to focus on the experiences and career paths of prominent women and women

of color in senior executive leadership roles. The study included both women at public

and private colleges and universities, junior colleges, institutes of art, and technical and

tribal schools in the United States. Several data collection methods were used, such as

invitations to women of interest through snowballing, networking, and professional

leadership academies. Thirty-five women and women of color participated in the study

consisting of White, African American, Latina, Native American, mixed Latina, Native

American, and others with no classification. The number of White women exceeded

women of color. Their demographic profiles included responses to race, marital status, years of experience, enrollment sizes, and higher education leadership positions. The women in the study held and had served as chancellors, provosts, emeritus, presidents, vice presidents, deans, chief diversity officers, and treasurers. Some senior women executive leaders worked in public and private colleges, universities, and schools with 1,000 to 50,000 enrollments (Hannum et al., 2015). In addition, a few women in senior executive roles had the experience of leading small to large educational institutions.

The interviewers used phone and in-person interview methods to collect, record, transcribe, and analyze the interviews. Fifteen themes emerged from the participant responses to their experienced challenges and barriers, supports and networks, and negative and positive aspects of being in leadership paths. Sixty percent of the women and women of color in the study described that they were discouraged and sabotaged, 51% lacked opportunities and support networks, and 75% of women of color compared to 35% of the White women had reported this as a barrier. They also perceived that accountability differed between women and men (Hannum et al., 2015; Moodly & Toni, 2017). This theme was one of three sub-themes selected for discussion in the study. Overall, the themes explored the experiences between males and females—Black, White, and of color—in leadership roles.

Researchers have explored the perception of women in leadership to understand their differences. For example, Hannum et al. (2015) explored the possibility of perceived differences between White and minority women in leadership positions. The researchers concurred that the tenets on intersections would apply to comparisons in the study,

although it was not the intended focus and based on previous researchers'

recommendations. They found statistically significant differences between how White

women and women of color perceived their experiences in leadership roles. The first and

third themes indicated that 67% of women of color, in comparison to 20% of the White

women, experienced being scrutinized and criticized more frequently and that 50% of the

women of color compared to 10% of the White women reported making a difference or

having an impact. Similarly, the women (40%) shared their desire to be role models for

other women seeking leadership roles, although the same reported lacking leadership

identities. Hannum et al. concluded that although the representation of women of color in

this study was more than the population, they wanted to contribute to the limited number

of studies on their leadership and share their stories. They also made recommendations on

exploring the leadership development challenges and barriers of women leaders and the

benefits of focusing on their disparities (Hannum et al., 2015).

      The experiences of African American women at PWIs are, in some cases, hidden

in coping strategies to persevere. Apugo (2019) sought to understand the impact of those

experiences on African American women students, their coping strategies, and the

barriers faced at PWIs. Apugo used an investigative literature approach to categorize the

three topics of interest. Black feminist thought informed the qualitative study, and Nvivo

was used to analyze the categories and themes. Some study findings suggested that

African American women experienced stereotype threats, accusations of being model

minorities, and engaged in academic masking to survive at PWIs. The stereotype threats

presented instances of feeling threatened because of their race and culture and having to

defend themselves in educational and social spaces (Apugo, 2019; Emerson & Murphy, 2014). At the same time, these African American women felt they had to disguise their authenticity while in the company of White students. This shift in behavior is described as "academic masking" (Apugo, 2019, p. 57) and was perceived as a socially acceptable strategy for navigating PWIs. Apugo concluded that academic masking as a form of coping places African American women's mental and social wellness at risk.

The experiences of African American women may also present challenges and barriers to their academic performance at PWIs. To avoid dissonance with academics and peers, the women experienced and practiced "hypervigilance" (Apugo, 2019, p. 54). The term "hypervigilance" refers to making assumptions that negatively influence interactions with others perceived as racial, cultural, and stereotypical at PWIs (Apugo, 2019). Those interactions were viewed as leading students to develop coping strategies that negatively impacted their well-being and socialization that led to isolation. Another coping strategy consistent with other researchers' findings in Apugo's study was "code-switching" (Apugo, 2019, p. 54) and referred to the students' inclination to assimilate when preferential. However, Apugo also found in the literature that researchers concluded that code-switching was not a psychologically healthy coping strategy.

The survival of African American women students at PWIs may be affected by negative racial and cultural stereotypes. According to researchers, the perceptions of African American women students coping mechanisms are both positively and negatively viewed regarding race and culture stereotypes (Apugo, 2019). A persistent theme in the literature suggests that the African American woman is considered the "strong black

woman" and can withstand struggles and mitigate assimilations and microaggressions in PWIs, where their cultures are not predominate. Moreover, these coping mechanisms are both positively and negatively construed (Apugo, 2019). Apugo concluded that PWIs' administrative leaders need to develop educational and institutional strategies to help them and staff understand the positive and negative impacts of coping for African American women students. Apugo also recommended that PWIs build alliances with African American women on their campuses by providing supportive structures, networks, and mentoring opportunities.

The perceptions of what constitutes managers and leaders as successful may be affected by stereotypes and leadership theories. Burris et al. (2013) studied White and Asian Americans' perceptions of their prototypical views of what constituted a successful manager or leader. Previous research informed the study on implicit leadership theories that compared both groups but from the perceptions of White males. A total of 2,839 individuals received email invitations through an online survey provider; less than 15% responded, and 187 eventually participated in a quantitative study. The sample also consisted of Indian and South Asians that Burris and colleagues found to bring diverse experiences. This group consisted of an equal number of men and women randomly assigned to three conditional categories based on race as managers or successful managers. Burris et al. used transformational and authentic leadership theory frameworks to inform and analyze the study. The researchers hypothesized and developed RQs to determine the perceptions of White and Asian American managers' ideas on Asian

American managers' prototypes, theories, and successful managers and similarly for Asian American managers' perceptions of Whites (Burris et al., 2013).

Several researchers have studied the perceptions of White and Asian Americans on leadership. As noted, Burris et al. (2013) conducted relevant research and found that racial stereotypes persist among White and Asian American managers concerning perceptions of competence, socialization, authenticity, and transformational leadership. For instance, White and Asian American managers' perceptions of Asian American managers were the same regarding competence but viewed less on social and transformational leadership and manager models. Asian American managers' understanding of White managers was similar to competence but seen as less authentic and a manager's model. As a result, Burris et al. concluded that Asian Americans' stereotypes are problematic and that much stands to be investigated on the "bamboo-ceiling" (Burris et al., 2013, p. 263). The stereotypes of Asian American managers may impact their chances of advancing in leadership roles because of the perceptions that both races have on their social skills as leaders.

The small representation of women presidents and leaders in business, public offices, and education in Asia is similar to the United States. The women presidents in the United States hover around 30% (Gray et al., 2018), whereas, for Asian universities, less than 20% occupy those roles (Cheaupalakit, 2014). An exploratory study of five Thai senior executive women in education leadership positions discussed the barriers to their career development, success, and paths. The researcher conducted semistructured interviews with the five women and an observation in which they discussed their

experiences. Multiple barriers surfaced and included lack of preparation for ascending to the presidency, balancing work and families, role models and mentors, and preference for males as leaders (Cheaupalakit, 2014). The five women described how education and opportunities to receive honors and rewards for pursuing advanced studies in other countries are highly valued by organizations in Asia. The continuing of advanced training outside of Asia represented status and readiness to navigate organizational paths successfully. Most of the women were middle-aged and developed through the ranks to become presidents in postsecondary education institutions and one in public service (Cheaupalakit, 2014). In another study by Hill and Wheat (2017), the researchers also observed that experienced and educated women of middle age had advanced to the presidency. Some women climbed the ladder to the presidency by obtaining tenure as faculty, although their paths were turbulent.

The climates of higher education institutions may have an impact on the persistence of women of color faculty. Researchers have consistently shown in the literature negative portrayals of PWIs and their treatment of women of color faculty due to their institutional climates (Carroll, 2017). In 2017, reports indicated that less than 10% of minorities are full-time professors in higher education institutions, while their White female counterparts hold 24% (McFarland et al., 2019). The numbers also indicated the differences among African American, Asian American, Hispanics, American Indian/Alaska Native, and mixed-race women and men full-time professors. Similarly, Carroll (2017) conducted an autobiographical narrative on the experiences of working as a woman faculty of color in a PWI and used critical race and institutional

betrayal theories to interpret and analyze this qualitative study. Carroll shared the findings from this narrative and how several factors contributed to her experiences while at the PWI. Although Carroll had esteemed credentials as a clinical practitioner and counseling psychologist, her White counterparts micro-invalidated them at the PWIs. According to Curtis (2017), the practice of micro-validations can alter the course of professionals in the social aspects of leading for justice, arouse fears, and disempower their missions. Carroll stated that these experiences included five assumptions based on Delgado and Stefancic's (2012) critical race theory. These assumptions may make it possible to understand the impact of race in evaluating women's experiences at PWIs.

The first assumption made was that racism and sentiments are institutionalized and practiced in society. Secondly, interest convergence benefits those with the power and authority to shift racial privileges to diminish groups to extend and maintain the status quo. Thirdly, race is socially constructed and learned in society and systematized to privilege and control dominant group ideologies. The fourth implied that intersectionality and anti-essentialism are necessary for understanding traditions and philosophical teachings not challenged. Lastly, the fifth focused on helping the marginalized share their voice on matters of concern to gain empowerment (Carroll, 2017). The five assumptions may help institutions consider ways to implement change for those that have worked at the margins.

Women of color faculty may experience feelings of betrayal in non-supportive climates at PWIs. Carroll (2017) referred to "institutional betrayal" (p. 43) as the refusal of organizations to take responsibility for the support and protection of individuals.

Moreover, Carroll suggested that institutional betrayal can happen when forced to work in adversarial environments that are not transparent during the hiring process. The researcher recounted experiencing institutional betrayal by a chair who assigned her to work with a colleague known on the campus for racial dissensions. As a result, Caroll encountered compensation and promotional accusations perceived as racially motivated and reported feeling compromised and unsafe.

The impact of microaggressions may increase the tension on college campuses for individuals. The experienced microaggressions may increase concerns for students, faculty, and staff at colleges and universities inhabited in institutional climates (Carroll, 2017; Vakalahi & Davis, 2015). The racial and gendered microaggressions that have become systemic tend to operate under the auspices of controlling and oppressive hierarchies. In her research, Carroll concluded that these disturbances and micro-invalidations could stifle institutions and the development of women of color faculty, students, and staff in preparation for a changing society. Lastly, she postulated that such practices must cease and provided recommendations and interventions based on the critical race philosophies (Carroll, 2017). Researchers have also concluded that these tensions may affect the social and psychological health of African American and Black women students (Apugo, 2019; Lewis et al., 2016) and faculty women of color (Carroll, 2017) at PWIs. While other researchers have studied that adversities may lead to resiliency in challenges (Seery et al., 2010), much remains unknown concerning the influence of adversity on the health and persistence of minorities at PWIs.

The lack of Native Americans in higher education and student affairs may influence the recruitment and retention of Native American students and professionals. Researchers have indicated in the literature that there is a persistent lack of studies on Native Americans in higher education (Oxendine et al., 2018). Oxendine et al. (2018) quantitative study used a critical race theory. It focused on identifying factors and experiences that may have influenced Native Americans in higher education to pursue pathways in student affairs. A critical race theory is also known as a tribal critical race theory or TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005) and has roots in the former and situates the Indigenous peoples in the latter to contextualize their colonized experiences and preserve culture and communities, espouse self-determination and sovereignty (Oxendine et al., 2018).

A total of 52 Native Americans and those considered biracial participated in the study from 59 individuals who were sampled and extended invitations. Most of the participants had master's degrees but did not specialize in higher education or student affairs, and a few had doctoral degrees. The participants responded to RQs, for instance, to determine what factors and influences made them interested, aware, and decide to pursue the student affairs profession. Oxendine and colleagues found that most were made aware of the student affairs profession through people of color practitioners who had been advisors, mentors, student activities, and experiences working as students in leadership roles. Many of the students' awareness of student affairs came after graduation. Most decided to pursue a career in student affairs because of the lack of Native American student affairs practitioners and the desire to help Native American

students, schools, and communities. The researchers also found that traditional modes of contact for recruiting these students who applied to graduate programs in student affairs did not work to their advantage (Oxendine et al., 2018). To this end, it can be reasoned that higher education institutions' recruitment of Native American students for graduate programs has not been successful.

Several factors influenced Native American students' decisions not to enroll in graduate student affairs programs. For example, the schools' location significantly influenced the decision to enroll in graduate programs because of family, cost of attendance, and the need for graduate assistance. Oxendine et al. concluded that higher education institutions need to develop more awareness of the cultures of diverse students attending schools, experiential learning programs, and mentors and sponsor relationships. They also stated that more quantitative studies would help to bring justification for studies on Native American students and professionals. Oxendine et al. study suggest that very few Native American students persist in higher education, and few become professionals in student affairs.

The leadership development of Native American and Indigenous women has become a concern for those representing community organizations, universities, and those in key leadership roles. Maranzan et al.'s (2013) mixed-method study entailed collecting data from 428 First Nation women in the North region of Canada and 15 men through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups led by a prominent organization representing an Indigenous women's leadership development program. The respondents represented a sample of 45,000 Nishnawbe Aski people of 49 First Nation political

communities in that region, according to NAN (2011), as cited in Maranzan et al. (2013).
The purpose of the collaborative two-year Major Women's Development Project was to
appraise the participation, learning, barriers, and impact for the next generation of
leaders.

The education of First Nation women may positively impact their families,
communities, and participation in political leadership roles. First Nation females have
more aspirations for higher education than First Nation males, like non Indigenous
females. Maranzan et al. (2013) stated that the educational attainment and earnings of
women on and off the reserves are different. Many of the study respondents discussed the
value of having an education and learning new skills in the focus groups and workshops.
The workshops helped the women become empowered and speak about the challenges
and barriers of pursuing education and leadership training and skills because of family
and communal responsibilities, finances, and support networks. The researchers also
found that race and sexual barriers and past rulings, treaties, and acts affected the
Indigenous women's concepts of leadership and their desire to pursue political offices
(Maranzan et al., 2013). Overall, the marginalization of the women impacted their pursuit
of leadership.

The lack of determination of First Nation women may impact their ability to
participate and succeed in policy making and legislation to improve Indigenous women's
conditions. The First Nation women's self-determination and participation in social,
cultural, and political aspects of their lives and peoples had previously been the subject of
colonization, patriarchies, and degradations (Maranzan et al., 2013). Because of class

rulings, the First Nation women did not have the right to governance and leadership roles and over their reproductions and land ownership.

The women in these workshops found that their perceptions directly resulted from patriarchal systems where disparities had been significant. In the study, Maranzan et al. (2013) also found that the First Nation women perceived that having the support of women in leadership roles and as mentors would help them improve their knowledge and skill-building capacities. Some women had previous leadership experience working in their communities, raising monies for charities, and holding a small percentage of political offices. The women highly valued their communities and did not consider themselves better than the males but valued them. Several respondents discussed how the workshops provided valuable information for managing work and their families, convenience, relationship parameters, and desire to pursue education and become leaders. The researchers concluded that the study's limitations included not having comparison groups and how some women participants had selected themselves (Maranzan et al., 2013). Future research studies may help in bringing awareness to other aspects of their livelihood.

The leadership development of cultural and ethnic groups has not received much attention from top-rated corporations and companies. Sy et al. (2017) found that organizations focused more on traditional leadership development and training programs for mainstream workers than on their relevance to cultural and ethnic minority groups. Their main research goal was to understand the factors that had contributed to 37 Asian and non-Asian executives' success, including four women with corporate and leadership

development experiences. They conducted semistructured interviews and found three primary factors that were essential to their development as Asian American leaders. The three factors included learning how to apply social, cultural, and technical competencies. Mainstream organizations can learn much from developing culturally relevant leadership programs and how diverse groups and factors play a role.

The importance of having programs that prepare women in leadership may provide pathways for them in corporations. Some corporate researchers have indicated that the lack of women in leadership development programs may impact their advancement to senior executive roles (DBPI, 2017). In addition, these researchers found that few women, regardless of their race, took advantage of leadership and career development programs than White and Asian American women. The study consisted of White, Black, Asian, and Latinas but not Native American women. According to DBPI (2017), more than half of the women reported not having the leadership skills to advance in their companies. The majority surveyed also indicated that not having the leadership, confidence, decision-making, and networking skills prevented them from advancing. Thus, women must take an active role in their professional development.

The positioning of diverse leaders may have an impact on their ascent to executive-level roles. The over-representation of women and minorities at managerial levels makes development to C-suites unattainable (DBPI, 2017). Furthermore, the concentration of these groups in mid-level roles can affect their development along pathways. The development of equitable corporate strategies and practices may influence the participation rates of the next generation of women in leadership roles. Thus, this

study's recommendations for improving the infrastructures involved developing internal and external pipelines, determining the challenges and barriers, and equitable workplace plans (DBPI, 2017). According to DBPI (2017), an understanding of the disparities would entail utilizing measurement tools to evaluate the demographics, biases, succession planning, mentoring, and sponsorships in the upper management of companies. The monitoring of the career development of individuals in entities may influence more positive collaborations and outcomes.

Also, the development of equitable infrastructures in companies would involve establishing clear leadership paths, training and performance ratings, and senior projects and assignments for women and minorities (DBPI, 2017). Researchers have found that negative performance ratings impede the advancement of minorities valuing diversity in organizations (Hekman et al., 2017). Several companies presently have specialized leadership development and advancement programs for women and women of color. Some have developed 12-month leadership development programs, summits, networking, and empowerment meetings while others have specialized programs for women and minorities, only 30% reported having targeted diversity (DBPI, 2017). The careful planning and implementation of diversity programs can be impactful to the development of leaders.

The impact of employing individuals predominately from mainstream populations may impede the success of students at educational institutions. Hiring diverse staff representing the student population helps them succeed and feel a sense of inclusion (Surna, 2018). Creators of leadership development programs at schools have started to

include and emphasize the need for women and people of color leaders (Surna, 2018). As women of color continue to earn advanced degrees at higher education institutions, their representation in leadership could be impactful for diversity and inclusion efforts and student success by clarifying the navigation.

Women of color remain "virtually non-existent among top-earners" at elite institutions in the United States, a key finding of the Women Power Gap Study (Silbert & Dubé, 2021). However, Silbert and Dubé (2021) discussed that women's degrees still do not translate to earnings. Recommendations included holding institutions accountable and requiring more transparency on gender, race, and ethnic systemic barriers that impede pipelines in higher education. The findings are similar to this study and recommendations that involve securing leaders, policymakers, boards, cabinets, and at all levels for change.

Organizations can ensure that the proper tools for diversity and inclusion become instituted by developing leaders to lead organizational change. Particularly, leaders must share the organization's values and mission to bring constituents together and identify problems, solutions, and outcomes (Spiro, 2011). The organization would have to be assessed as ready through individuals, groups, and leaders while considering tool measures for resistance. Spiro (2011) stated that organizations could resolve challenges and barriers to change through (a) identification of the problem, (b) connecting with individuals affected by the change, (c) acknowledging culture and traditions and, (d) communicating and sharing reasons for resistance to the change, and (e) setting boundaries for bargaining. Change can be informative and a valuable learning experience for organizations when affected individuals and leaders decide to engage in the process.

Leaders are best suited for delivering and leading change in organizations interested in pursuing diversity and inclusion practices in educational institutions. Adserias et al. (2017) conducted a literature review search of over 400 documents and manuscripts to explore the type of leaders that are best at leading organizational change and diversity and inclusion at education institutions. The researchers were explicitly interested in organizational change, culture, and leadership, which narrowed the search to less than ten through synthesis. They found that the best leaders could implement and enforce strategies using a combination of three leadership styles. Adserias et al. concluded that the three forms included transformational, transactional, and full-force leadership. The leadership styles that are appropriate for organizational and cultural changes may require further exploration in educational institutions.

Intersections of Race and Gender in Leadership Paths

The intersection of race and gender may affect the number of African American women who advance and develop leadership roles at higher education institutions. However, according to Davis and Maldonado (2015), studies on African American women's experiences and their leadership development at the intersection of race and gender in higher education institutions are few. Therefore, the researchers sought to understand African American women's leadership development's identities and experiences at the intersection of race and gender in their study. A total of four conceptual frameworks and theories informed their phenomenological qualitative study: (1) Black feminist thought, (2) feminism, (3) intersectionality, and (4) social-cultural theories; these intersected to provide the interpretations, thematic analysis, and findings.

According to Davis and Maldonado, the theories and frameworks described the similarities and differences of previous research on leadership development that perpetuated male dominance and oppression in predominately White organizations but did not include studies on the intersection of race and gender.

Moreover, the previous theories on leadership in the literature enumerate male gender, development, and styles than women. Researchers have concluded that some leadership styles in the literature substantiate the traditions; others include examinations of the adaptive, servant, and transformational theories. While most studies have focused on the male and White female perspectives, few have focused on women of color (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Studies that inform and explore the experiences of women of color in leading roles are crucial for learning institutions.

A purposeful sampling and criterion-based strategy converged to examine the experiences and development of five African American women senior executives in two- and four-year colleges and universities. The African American women selected and interviewed for the study included deans, vice-presidents, and presidents. The findings on the experiences and development of the women while advancing to leadership at the intersection and race surfaced considerably on social and psychological factors. Those factors concerned their experiences with feelings of being not visible and heard, alienated and isolated, discriminated against, devalued, and faced challenging and harmful role changes (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Overall, Davis and Maldonado concluded that these developmental leadership experiences impacted their career advancement because

of their race and gender. They also found that the women's race and gender had informed and shaped their identities (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Several themes evolved from the interviews with the five African American women and revealed other factors contributing to their leadership development. These factors that shaped their identities as leaders and development, for example, included reflecting on childhood experiences, paying it forward, and learning how to play the game, and developing informal and formal professional networks (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Moreover, the women reflected on their childhood experiences and emphasized the importance of having immediate and extended families that were professional educators. They also revealed how exercising family values and beliefs when making decisions helped them to become successful leaders. In addition, they discussed learning how to play the game to navigate organizational structures and chains of command in their roles as leaders.

In some cases, they realized how White male sponsors in positions of power without their knowledge established opportunities and stood in opposition to those that did not support their advancement. The women also had Black males' assistance in positions of authority, having bosses that supported and sponsored their development (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). According to Davis and Maldonado (2015), African American women shared how having male mentors and sponsors contributed to their progression and development. Hill and Wheat (2017) emphasized how women of previous generations recounted not having women in leadership that could mentor them

but only males. The role of mentoring can impact the development of women pursuing advanced leadership roles in uncertain pathways.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) described "vignettes" of their experiences, barriers, and perspectives on leadership development at race and gender intersections in higher education institutions. Although the researchers studied African American women and their experiences ascending, they also concluded that researchers and practitioners need to extend their practices to include women of color in leadership development. The institutionalization of these practices within higher education may benefit them and the women of color who seek to provide their experiences in leadership.

Gipson et al. (2017) examined Eagly and Johnson's (1990) meta-analysis on aspects of leadership behaviors and found it lacked cues on selecting, developing, and evaluating women leaders. However, Gipson et al. did not examine women of color even though their study included women. In reviewing over 160,000 articles, they found that only 5% of the research focused on women in leadership. In the study, they also found gender differences in the selection and development of male and female leaders. There were few differences in their styles and performance evaluations, but they concluded that much is unknown about women's leadership experiences and diverse topics.

Women of color can also offer valuable input to their development as senior leaders in colleges and universities. In a recent study by the American Council on Education (ACE) and Teacher's Insurance Annuity Association (TIAA) on understanding the perceived constraints of women of color's entry to the presidency where they hold less than 6% of the roles, Gray et al. (2018) explored the experiences of an African

American, two Latinas, and an Asian American, who were presidents and chancellors at colleges and universities. The women revealed race and gender as barriers, except one who emphasized that race was not a concern but religion. Consequently, most had aspirations to become presidents and chancellors, although taken through non-traditional and traditional leadership pathways. The majority sensed constraints to prove their competence, stereotypes, biases, and some self-imposed barriers to advancements, while others had concerns about unstructured selection procedures. What was most similar involved how they measured success and their goals and used statistical data as indicators. When asked about how their identities impacted them as leaders, the four women discussed the value of understanding cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and communities (Gray et al., 2018). Women in leadership from diverse backgrounds and experiences can provide valuable contributions to educational communities.

The women of color provided several recommendations for colleges and universities to consider to increase prospects for president roles: (a) the need for professional and personal development assistance tailored to women of color, (b) systemic institutional policies and strategies to discourage race and gender challenges, and (c) resourceful high-ranking officials who will be mentors and coaches. While most agreed to increase the number of women of color in leadership and president roles, many also stated that they would like to see more representative of their student populations (Gray et al., 2018). The demographics of leadership on college campuses may positively affect students.

The intersections of race and gender may impact women advancing to leadership in education. Ten highly experienced African American women, assistant superintendents at a southern U.S. PWI, participated in 90-minute interviews and shared the experiences and barriers that prevented them from advancing to superintendents (Angel et al., 2013). In this qualitative phenomenological study, Black feminist thought and thematic synthesis analysis captured their dualistic experiences on racial and gender barriers. The works of Alston (1999) on "constraints and facilitating factors" and Jackson's (1999) "success factors" (p. 600) were rendered from Black feminist thought to provide the rationale for their interview questions (Alston, 1999, as cited in Angel et al., 2013). They found four internal and three external themes that the African American women had experienced in their professional pathways. The four internalized factors that contributed to their success in leadership included (a) setting high standards, (b) supportive family environments, (c) ethical practices, and (d) learning. The three external themes involved experiences of oppression, the lack of supportive professional networks and mentors, unknown application, and selection criteria. Angel et al. (2013) concluded that African American women assistant superintendents need to take proactive steps to influence curriculum designs in educational leadership programs as alumni. They also concluded that arranging internship programs for Black and White males and females to work with African American women leaders was crucial to the students' leadership development. Similarly, Guerra et al. (2013) concluded that many graduates of educational leadership programs leave schools unprepared for leading in diverse work settings, suggesting that

the programs that prepare students for leadership in education may lack a focus on diversity.

Furthermore, the experiences of women in higher education administration at the intersection of race and gender may provide a different perspective for leaders. Brower et al. (2019) studied the gender-based attributional ambiguity in higher education among deans but did not focus on the intersection of race and gender. The meaning of 'attributional ambiguity' is derived from Crocker et al. (1991), who described it as how minorities determine the differences between social and psychological interactions that are perceived negatively' or positively (as cited in Brower et al., 2019). Brower et al. examined three gender-based attributional ambiguities that focused on the escalation of situations in professional environments, the types, and individuals and organizations. Their study included a sample of 10 female and six male academic deans from small to large southern colleges and universities in the United States. The academics had previously participated in a quantitative study of 51 deans in academia other than STEM. The study did not include race but gender; one woman of color was included in the sample. Other researchers have explored the intersectionality of women of color professionals and students in STEM (McGee, 2018; McGuire et al., 2016; Ong et al., 2018; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2019). The study of intersections in professional fields may add breadth to understanding and preparing diverse individuals as leaders.

The study of intersectionality may affect relationships in workplace settings. Crenshaw (1989) argued against the separation of race and gender in workplace discrimination cases and viewed them as intersecting with systems of oppression (Apugo,

2019; Collins, 2009). However, this study mainly focused on gender-based attributional ambiguity and not discrimination in higher education. Scholars have mentioned that studies on the intersection of race and gender on women in leadership are limited (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Brower et al. (2019) found that gender-based attributional ambiguity was fluid among women's experiences in seeking advancement. They tended to lack decision-making power in their organizations and were discriminated against in advancing to deans.

Some of the implications for practice in Brower et al.'s (2019) study included the need for professional development to alleviate gender-based attributional ambiguity challenges. Although the study did not focus on race and gender intersections, some inclinations point to research in this area. Brower et al. emphasized the importance of supporting systems, mentoring, and sponsorships and helping women advance to academic deans in higher education because of their experiences. They referenced that other researchers (Angel et al., 2013; Apugo, 2019) have mentioned that having organizational support, networks, and mentoring is essential for advancing women's leadership. However, Brower and colleagues also specified that having male and female mentors and sponsors would provide opportunities for understanding different perspectives. Studies have explored that race and gender microaggressions may negatively impact people of color at PWIs (Apugo, 2019; Carroll, 2017; Lewis et al., 2016). Specifically, research shows that the PWIs welcoming of minorities on their campuses have lacked positivity.

The persistence of microaggressions may negatively affect the experiences of students at PWIs. Lewis et al. (2016) captured Black women students' experiences at a PWI in the Midwest on their perceptions of racial microaggressions and interpersonal relationships. The Black women in Lewis et al.'s study consisted of 17 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students that could identify with intersecting race and gender issues and their impact on women of color. A prerequisite for participation in the purposeful and qualitative study involved understanding the intersection of race and gender. The study did not focus on women of color students at PWIs; therefore, more research studies are needed to obtain their perspectives on racial microaggressions in other social and professional contexts (Lewis et al., 2016). Lewis et al. conducted the study utilizing intersectionality and Black feminist thought as frameworks to focus on Black women students' experiences from a social and cultural perspective. Both frames served to capture the students' experiences and helped the researchers make meaning of their multiple intersections with race and gender at the PWI.

The use of focus groups in research may provide ways for students to share their experiences. Students' placement in focus groups enabled Lewis et al. (2016) to conduct semistructured interviews. The students responded to experiences with race and gender in the classroom, interpersonal encounters, and on campus. By analyzing these themes, they found that the students had similar experiences with stereotypes, racism and sexism, marginalization, and how others perceived their attitudes, such as being an "Angry Black woman" and invisible. The Black women in the study faced not only these obstacles but also situations where labels and names described their outward features. The researchers

also found that the themes carried a uniqueness to racial and ethnic minority groups, and meanings across them would require further exploration (Lewis et al., 2016).

The tenure and promotion of African American women faculty may present challenges in the absence of leadership support at PWIs. Jones et al.'s (2015) phenomenological study focused on the experiences of five African American women faculty at PWIs in the United States and their progression to tenure and strategies for coping and developing relevant institutional and diversity practices for leaders. This study also purposed to include African American women faculty's shared experiences for their empowerment and the development of inclusive higher education leadership strategies that involve supporting them. The researchers found that in face-to-face interviews, in the absence of university and leadership support, African American women faculty experiences resulted from institutionalized racial and discriminatory conditions requiring them to rely on social and emotional value networks. In addition, the African American women faculty participants had endured being bullied by their White colleagues, shifts based on their race and gender to assimilate, and had been marginalized. They were also treated as outsiders in their institutions at the expense of their health (Curtis, 2017; Jones et al., 2015). As a result, the impending health of women of color faculty has become jeopardized in the institutions that claim to support them.

The convergence of theories may help to understand how individuals communicate in educational settings. Jones et al. (2015) also discussed how Black feminist thought and relational-cultural theory helped the respondents communicate deviations from the preferred treatment they would have liked to receive while at the

PWIs. The findings of this study alluded to these claims, and when institutional and mentoring support was in place, the African American women faculty did not experience as many adverse reactions. Educational support systems harnessed and developed by faculty and leaders to emphasize their role in combating harmful working conditions are imminent for women of color at PWIs. The proactive leaders in higher education institutions can provide supportive environments for diverse faculty and staff to develop at PWIs. The faculty chairpersons' and leaders' understanding of the missions and values concerning institutional diversity revealed their managing practices (Jones et al., 2015). The African American women faculty and staff, for instance, received dismal treatment when they wanted to receive information about the tenure and promotion process from leaders. Also, the African American women faculty elaborated on how specific guidelines about the tenure and promotion process, mentoring, and extended work demands should become clear to retain diverse faculty and staff, including women of color (Jones et al., 2015). The clarification of the tenure process and retention policies are pivotal to addressing the needs of diverse audiences.

The paths to senior leadership positions for African American women and women of color are not without aggravation in work environments. Beckwith et al.'s (2016) exploratory study revealed that in corporate and educational settings, structuralized practices created barriers and glass ceilings for women who pursued leadership opportunities. Beckwith and colleagues also found that stereotypes, discriminatory and exclusionary tactics, and racial and gender biases are more prevalent in organizations. Uncertain practices and concessions have made promotional opportunities challenging

for African American women in securing mentors, sponsors, and positive performance ratings necessary to advance. Moreover, Beckwith et al. concluded that no specific strategies attuned to what African American women and women of color would need to acquire leadership positions. The literature remains dismal about accelerating, although they have made substantial gains in education and work experiences. Thus, the leadership development and acceleration of women and women of color in corporate and education institutions have not been constant.

Self-empowerment may be impactful for women pursuing leadership roles in higher education institutions. The same is necessary for women of color in corporate environments seeking to advance by initiating the process of creating seats at the table for themselves (Harts, 2019). Harts (2019) suggested that women of color become more intentional and seek out relationship-building opportunities, peers for mentoring, and networks. The impact of these efforts may lead to the advancement in leadership roles not considered. The preconceptions of moving beyond those seated at tables may affect the ascension to higher-level leadership roles. The former first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, and graduate of Harvard Law School, received guidance on advancing from her husband, President Obama, regarding her perspectives on acquiring just a seat at Sidley and Austin Law firm (Obama, 2018).

The studies on the experiences of Asian American women in education leadership are sparse. Specifically, researchers have confirmed that the number of studies on the experiences of Asian American women in leadership roles at the intersection of race and gender in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions are few (Liang & Peters-

Hawkins, 2017). Liang and Peters-Hawkins (2017) discussed studies' lack of focus on Asian American women's leadership at the intersection of race and ethnicities in either elementary, high-school, or post-secondary institutions but instead on Black women in education. Also, researchers have studied little on the experiences of women of color in leadership. Liang and Peters-Hawkins claimed that their research would help to fill the knowledge generation gaps. Their study identified 11 Asian American women in educational leadership through public documents, purposeful, snowballing, and criterion sampling in two bordering states. The criteria for selection in the study included having a degree in the discipline, classification as a building administrator, and at least two years of professional work experience. A qualitative multi-case study helped the researchers make meaning of the experiences, purposes, roles, challenges, and barriers of Asian American women in educational leadership. The researchers captured their experiences and responses through in-depth, semistructured interviews, observations, and analysis of artifacts and documents. They also used intersectionality as a conceptual framework to explore their experiences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexism, and leadership issues.

The experiences of individuals may impact their desire to pursue careers in leadership to help underrepresented students in education. The Asian American women in the study had described how their previous work and life experiences prepared them for careers in leadership and the desire to make a difference (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). A participant described how working in the clothing industry abroad had influenced her decision to pursue a career in school leadership consciously. The desire for some to help underrepresented student populations in communities led them to make

leadership career decisions. Many women described their decisions through moral and ethical lenses and their purposes in mind. The rationale behind women who pursue careers in leadership may intertwine with their experiences and beliefs.

The perceptions and experiences of Asian American women in leadership paths in education may influence how they make meaning. According to Liang and Peters-Hawkins (2017), Asian American women have unique experiences described differently from White women and Asian American males and other women of color due to racism and sexism. Similarly, researchers on women issues, such as Collins (2009), perceived Black women's experiences differ from White women and Black males due to their race, gender, class, and marginalized status (Collins, 2009; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). In addition, some Asian American women perceived their experiences as different due to historical and social exclusions resulting from immigration and discrimination acts targeting Asian females. Accordingly, scholars have argued that women of color are not all the same, and work on intersectionality excludes Chicanas and Latinas (Baca-Zinn & Zambrana, 2019). The Asian American women in Liang and Peters-Hawkin's (2017) study, for instance, described and perceived their experiences in school leadership paths differently. Most of the women perceived their experiences in advancing to school leadership roles were not the result of concerns of dominant male systems but lacked the desire and capabilities in some cases. They also felt their professional work experiences, opportunities, and personal growth instead contributed to these factors.

Asian American women's experiences and perceptions of racial and ethnic undertones are described differently in their leadership paths. The participants'

viewpoints on their experiences of discrimination, model minorities, stereotypes,

isolations, mentoring, and challenges and barriers are not viewed negatively but

positively as a chance to self-evaluate themselves and as forms of resistance (Liang &

Peters-Hawkins, 2017). The women's experiences and perspectives on racial

discrimination stereotypes were not perceived as much as sexism—the perceptions of

being model minorities related to their concerns about competencies, work ethic, and

professionalism. Moreover, the participants' perceived challenges and barriers to

mentoring captured their tendencies not to let others know or vocalize the need for

mentors and role models. The women's perceptions of leadership development opposed

what DBPI (2017) reported on how Asian and White women are more likely to take

advantage of leadership development programs than Black or Latinas. This suggests that

researchers may have come to different conclusions on the career experiences of these

women in leadership.

The identities of racial and ethnic minorities can positively affect their

professional aspirations to pursue careers in leadership. Researchers have examined the

intersections of race and ethnicity between the professional identities of Latina/o as

school administrators (Murakami et al., 2018). Specifically, Murakami et al.'s (2018)

study of Latina/o school administrators at the intersection of race and ethnicity and

impact on their professional identities resulted from a larger study, the National Latina/o

Leadership Project (NLLP) in the state of Texas. A qualitative study helped describe the

experiences between Latina/o school administrators' early schooling experiences and

perspectives, the impact of race and ethnicity on their roles as leaders, and the benefits of

being a Latina/o in the schools. A total of 231 school administrators' invitations were sent to Latina/o school administrators from the state of Texas independent school district with a student population of 5 million and where the majority of teachers are White, and the others African American or Hispanic (Murakami et al., 2018). The participants consisted of 216 females and males Latina/o school administrators, with the majority being females. The school administrators in this study included superintendents, principals, and assistant principals who had advanced education, certifications, and training in their fields (Murakami et al., 2018). The advantages of having pursued higher education and professional development informed their advancement in career paths.

The importance of cultivating meaningful childhood and school experiences may affect the development of professionals' identities. In this study, the school administrators reported having mostly positive rather than negative experiences in their childhood in the schools. Although some participants described teachers not embracing the Spanish language and their names, facing alienation, and having menial expectations for learning, these practices did not stop them from succeeding. In some ways, the teachers' contrary practices could have suggested their lack of racial and ethnic preferences regarding their cultures and family teaching. However, the interactions and interventions with the parents were limited. Many seemed to be aware of mainstream institutions' cultures in describing their childhoods (Murakami et al., 2018). As a result, the Latina administrator's identities were impacted more by their early childhood experiences.

The impact of race and ethnicity is perceived differently by Latina/o in their leadership roles. The Latina/o school administrators (61%) reported that race and ethnicity positively impacted their roles as leaders in the schools. The participants described how understanding the cultures, experiences, and languages allowed them to engage with the students and serve as role models. The participants also explained that working as leaders did not influence their interactions with students of other races. They tended to focus on individual behaviors rather than on their race. Research has shown that some Latinas/os tend not to make racial and ethnic differences (Murakami et al., 2018). Latina administrators tend to focus on the individual rather than on their race.

The role of mentoring can immensely assist in advancing professionals along career paths in leadership. According to Murakami et al. (2018), over 75% of the participants described the impact of having mentors and role models in their development as school administrators, including on styles of leadership. Some identified themselves as having "democratic" styles of leadership and others as autocratic leaders. The mentors and role models profoundly impacted their development, experiences, earnings, and desire to pursue career paths in school leadership. Murakami et al. reported in the study that the salaries and earnings of the Latina/o males and females did not differ. The researchers concluded the benefits of having mentors and role models can play a significant role in helping to develop Latina/o leaders and should not be frowned upon but encouraged to change race and ethnic relations in the school system and pipelines.

Traditional leadership research and practices may impact the development of culturally diverse educators and leaders. The previous research literature on leadership

has excluded the experiences of women and those of different cultures and has disconnected them from their backgrounds and contributions (Curtis, 2017). Black feminism and critical race theory frameworks in this study also enabled the researcher to bridge traditional views on leadership with the present knowledge of their multiple identities and cultures. The identities and the cultures of Black women have not received much respect because of their hair braiding and styles, accents, selection of clothing, cultured foods, and spiritualties. Black women's acceptance in mainstream social, historical, economic, and political cultures is limiting, and aligning with these realities has enhanced resilience. Black women leaders and educators have used forms of resistance to become advocates in their fields and are known for paving the way for other women as survivors (Collins, 2009; Curtis, 2017; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017). Embracing resiliency had helped the women develop positive leadership attributes.

Curtis (2017) contended that research disconnections left gaps and limitations in the leadership scholarship on White women and Black women at the intersections of race, gender, class, and other socio-cultural, historical, and political factors that attributed to their oppression. Similarly, Hannum et al. (2015) emphasized that past research practices did more injustice than fairness to the stories and descriptions of women in leadership roles because of male preferences. The exclusion of the experiences of women in leadership has impacted their contributions and histories.

Curtis had also built on her 2014 study that examined the experiences of eight Black women leaders and educators at the intersections of their race, gender, class, and other social dynamics. The perspectives of Black feminism and critical race theory

framed the study to understand the experiences of Black women through five phases of

data collection that included first and final interviews, focus groups, discussion walks,

and quilting. Black feminism and critical race theory frameworks in this study also

enabled the researcher to bridge traditional views on leadership with the present

knowledge of their multiple identities and cultures (Carroll, 2017; Curtis, 2017). This

study's frameworks helped fill the gap between the past and present research on women

leaders.

      Three themes emerged from the counter-narratives on their experiences of

isolation and silencing and barriers advancing in leadership and cultural community

intuitions. The emergent theme on Black women's experiences impacting them the most

was their counter-narratives on cultural insights and competence (Curtis, 2017). The

Black women leaders and educators had used their cultural competencies to navigate

spaces in leading community children and family services and educational programs. The

women told stories of the barriers to delivering services to children and families in

communities where challenges against their race, gender, values, beliefs, and spiritualties

empowered them to advocate for their communities. They functioned as social justice

advocates to challenge the injustices and dominant structures using their cultural insights

as wealth.

      The leadership styles of Black women leaders may affect how mainstream

cultures perceive their identities and cultures. The emergent theme that also emanated

from this study to describe Black women's identities and cultures in leadership included

possessing distinctive bicultural qualities and skills to successfully switch between

cultures (Curtis, 2017). Curtis (2017) and Apugo (2019) found that switching between cultures may affect the social and psychological aspects of managing individual identities in mainstream cultures. These skills provided the women with distinct privileges and abilities to navigate cultural communities and develop mutual engagements and relationships.

Mentoring Women in Leadership Paths

The lack of women and women of color in higher-level roles presents challenges and barriers for early-career women aspiring to senior leadership in higher education institutions. Hill and Wheat's (2017) qualitative study focused on women's experiences in higher education and the influences of mentors and role models in their advancement to presidencies. A feminist and postmodern framework conceptualizes the voices of the women's experiences, aspirations, and importance of mentors, role models, and gendered relationships in this study. The purpose of feminist and postmodern qualitative interview methods is to provide underrepresented women with a voice to share unknown aspects of their life experiences and broaden the perspectives of dominant research structures (Hill & Wheat, 2017). A total of 40 women received email invitations, and 16 were selected to participate in the study, including 14 White women and 2 Black women.

Criterion sampling strategies were employed to locate women in Carnegie classified research universities with masters' and doctoral degrees and experience in senior administrative level roles such as deans, vice presidents, provosts, and presidents. The majority of the participants had postgraduate degrees, middle-age, and 20 years of professional work experience. The participants responded to semistructured and in-depth

interview protocol questions conducted in-person and over the phone (Hill & Wheat, 2017). Hill and Wheat (2017) found that role models and mentors did not significantly advance women's career paths. The advancement of women in careers may include the influence of multiple constituents.

The benefit of having mentors and role models may impact women in the workplace. Furthermore, Hill and Wheat (2017) found how (a) gender role differences impacted women and (b) the informal conversations with role models and mentors were inspirational; they also highlighted the benefits of having role models and mentors. The researchers concluded that there is a lack of mentors in senior executive leadership roles and women at those levels who could become mentors and role models. Moreover, this has caused a disproportionate representation of males compared to females as mentors, role models, and leadership generation gaps in universities. Lastly, they concluded that the women relied on their agencies to a large extent to gain advanced education, credentials, and training, and capitalized from the informal and formal mentors and role models in advancing to senior executives and resisted institutional barriers. Therefore, there is also a need for women in leadership to become mentors and role models for aspiring leaders in universities.

The research on women of color in higher education and movement to leadership roles has not been sizeable in the literature. Women of color have made positive strides in their pursuit of terminal degrees, which have more than tripled. While some hold faculty and president roles, they remain few in numbers (Mainah & Perkins, 2015). After reviewing research documents, publications, and reports from regulatory agencies on

women of color, much alluded to social, economic, and political debasement that is

present in their lives. The authors found that women of color lack inclusion privileges to

social networks, mentors, and sponsors and chances for increased responsibilities. The

economics of women of color focuses on their controversies with race and gender at work

on compensation, biases, stereotypes, and prejudices that have resulted in an

unprecedented number of legal interventions. Policymakers and commissions designed

several interventions to protect women in the workplace and civil rights, such as the

(EEOC, 2017a; 2017b), Equal Pay Act of 1963, Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, and

Title IX and Sex Discrimination Acts (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In politics,

women of color voices have not been a factor in developing laws, policies, and

procedures for their protection (Mainah & Perkins, 2015). They concluded that their

voices in higher education, business, and corporate structure matters where decision and

rule-making preside in male-dominated cultures were lacking.

The role of mentoring may positively impact the advancement of women of color

in higher education. According to researcher scholars, the role of mentoring has been a

determining factor for the successful advancement of women of color leaders in higher

education institutions (Tran, 2014). Tran (2014) explored the mentoring experiences of

women of color leaders working in highly-ranked diverse Hispanic-serving institution

(HSIs) systems and the impact on their current roles, and how they perceived informal

and formal mentor practices developing as leaders. The systems comprised 36,000

students, where 31% were White, 29% Latinos, 21% Asian, and 3% African American

and had the highest degree attainments. The qualitative phenomenological approach used

in this study explored the mentoring experiences of four women of color who self-identified as Chinese, Latina, Black, African American, and Indigenous and as former or present chancellors, presidents, vice presidents, and directors. The women of color in leadership served in public and private colleges and universities. At the time of the study, one of the criteria involved having full-time status at an HSI. In this study, Tran (2014) also wanted to explore women of color leaders who worked in HSIs and not PWIs because previous research had focused mainly on their experiences.

The four women of color leaders participated in 30- to 90-minute semistructured interviews conducted mostly in-person and captured the four themes that emerged from this study. The four themes that captured their mentoring experiences, roles, and professional development included experiencing a lack of clarity, taking the initiative, and realizing the continuity and the multiple dimensions of the mentoring process (Tran, 2014). The last theme resonated and focused on the multiple dimensionalities of mentoring. It had implications for inspiring higher education institutions to consider developing informal and formal mentoring programs that understand who needs mentoring and their pathways. This particular theme became focal because of the multiple ways a participant told of her informal and formal encounters with mentoring, such as with extended and immediate family members, the older women at church, colleagues, and bosses. The participants expressed that mentoring (a) involved movement, (b) was not stagnant, and (c) could lead to transformation at all levels in organizations (Tran, 2014). Mentoring may affect the development of institutional policies and practices for the advancement of employees.

The women of color expressed their individual experiences with mentoring and development as leaders at the HSIs. The women discussed their unique experiences of having mentors from diverse races and ethnicities, males and females, and participation in the American Association State Colleges and Universities Millennium Leadership Initiatives for those aspiring to become presidents. These individual experiences also included being solicited in action because of their talents and feelings of exclusion. Tran concluded that institutions should consider diverse workforce needs in planning for the future, although women of color have some of the same experiences as leaders (Tran, 2014). The understanding of diversity in the workplace will be helpful for leaders in the future.

Summary and Conclusions

The research literature on the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs, those in other professions, and as students is limited. The majority of the research studies have focused on African American women's experiences, challenges, and barriers in leadership. Also, the bulk of the research studies on women in leadership in higher education has explored them as homogenous and not at the intersection of race and gender. The two conceptual frameworks of interest and constructs and methodologies examined Black feminist thought and intersectionality were scarce on women of color in leadership roles in PWIs.

The intersections of women of color in leadership paths have crossed disciplines in higher education and industry. Specifically, the intersections of women have problematized the experiences of African American women's senior executive roles in

higher education (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; DBPI, 2017; Gray et al., 2018). Moreover, intersections have been problematic for African American, Asian American, Latina/o school administrators (Angel et al., 2013; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Murakami et al., 2018), those in government leadership roles (Lien, 2015), corporations (Beckwith et al., 2016), and men and women deans (Brower et al., 2019). They also have impacted African American faculty and administrators of color (Henry & Glenn, 2009; Jones et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2016; Razzante, 2018) at PWIs, women of color in other professions, and students in STEM (McGee, 2018; McGuire et al., 2016; Ong et al., 2018; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2019). A few studies have focused on the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs and fewer on those who have successfully advanced to the presidency (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gasman et al., 2015). This study will help fill this gap by focusing on the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs.

In Chapter 3, a qualitative research approach to examine the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs and their perceptions on the intersection of race and gender and mentoring will assist in capturing those complexities and fill that gap in the research literature. This section will involve discussions on the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, and methodologies and include the participant selection logic and instrumentation. The procedures for recruitment, participation, and collection of the interview data and analyzing the data, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures will conclude this section along with a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In Chapter 3, I describe the research method I used to further understanding of the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. I begin this chapter by restating the RQs. The chapter also includes a discussion of the rationale for the research design; the researcher's role; and the methodology, including the participant selection logic; instrumentation; and the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Chapter 3 also includes information on the data analysis plan and discussion of issues related to trustworthiness and ethical procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The three RQs posed for this qualitative study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs?

RQ2: How do women of color describe their experiences with race and gender in leadership paths at PWIs?

RQ3: How do women of color in leadership roles describe their mentoring experiences working at PWIs?

A basic qualitative study involves strategies for understanding the experiences and perspectives of participants related to a phenomenon of interest. Through interviewing, researchers can obtain information about individuals' experiences from their perspectives (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The use of interviewing as a strategy in this study was motivated by a desire to understand the experiences of women of color in

leadership paths at PWIs, specifically about the intersection of race and gender and the role of mentoring. The interviews provided a chance for participants to share their experiences in a story-telling manner.

Qualitative research offers several approaches for researchers and serves different purposes in examining the research problem. I selected the basic qualitative study based on the desire to understand the experiences of the phenomenon of interest under investigation (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). I felt that the women of color in leadership roles could best address and share their experiences and perspectives working at PWIs. The phenomenological approach focuses on understanding participants' experiences through direct observations and extensive interviews (Patton, 2015). The phenomenological approach was not appropriate based on the time needed to complete the interviews and observe the participants individually. This approach would have also been challenging because the informants may not have been able to commit to interviewing and observations for prolonged periods. The participants sought for this study mostly work in high-demand positions where time is limited.

The narrative design is another qualitative approach that was not suitable based on how I intended to capture participants' stories. The narrative approach focuses on capturing the experiences of participant stories and then putting them in the interviewer's words. The challenges with this approach depend on the researcher's interpretation, which sometimes does not agree with that of the participants (Blustein et al., 2013). Narrative approaches could also produce challenges for researchers because interviews

may be unstructured (Blustein et al., 2013). Unstructured interviews did not work for this study because of the construction of the RQs.

Another design that I considered but opted against using was grounded theory. A grounded theory approach would include going into the interviewee's world to understand their experiences (Patton, 2015). The intention of the grounded theory approach is to develop systems to engage in the participants' real world and generate new theories (Patton, 2015). The plans for this qualitative research did not consist of generating any new theory from participants' experiences. Case studies and ethnographies were not appropriate due to the time constraints of the study; the former involves collecting multiple data and the latter, immersing oneself in the participants' culture (Creswell, 2014). These two qualitative approaches consist of spending substantial time at locations and doing observations that may not have been preferential for the participants. The basic qualitative research approach was appropriate based on the identified problem, questions, and purpose of the research.

Role of the Researcher

The research topic is associated with my personal and professional experiences working in higher education institution leadership as an African American woman. As a professional in leadership and supervisory capacities, I understood power differentials in the workplace. The same emphasis in this study required a balance between the interviewer's role and that of the participants. I believed that managing those balances would be based on having similarities and backgrounds of the participants. Therefore, I was careful not to impose any personal interests when extending invitations and

recruiting the participants on professional women's leadership Linkedin networks and public websites and through referrals. My role as a researcher involved engaging and reflecting on all aspects of this qualitative study and explaining the research purpose, interview protocol, informed consent, and plans to protect their privacy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Moreover, I explained the plans for transcribing and coding the interview data, developing themes, interpreting the participants' information, and reporting findings. The purpose of interviewing was not to exert or influence the participant but to share their experiences without judgment and biases.

My professional experience has included memberships and roles in women of color foundations, conferences and summits, national and local business chambers, and science organizations. The personal and professional affiliations also includes roles in colleges and universities and social media groups. Presently, I do not work in the same workplace settings as any prospective participants, nor have I served as their supervisor. A determination to use incentives may also have assisted in attracting individuals to participate. However, the use of incentives was not an option for this study. The decision to participate in the study was based on the participants' choice alone and not coercion tactics. The participants received consent information about their rights before the interviews and had a chance to provide input or decline. After the study, the participants received gift cards to thank them.

Methodology

This section of Chapter 3 includes discussions on the methodology used for the study. I explain the rationale for the research design, the role of the researcher, and the

methods. I discuss the participant selection logics, instrumentation strategies, procedures

for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and the data analysis plan. This section

concludes with a discussion of issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Participant Selection Logic

Researchers have examined various qualitative research sampling approaches for

interviews. Purposeful sampling allows researchers to collect rich and in-depth interview

data from experienced individuals who have the most knowledge in their fields (Patton,

2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, sampling refers to purposive rather than

purposeful (Patton, 2015). This study's key informants included women of color in

leadership paths at PWIs serving in administrative, executive, and managerial roles in the

United States. A population sample shared meaningful data for interviews in this

qualitative study (see Patton, 2015).

In this study, I used purposive sampling to identify 13 women of color who

served as informants for interviews in higher education institutions, professional clubs

and organizations, and Linkedin. Purposive sampling is an approach for qualitative

research that offers the researcher opportunities to recruit relevant informants based on

their experiences, influences, and expertise in their fields (Patton, 2015). By using this

sampling technique (vs. random sampling), researchers may be able to recruit a sample

that is more representative of the population and ensure adequate findings (Maxwell,

2009). I also used snowball sampling to recruit participants. Using this technique, the

researcher makes contact with individuals (e.g., through informal meetings, professional

conferences, and seminars or on social media) who may set up meetings and

introductions with others who may be interested in the study (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The sample was reasonable considering the research problem, purpose, and RQs for the study (Creswell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The participating women of color were recruited solely based on their ability to answer the RQs as professionals. Those selected participated in 45- to 60-minute semistructured interviews over a 4-month period. The interview process included Zoom video recordings, member checks, debriefs, and follow-up interviews. I intended to interview the women over 2 months but extended the time frame due to schedule conflicts and unforeseen circumstances. My committee chair and I agreed that the extension could result in more rich data. Data saturation from interviewing happens when there is no more new information or contributions (Creswell, 2016; Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010; Patton, 2015).

Instrumentation

In this qualitative research, I sought to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. Qualitative research provides the best practices for interviewing participants and understanding how they describe and apply meaning to their lives (Creswell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2012). In this study, I explored women of color's experiences in leadership paths through interviews. Participants shared their perspectives on leading and advancing at PWIs, including on the intersection of race and gender concerns and the role of mentoring in leadership. Seidman (2012) emphasized that understanding individuals' experiences through interviewing is preferable in making meaning rather than other methods. The purpose of interviews is to help individuals tell

their stories and not just respond to a series of questions (Seidman, 2012). Therefore, interviewing was the best approach for this study based on exploring the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs.

The interview protocol stemmed from the purpose and RQ for this qualitative study. According to scholars, the central RQ and the subquestions should inform the development of the interview questions (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). The interview protocol is in the Appendix. Interview protocols provide researchers with more uniform approaches for their inquiries and simplify and structure the interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Patton, 2015). I drew from the literature in creating the three RQs for this study (see Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The questions also provided overall guidance for this study.

Hill and Wheat (2017) examined the role of mentoring and the impact on African American women in leadership roles. Their interview protocol focused on capturing participants' experiences with mentors and role models. By conducting semistructured interviews, the researchers were able to collect thick and rich data from the participants. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), these interviews enable researchers to explore data content, consult with their peers, and keep journals for audit trails. Moreover, the use of semistructured interviews allows researchers to engage in reflexivity and establish credibility and dependability (Hill & Wheat, 2017). The use of proper research techniques and practices can impact a study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Before recruiting participants and collecting interview data, Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires that researchers follow certain practices and mandates for approvals. The process ensures that protected groups and plans for handling, storage, and destroying their interview information appear in recruitment plans. The participants received the informed consent form outlining this information before committing to interviews. Data collected from participant interviews were password-protected and stored on a laptop; recordings and transcripts were secured on a disk.

The participants received an email invitation with information explaining the study's purpose. They also received informed consent forms describing their rights—the right to refuse, withdraw, and not answer questions during the interviews (Patton, 2015). Informed consent discusses the potential participant rights, protection, privacy, information about the interviewing, and permission to withdraw. Participants have a right to review the transcripts, know about audio-tapings, and decline interviews (Patton, 2015). They should also receive instructions on following up, concluding comments, and changing their wording in interviews. Moreover, participants should know that to hold the research to the highest standards that peer debriefs and interactions will occur to produce credibility for the study (Patton, 2015). Debriefing can add to the credibility of qualitative research studies.

The data collection method used for this qualitative inquiry was a semistructured interview approach to gather the experiences of 13 women of color in leadership paths at PWIs in the United States. The qualitative inquiry can give the marginalized and

underrepresented a voice in sharing their experiences who do not ordinarily receive the chance (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Selzer et al., 2017). The 45- to 60-minute semistructured interviews provided participants some latitude for responding to semistructured interview questions using an interview protocol. The development of interview protocols can prepare the way for obtaining the richness and in-depth quality needed from interviewing participants (Creswell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocol helped to keep the interviewer and participants on track during interviews. My plan was to conduct phone and face-to-face meetings and use electronic media such as Zoom meetings for interviewing over two to three months, including the follow-ups. Menial phone conversations occurred to further clarify their availability for interviews and any technical difficulties.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the plans were interrupted due to governmental mandates regarding in-person meetings for qualitative research studies. The IRB approved the study in late November, and interviews started in December and ended in May. I solely conducted the interviews and used Zoom meetings for recordings, observations, closed captioning, and transcription functions. The limited research studies on video conferencing have not fully captured the advantages and disadvantages of Zoom. Researchers caution against reliance based on the potential for bias and not being able to capture nuanced observations (Archibald et al., 2019). Zoom meetings also served as a platform for informal and formal introductions, informed consent clarifications, and the scheduling of interviews. The data collected was securely stored from the participant interviews in cloud recordings of Zoom for their privacy and protection. After

interviewing, I transcribed the data verbatim and emailed their transcripts for member checking. To thank participants, I sent Amazon gifts cards upon completion.

The researchers and the participants in qualitative studies become active participants during the interview process. Researchers emphasized that Zoom helped individuals develop positive interactions, global access capabilities, and ways to streamline travel budgets (Archibald et al., 2019). Scheduling interviews and the reluctance to disclose information were not factors for such high-profile women. The interview process was the preferred method of data collection because of its unique nature; it gave the participants a chance to provide in-depth information. In qualitative research, questions are open-ended, easy to understand, and have neutral grounds. I anticipated that these women leaders would provide rich information and interviews based on their extensive backgrounds and experiences, contributing validity and credibility to the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis in qualitative research is a process that relies on the researcher to manipulate and arrange information for understanding and making sense of the data collected. I explored three RQs on women of color's experiences in leadership roles, intersections of race and gender, and mentoring. The analysis of data in qualitative research is the researcher's responsibility, who determines how to manage, interpret, validate, and provide evidence of the findings (Creswell, 2014). These processes preferably happen in data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2009). Simultaneously, during this process, they separate and dissect the text that may not be

useful for the study (Creswell, 2014). Data analysis can help researchers and participants to understand research studies.

The researcher also collects, transcribes, organizes, and sorts information retrieved from interviews to develop themes and patterns by creating codes and categories. The summary of the data through analysis is a significant part of the research and has resulted in meaningful information from participants after collecting data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended six processes for the conception of the data that I analyzed:

1. Reflect on the purpose of the study.

2. Conceptualize the framework as a lens, for instance, in post-structural feminisms, to see power structures, life experiences, and intersections of class, race, and gender.

3. Focus on the research purpose and the questions, texts, and open-code data.

4. Retrospectively seek to consider the themes that emerge.

5. Repeat the process in Step three.

6. Develop the categories to decrease the number of codes and make constant comparisons.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), Steps four through six reflect on any biases and positionalities and follow them through the research process. Patton (2015) included similar steps in using a 12-step approach to connect with the data. The proper steps taken to design research studies can have a positive impact on the findings.

A basic approach to qualitative research is data analysis and the coding of the data collected; researchers are responsible for the coding, whether it is by hand or computer (Creswell, 2014). Due to limited qualitative software research experience and perceived time-consumption of the learning process, the two qualitative data analysis software programs reviewed were NVivo and Atlas.ti. These programs provided features to interface with Microsoft to import and export data (Boston University, n.d.). NVivo was the most promising for coding because of the satisfaction and strength reported by customers. Both programs offered features for inputting data from documents, and NVivo provided video, audio, and transcription functionality. Due to the proposed time constraints as a novice, I decided against the use of NVivo. Instead, I coded the data verbatim immersing myself as an active researcher. I used Microsoft Excel Video Coding Document Template (Laureate Education, Inc., 2016) to code data from the Zoom transcriptions and transcribed them verbatim to organize cases, categories, themes, and patterns.

Data analysis is also composed of two processes in qualitative research and for reviewing data of the participants. The first involved inductive analysis and includes how data becomes themes, patterns, and categories through the information (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The second entailed a deductive analysis where predetermined concepts and theories back up the themes (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) discussed that discrepant cases might appear that do not support the themes and categories; however, to my knowledge, I did not identify any discrepant cases in particular for the study. The two processes in data analysis can lead the researcher to

experience how qualitative research data emerge (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015).

Qualitative research and data analysis is an iterative process.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness issues in qualitative studies involve ensuring allegiances to the participants and researcher experiences in the research process. The researcher plays a role in implementing the research's internal and external validity aspects (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Internal validity involves examining the credibility of research studies through triangulation, such as conducting member checks, debriefing with peers, and providing thick descriptions of the interview data and reflections (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). External validity ensures that transferability issues focus on the qualitative aspects rather than the quantitative understanding of the research. The same qualitative reasoning applies to those of dependability and confirmability. In this study, I addressed the issues of trustworthiness in the research process.

I established the credibility of this qualitative study by implementing member checks to ensure that the participants' experiences represented their interview data. The member checks can also enhance the research process by allowing the participants to comment on their interview transcripts, interpretations, and findings for clarification. Conducting member checks enables researchers to establish relationships with the participants and reflections and welcome alternative perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The practice of member checks can bring credibility to the research process when scheduled between the researcher and the participants and follow-up.

Furthermore, the feedback from the participants and peers can help make improvements to the research methods. According to Patton (2015), triangulation helps bring credibility when multiple parties' perspectives are involved in the reflexivity and reporting of the findings. After the interviews, the participants received a summary of their transcripts for member checks, and the majority responded, providing further meaning to the study. I also shared and discussed reflections on the interviews with the committee chair, and we both determined that saturation had occurred. Applying triangulation in studies can provide a broader perspective on approaches.

The transferability of a study involves understanding the application of the research design. The research design's transferability pertains to the specific intentions of addressing the topic under investigation and not the considerations for generalizations. The purpose of qualitative research studies is to understand the experiences of individuals under investigation through interviewing (Patton, 2015). The qualitative aspects of research are context-specific, and by using questions, the interviewer seeks to collect thick information data from the participants from their perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In qualitative interviewing, the participants' stories may be different based on their experiences and perspectives and subjected to the interpretation and analysis of the researcher and findings.

Consequently, I relied on member checks and feedback to understand the relevance to the context, which pertains to the study's frameworks and goals. Shenton (2004) presented an analysis of scholars' perspectives on transferability. Some had concerns over the context, while others justified their rationale for considering the

practice. Shenton concluded that the context of the study in cases of transferability is necessary. The aspects of qualitative research are unique to individual studies.

The dependability of the qualitative study includes developing a justification for the consistent use of methodologies. I used an interview protocol in this study to capture the experiences and perspectives of the women of color in leadership paths on their intersections and mentoring relationships. The participants received the same interview questions; however, their responses may not have been similar due to their individual experiences and perspectives.

The confirmability of qualitative research studies stems from understanding how researchers arrive at their findings. A significant amount of reflexivity is necessary for the researcher to understand the research process and ensure that others can also (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). In this qualitative research, I practiced reflexivity by journaling to evaluate any preconceptions and biases that may influence the interpretations of the participants' interviews, analysis, themes, and findings. The dissertation committee for this study provided the guidance needed to meet high-quality research standards. These standards were necessary for the development of this study.

Ethical Procedures

Participants in this qualitative study were not accessed until after the proposal's completion and IRB approval. Researchers must complete Walden University's Form A online, adhere to the instructions set forth by the IRB, URR, and consult with chairs and doctoral committees (Laureate International Universities, 2020). The application and agreements included information that pertained to the collection of research data,

methods, sites, and participants and were subject to COVID-19 modifications (Laureate International Universities, 2020). Several requirements are also mandated, such as responses to vulnerable populations' treatment in the study. Researchers have emphasized that addressing possible harm is a continual and ethical practice (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and agreed that the researchers' role is to ensure participants understand the benefits and risks of the studies. The informed consent form detailed the benefits and risks of participating in this study.

The dissemination of recruitment materials for the study did not begin until the IRB granted approval. I used purposive sampling approaches to recruit women of color in leadership at PWIs through phone contacts, emails, invitations, and social media. The IRB at Walden University recommends that researchers consider alternatives to participant recruitment due to the possibility of limited sample numbers. Social media has become a valuable technology; however, researchers' concerns about confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy are also factors (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I used pseudonyms to protect the research participants' confidentiality and privacy of their data, records, files, and correspondences in this study. The participants received informed consent forms and invitations to participate in the study. Informed consent forms allow researchers to establish relationships with the participants, where information on the purpose, expectations, time, and right to refuse and to withdraw or not answer questions are shared (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Due to COVID-19, pandemic modifications were made to the IRB application to address social distancing restrictions and included invitations and informed consent forms. These

restrictions have remained in effect, and researchers must use electronic media formats (Laureate International Universities, 2020).

Data management systems can impact the way interviews are stored and retrieved in research. Moreover, these systems are necessary to maintain the participants' privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, although challenging (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I stored the data collected from the interviews in separate computer files and assigned pseudonyms. I also stored hand-written notes in folders, locked in drawers, and transcripts on the Zoom cloud recordings. The interviewee transcripts were made available after interviews for the review and results of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participants did not receive an incentive to participate; however, I provided Amazon gift cards to thank them for participating. Researchers have claimed that incentives for research studies are not recommended (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Summary

Chapter 3 focused on the purpose and plans for researching women's experiences and perceptions in leadership, their intersections, and mentoring at PWIs. In the chapter, I discussed the design of qualitative studies and the rationale for answering the RQs and addressing the problem. The chapter also included an explanation of the researcher's role, how it applies to this study's preferred methodologies, the logic of purposive sampling, selection of the participants, and data saturation. Additionally, Chapter 3 highlighted the instrumentation strategies, the interview protocol and RQs, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness issues to ensure that the methods to collect data meet ethical research

standards and practices. The results of these strategies will be discussed in more detail in

Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership roles such as high-level administrators, deans, directors, and senior executive level leaders at PWIs. Some of those experiences and perceptions focus on the intersection of race, gender, and mentoring. In Chapter 4, I present the results, including thematic patterns, of this study based on the RQs. Chapter 4 also includes sections on the setting, demographics, data collection and analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

The three RQs I sought to answer in this qualitative study were

RQ1: What are the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs?

RQ2: How do women of color describe their experiences with race and gender in leadership pathways at PWIs?

RQ3: How do women of color in leadership roles describe their mentoring experiences working at PWIs?

Setting

The interviews occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, all were conducted via Zoom meetings. The interviews' settings were the participants' created workspaces at their homes, mostly with images of their institutions, beach scenes, and social justice as their chosen backdrops. Due to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) mandates for social distancing and adherence to institutional guidelines for research students (Laureate International, 2020), face-to-face meetings were not permissible. The 45- to 60-minute semistructured interviews occurred on Zoom

after the participants consented and received brief introductions on the format and

recording of the interviews. The researchers had suggested that Zoom platforms were

preferable over face-to-face meetings by the participants from different regions

interviewed (Archibald, 2019). The participating women were relaxed, respectful, shared

their stories in secure environments without interruptions, and easily navigated Zoom. I

conducted the interviews similarly in the privacy of a home office. The office space

provided security and was free from noise distractions. I used a dedicated laptop to test

the camera, background, recording, and transcript functions to ensure readiness before the

interviews. I sought to minimize disruptions and focus on verbal and nonverbal cues. The

closed captioning enabled me to view transcriptions in real-time, and the transcripts were

saved and printed for review.

Demographics

A total of 13 women of color participated in the study: seven African Americans,

two Asian Americans, one Hispanic and one Latina, and two Native Americans. Three

African American women serve in university presidencies. Only one of the presidents

had more than (5-10 years of experience). The majority of the participants primarily have

experience working in PWIs. Eleven of the women had attained doctoral degrees, one

had a master's, and another's highest degree was a bachelor's. The participating women

of color served in leadership roles, including associate provosts, deans, interim chairs and

interim deans, vice presidents, directors, and managers. Some of the women who served

as deans also served in teaching and professorship roles. The participants worked at

private and public 4-year and doctoral research granting institutions and community

colleges in the United States. The majority of these institutions are in the Midwest and

Northeast; one was in the Southeast region. Seven participants mentioned that they were

married and had school-aged children, and only one had an infant. The majority were

women of middle age except for three. Table 1 presents the demographics of the

participants.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Title	Region	Institution	Degree attainment	Years	Race and ethnicity	Age
Mary	Administrative Director	Midwest	PSU	Ph.D.	<1-5	Latina	45-65
Elizabeth	Executive Director	Midwest	ASC	Ph.D.	<1-5	African American	45-65
Sarah	Associate Provost and Dean	Northeast	DSC	Ph.D.	<1-5	African American	45-65
Miriam	Center Director	Midwest	RSC	Masters	>10	Native American	45-65
Bethany	Associate Vice President	Northeast	ESU	Bachelors	<1-5	Asian American	45-65
Lydia	Research Manager and Instructor	Southeast	BSU	Ph.D.	<1-5	Asian American	25-45
Clement	President	Northeast	PSC	Ph.D.	>6-10	African American	65+
Esther	Director/Career Center and Professional Development	Midwest	PESC	Ph.D.	<1-5	Hispanic	25-45
Deborah	Dean Special Assistant to the President/Diversity Equity and Inclusion	Midwest	BDCC	Ph.D.	<1-5	African American	45-65
Ruth	President	Midwest	ACC	Ed.D.	<1-5	African American	45-65
Priscilla	President	Midwest	JACC	Ph.D.	>1-5	African American	45-65
Euodia	Associate Professor, Interim Chair, Associate Dean of Inclusive Excellence	Northeast	RBU	Ph.D.	>10	Native American	45-65
Faith	Interim Dean and Vice President	Northeast	CRC	Ph.D.	<1-5	African American	45-65

Data Collection

A total of 13 women of color responded to questions from the interview protocol.
The data collection process started when I received approval from the IRB (approval #11-
25-20-058). The interview protocol designed for the study helped capture participating
women of color's experiences in leadership paths at PWIs. In addition, it captured the key
informants' experiences and perspectives at the intersection of race and gender and
mentoring at PWIs. I used LinkedIn, a professional network, and public websites to
identify women of color in leadership roles at PWIs. The women received email
invitations, consent forms, and flyers requesting their participation in the study.
Participants received Zoom meeting schedules and a link after consenting, along with a
demographic profile document. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews took
place through Zoom meetings, which was ideal due to the participants' locations
throughout the United States.

Each participant engaged in a 45- to 60-minute semistructured recorded
interviews that adhered to the interview protocol. During the data collection process, I
asked some participants to provide names of potential participants, following the
snowballing method of acquiring participants (Patton, 2015). After the conclusion of the
interviews, the participants received transcript summaries through email to engage in
member checks for accuracy. Several exchanges through email helped solidify most
participant meanings based on the rich data collected. The data collection process lasted
from early December 2020 to late March 2021. The majority responded promptly and

scheduled their interviews while a few had projects they were managing, deadlines, and extenuating circumstances, extending the data collection process to late March.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process consisted of following the six-step process identified in Chapter 3, which, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described, moves inductively from codes to themes, patterns, and categories. I transcribed the interview recordings line by line and later, provided participants with summaries. The time-stamped interview transcripts from the Zoom meetings were marked as I reflected on the research problem, purpose, conceptual frameworks, and questions. While simultaneously focusing on the possible codes through the open coding process, I focused on the three primary RQs to extract pertinent excerpts from the data to individual participant spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel for coding, organization, retrievals, and sorting.

I noted similarities and differences in analyzing the data, which I coded accordingly. In transcribing words verbatim, I was able to see the similarities and differences in participants' experiences. I assigned colors to coded data and compared each participant's transcript and exchanges through member checks for accuracy, including reflexivity. I worked repetitiously transcribing the data to codes, categories, themes, and patterns. At the same time, I made meaning for this study, including checking positionalities and stances through the data analysis process. The data transcribed eventually formulated codes, categories, and themes used to describe cases for the study.

A total of 14 themes emerged from the data analysis from the three RQs along with categories and codes, respectively. Themes emerged from RQ1, the first RQ, describing the participants' experiences in leadership development and training programs, navigating the pathways, the multiple identities of women of color, and embracing intentionality. The encompassed emergent themes and patterns from RQ2 included the intersections of race and gender persisting through stereotypes and biases and tones of patriarchal enforcements and working in structured systems. While sifting through and making sense of the data extracted, words and phrases emerged into themes and patterns describing those experiences of women of color. The themes to describe those experiences that emerged from RQ3 included being sought-out mentors and role models, experiences of not having mentors, predominately White men as mentors, personal mentoring models, building networks with caution, and informal and formal mentoring. The data analysis process revealed similarities and differences in participant responses; however, discrepant cases did not evolve from the analysis. Table 2 provides the themes, categories, and codes from the RQs.

Table 2

Research Questions, Themes, Categories, and Codes

Research Question	Theme	Category	Code
RQ1	Experiences in leadership paths	Women of color, leadership roles, predominately White institutions	Leadership development, traditional and nontraditional paths, being the only one, male dominated spaces
RQ1	Navigating pathways	Knowing what to expect, proper planning, not anticipated	Unexpected paths, having the credentials of the academy, pigeonholing, positive and negative experiences, primarily White males, double whammy
RQ1	Multiple identities of women of color	Unique experiences, multiple identifications	Cultural uniqueness, solidarity practices, shared commonalities, mainstream ideologies
RQ1	Embracing intentionality	Self-confidence, purpose and intentions, empowerment	Speaking up, being intentional, self-empowerment, challenging the status quo

Research Question	Theme	Category	Code
RQ2	Intersection of race and gender	Negative aspects of intersections, disruptive v. positive behaviors, managing intersectionality	Intersectionality, angry Black women, lumping racial and ethnic groups, extra pressure, work twice as hard, operating in persuasive environments, status quo, being presumed incompetent, microaggressions, code switching, minimized, seat at the table, female friendly, silencing
RQ2	Persistent stereotypes and biases,	Indoctrinated practices, workplace interactions, experienced biases	Hair maintenance, race and gender bias, pigeonholing, Whitewash resumes
RQ2	Tones of patriarchal enforcements	Embedded controls, instilled patriarchies	Feeling undermined, invisible in meetings, isolations, lacking voices
RQ2	Working in structured environments	Structuralized components, treatment of others	Excluded from meetings, White privilege, tokenized, underestimated, marginalized

Research Question	Theme	Category	Code
RQ3	Sought out mentors and role models	Mentoring experiences	Family as mentors, mentoring students, faculty led programs, building reputation as mentors
RQ3	Experiences of not having mentors	Lack of mentors, locating mentors, self-mentoring	Nonexistent, zero to little, locating someone organically and intentionally
RQ3	Predominately White males mentors	White male mentors, limited selections	Your mentors had to be by definition White men, the mentor I wish I had, having to do much of the work
RQ3	Personal mentoring models	Specialized approaches, situational experiences	One on one mentoring, multiple situation based, women of color in higher level roles, staff members
RQ3	Building networks	Negative mentor experiences, finding supports	Cautionary steps, betrayals and intentions, mentoring supports, antithesis of mentoring
RQ3	Informal and formal mentoring	Need for transparency, mentor awareness	Internal and external constituents, secret sauce, hidden agendas, mainstream formal programs

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The research design entailed developing evidence of trustworthiness to ensure

accuracy. This involved constant interactions with the data in analyzing and reporting

findings. Those pieces of evidence included ensuring credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability throughout the study. Implementations and adjustments

to the strategies are described and discussed to reflect those described in Chapter 3.

Credibility

Credibility in this study was assured by ensuring participants received the same

questions on the interview protocol. Each participant contributed to understanding the

experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The

participants provided rich and thick responses to the interview questions. The majority

provided feedback on their interview summaries in response to member checks for

accuracy and included several iterations for clarity. Debriefings of the interview process

with my committee chair helped to encourage reflexivity. After the interviews, I

summarized the participant transcripts and requested member checks and debriefings

based on literature review and frameworks. Triangulation had become more exercisable.

Transferability

The transferability of qualitative research studies depends on the intent, purpose,

and questions to understand a phenomenon of interest. The phenomenon of interest is

research-specific and the individuals under investigation (Patton, 2015). In this study, key

informants helped to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at

PWIs in the United States. They shared their experiences and perspectives concerning the

intersection of race and gender and their mentoring experiences. Their responses, being contextually specific, made the study unique to this study. Although transferability may be possible based on applying the research design to other women's groups, the findings from this study are not generalizable.

Dependability

The interview protocol developed for the study helped through the data collection process to maintain consistency. The 13 participants in the study responded to the same interview questions to understand the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The participants' responses helped make sense of the phenomenon under investigation through data analysis, although findings revealed some similarities and differences. The majority had experienced similar concerns at the intersection of race and gender and mentoring. Words and phrases from their interviews formed themes and patterns representing their similarities and uniqueness.

Confirmability

Reflexivity helped in developing a researcher's positional stance to monitor biases from data collection to analysis. Through careful reflexivity and journaling, preconceived biases were monitored in participant interviews, transcribing, coding, and developing themes and patterns. I maintained an awareness of the maintenance of positionality attributed to being a woman of color that had worked in leadership roles at PWIs. My chair concurred and provided helpful recommendations in moving forward with reflexivity. Member checks and debriefings provided means to monitor biases ensuring confirmability.

Results

This qualitative study's overall focus was on understanding the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs, as posed in RQ1. Thirteen informants participated in the research and responded to 10 semistructured interview questions. Subsequently, the data extracted involved analyzing three RQs that included initially understanding the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The second RQ focused on the perspectives of women of color on their experiences with race and gender in leadership paths at PWIs. The third focused on how the women of color in leadership roles described their mentoring experiences at PWIs. Several themes emerged from the extracted data based on these RQs to support findings. In this section, the three RQs and supporting themes converged to describe the results' words, phrases, and quotations.

Research Question 1

The first RQ was, What are the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs? The majority shared their experiences in traditional and non-traditional leadership paths and perceptions of being the only one, working in male-dominated spaces, and asking for what they wanted. The traditional routes typically entailed serving as an assistant, associate, and full professor before obtaining tenure and having a PhD. Some of the participants had assumed in the traditional routes chair, dean, and senior administrative roles before the presidency. In some cases, the non-traditional route has involved taking entry-level roles in student services and advancing to mid-level positions with a PhD or professional degree. Some of the women also pursued PhDs,

leadership development, and training while working towards advancement. In the next section, I describe the themes that emerged from RQ1, leadership development and training programs, navigating the pathways, multiple identities of women of color, and embracing intentionality.

Theme 1: Leadership Development and Training Programs

The first theme entailed understanding the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership development and training programs. Three women had participated in the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Leadership Programs. They had attended Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Institute at Bryn Mawr, Harvard Graduate School of Education Trainings, and Kellogg Leadership Program. These women all had affirmative words and recommendations for aspiring young women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. They shared their similarities and differences successfully as trailblazers, advocates, and educators in leadership roles. For example, Clement had experiences participating in leadership development and training programs, including sharing perspectives on two signature programs, such as through Kellogg's leadership and the American Council of Education (ACE). The ACE provided several experiences and was designed for individuals perceived to become vice presidents or presidents in higher education leadership. It entails a lengthy nomination process to eventually get selected. Individuals are selected to participate in a year-long leadership program at another institution that entails "shadowing" and working with different administrative leaders, learning their styles, and through another lens. The institution was on the East Coast, and she had the opportunity to work with a White female provost and a

White male president. The work with the provost provided avenues for understanding how she worked with constituents, students, and the community. The provost had more of a "relational style" compared to the president but had similarities to the home institution president. Later she incorporated through assessments "what to do and not to do." This was encouraged in the leadership program. After having those experiences as an associate dean, she started having thoughts of becoming a president.

Additionally, Deborah had discovered that two of her colleagues received advancements. Although she had not, she stated, "You have to ask for what you want." Deborah later worked with a supportive boss, a member of the president's cabinet, who arranged a meeting between the two. The president mentioned that her work was not "unnoticed" and wanted to know her interest in attending a program for rising presidents at the Aspen Institute. Deborah was ecstatic when she stated:

> Just this week, my president asked me if I might be interested in the rising
>
> president program that is highly selective not sure I would even get into, but it's
>
> the Aspen. It's the same that she went to. As a president, they literally get, you
>
> know, four times more applications [than] they have spots. But she did ask me
>
> whether or not I would want to apply, and she said she would be happy to
>
> nominate me.

Deborah attended a leadership development and training program at Higher Education Resource Service (HERS) Institute at Bryn Mawr and, as a result, wanted to share those experiences with other women because it was transformative and empowering. Deborah mentioned that over 127 women had benefited from the leadership

program, and the cohorts still managed to get together to share their experiences. She

continued stating:

> And I was just so transformed by that experience that was way back in 2005, and
>
> I felt, you know, what I can do on campus to help others have that similar
>
> experience and advance their own leadership? I had the pleasure and privilege of
>
> creating a women's leadership program almost 12 years ago. I was one of six
>
> women who developed this program specifically to help women advance in
>
> higher education. It was modeled off a program I was sent to by my university,
>
> and that is the Bryn Mawr Summer Institute, which [HERS] developed.
>
> Furthermore, that was a month-long leadership institute for women who want to
>
> pursue the highest level possible, typically the vice presidency levels.

Another participant, Esther, had also participated in professional development and

training programs as a result of being told she was inarticulate in her profession. She

stated:

> I am a voracious devour of professional development because again when you
>
> lack a mentor, you have to seek out pretty much everything you can get your
>
> hands on, and so when I first started in the career field, it wasn't my background;
>
> [it] was more student affairs and student development. And so, when I entered
>
> into the Career Center, my boss actually told me within a couple of years that I
>
> was inarticulate when it came to talking about career development. And I was just
>
> like, oh, wow! You tell me that I'm going to change your mind. And so I went,
>
> and I took a [Global Career Development Facilitator] GCDF course, and I ended

up becoming an instructor, and I published articles in [National Association of Colleges and Employers] NACE and, I mean, I did all of these things because that's how I've grown up. Anybody who told me I [can't] do something, or I'm not good at something, that was exactly the impetus I needed to prove them wrong. And so now I look back at my boss. I don't mean to be rude, but I'm like, you haven't published in days; you are not GCDF trained. Like, you don't have these things. So you could never tell me that I'm inarticulate ever again! But it's that kind of activation that I have where anytime I see something coming through that's get this certification, get this training, read this or write this. Like right now, I'm putting together a blog for anyone who is starting a job search and relocating, virtually because these are all things that I did not know a lot of people had to do before, especially during a pandemic, and I'm like, well, if they don't want to read it, they don't have to, but I want to help other people who might have gone through this situation.

Five of the women had experiences in leadership and development programs representing their institutions and regional affiliations. Those experiences also included participating in specialized professional development and training and executive coaching. Ruth, for example, mentioned that she attended an executive leadership institute through the League of Innovation for Community Colleges, Kaleidoscope Leadership, and Mandel's year-long Leadership Program with executive search consultants that helped with resumes. Where over 100 people have graduated from the program, with Kaleidoscope being specifically for women of color. She stated that her

institution is "big on professional development." Participation in leadership development and training from Ruth's perspective seemed to be helpful and certainly will play a role in increasing the ratio of women presidents to 50% by 2030, which she stated is a goal of the American Council on Education Network.

Bethany had attended the Center for Creative Leadership and felt those programs were beneficial. On the other hand, Mary, Lydia, and Euodia described their accessibility to leadership and development programs at their institutions as challenging. Mary, for example, stated:

So we are part of the big ten academic Alliance [the entity] offers some opportunities for leadership training for example, but the people get to participate in that have to be nominated by Deans or department chairs at least in those, so that's kind of a leadership opportunity which I think is not very accessible because it has to do a lot of, who do you like. Who do I nominate? There's no merit in this; it is just about getting picked. I mean, of course, there's an application, and I guess you need to have a certain profile, but that is an opportunity, for example, that is not accessible to me.

Lydia, as a research manager, described her experiences of training students but not being on the receiving end when she stated:

But in my role, we haven't had like, institutional leadership training or anything like that. I'm not part of it.

Euodia also mentioned the challenges concerning the participation in leadership development and training programs and perceived it as:

You know, I haven't had any of that, and I still think it's an issue. I haven't had any that I've taken, so I've had no formal preparation. I don't think it comes with, you know, other than there's nobody really to, to help train at [the university]. I know that there's [sic] different places you can access that like in the National Center for faculty development and diversity as a program and I've you know tried to participate in that, and there's [sic] some other kinds of programs, but really nothing like that have I participated in personally.

Priscilla had the experience of receiving executive coaching as a result of her Chancellor, who wanted to build a successful team stating:

When my chancellor first got here, she wanted to build a team, so we had the opportunity to have an executive coach, and we have the opportunity to work on what we call rock drivers. And these were things that were impeding us from being our best self [sic]. And we had 100 days to work on it. And so I had a number of rock drivers. One was emotional intelligence, and my emotional intelligence is better now. But I will say that I had to work on it because I can really look at you if you say something stupid to me, and I will look at you like you said something stupid to me, and then I will probably say, "Did you just say something?" But now, I don't say it as quickly; I may say it in my hand. But I will say ... I will ask a different type of question. And so, being able to have that executive coaching has passed and was and still is, has been a great benefit for me.

Priscilla's chancellor also served as her champion in negotiating her salary for advancement and stated:

Um, so I'll say, I've not had a champion outside of my organization, but I have a champion inside of my organization, so when I was in negotiations for this position, they wanted to offer me the same salary that I had at my current job, and I was going to accept [it] to, and my new chancellor said, "No you're not, you're not going to accept that position because you are taking on more responsibilities." And I said, well, I'm okay with the risk; I'm more about the responsibilities and the role that I played versus the salary. And she said, "Well, I appreciate you being like that, but no, you are not going to accept that salary."

The women had experiences participating in leadership development and training programs. The participants were in leadership programs specific to their advancement, and a few mentioned their lack of participation and meeting challenges. In contrast, others focused on in-house training programs, executive coaching, and external societies and organizations related to women in leadership. Most suggested having career plans, knowing what you want, and building relationships with supervisors and bosses—several shared stories of being the only one and feeling isolated at their institutions. These women also had affirmative words and recommendations for aspiring young women of color in leadership career paths at PWIs. The women shared their similarities and differences successfully as trailblazers in leadership roles.

Theme 2: Navigating the Pathways

The second theme focused on navigating the pathways. The women described their experiences and perceptions navigating leadership pathways. Clement's experiences and perspectives focused on working in "five different historical PWIs," where the "student population and the presidents were Caucasians and the majority," thus, working with all White male presidents and principally White leadership. Having over three and a half decades of serving in faculty, administrative, chair, and dean roles in several United States regions, she also explained the historical experiences of working in PWIs leading from academia to provost and then to the presidency. She described taking the classic or "traditional route" and "not missing any steps on the ladder." However, she perceived it as "not as straightforward for other leaders."

Before becoming presidents Priscilla and Ruth served in entry-level and mid-level student service roles. Priscilla was a vice president at a predominately Black community college where she also had challenges; she stated, "I know how to get to the seat of the presidency." Ruth had no intentions of being in any other role except for student services. She reported being extremely satisfied, and she pursued an advanced degree. The majority shared commonalities in handling conflicts, racial and gender biases, champions and sponsors, and signature leadership development and training programs.

Elizabeth described her experiences and perceptions of navigating leadership pathways in PWIs as:

Yeah, right now, I am an Assistant Dean, and in my time at my current institution. I came in as an associate director, moved up to a director, and then moved to an Assistant Dean position. I think that being a woman of color in an institution that is predominately White definitely has a unique experience. I have the opportunity to work with other women or other people of color more than maybe some of the other disciplines. But even with that can be very isolating, and the more you move up the ranks, the number of people of color that you see sometimes is very limited.

Miriam described having positive experiences navigating roles and stated:

I've had very positive experiences. And I've also been able to see how women— my previous supervisors—how they've been able to navigate through their role, and it is a struggle you know you're having to consistently feel like you're juggling all the time. You're having to appease your administrators, who are many times "primarily White males."

Deborah discussed her 20 years of experience working at PWIs and a community college and perceived how experiences make differences. For instance, she had the perception earlier that avoiding "career traps" in entry-level roles such as admissions, financial aid, career services, and minority affairs departments was vital to the navigation of leadership pathways. For those seeking to advance regardless of their race and ethnicity, these roles can prevent individuals from assuming higher-level positions because of pigeonholing, which in institutions may lead to categorizing individuals based on stereotypes and their class for specific roles. In addition, the significance of obtaining

the proper credentials, such as a PhD, was essential for establishing credibility as a staff member and contending with faculty reservations and advancement. The explanation of "having the credentials of the academy" and being "intentional" in career planning aspects speaks to these experiences. Elizabeth mentioned that she had not received the proper acknowledgments even with having credentials in meetings.

Sarah initially discussed the steps leading to the associate provost and graduate dean of education at her institution and the reservations associated with each future leadership role. Sarah noted that she started her career in higher education as an adjunct faculty after relocating from another state, which was not her intention. Sarah pondered the move from reviewing information on being hired through the "First in Class Program," a grant-funded program to hire individuals from industries with specific skill sets on the campus.

Having previous chemistry and industry experience from a reputable technological-based company provided her the foreseeable opportunity to work as tenure-track faculty. Not too long after being hired into the tenure-track position, an opportunity arose for a graduate program director position. While this was a valuable learning experience, Sarah advised others not to take on this role while pursuing tenure. At times, Sarah considered leaving the institution. In this role, Sarah discussed how it provided some "really good administrative leadership experience" and that an original 18-month assignment turned into eight years. In this discussion, she mentioned, "When I started and was going through the pre-tenure process, I did not have good mentoring, which led to

sometimes not making the best decisions." Since that time, the institution has "raised the bar" on mentoring faculty.

Bethany responded to this question by explaining that her experiences working at PWIs had been "very good experiences" while working at two public universities and an all-girls school after graduating from college. For over 30 years, she served in several leadership roles from assistant director to director, associate, and vice president roles in advancement at the universities stating, "I did not encounter any barriers" but later mentioned one encounter related to promotion and advancement. Bethany first started a career in fundraising as an assistant director of development for the college of medicine. After three to four years, she pursued a promotion at that university's director of development level. The vice president of advancement had stated his rationale for not putting her in that role, which was she was not a "thoroughbred." However, even with the bidding of colleagues, she decided not to pursue a grievance because it was not worth her time and consciously knew that her "talents could be taken elsewhere." Bethany, when recalling the encounter, stated:

> And we were all going, what am I? What does that mean here? And one of my friends, my colleague who is a mentor, as well as my boss, were very supportive of me pursuing this position. It wasn't time, and I was pursuing a director position for the school.

Ruth, Miriam, Deborah, and Faith described their experiences in higher-level roles as the only ones at their institutions. Ruth's initial understanding of a PWI made her reflect on the terminology. Due to the representation of the people at the institution, she

stated they "look like me." For example, several of the presidents and the composition of cabinets have included minorities, and her predecessor was a Black male, along with those being influencers and decision-makers. She noted that her perspectives might seem skewed because of the composition of people of color at her institution. Accordingly, her lens present a different case regarding being surrounded by people who look like her. Ruth discussed being the "only female of color" in the administration that the provost was female and had a Black male president. The institution was not only seeking a female but also a person of color for the urban campus. Ultimately, being a woman of color positioned her in many ways for the presidency at that campus. Through her lens, being the "go-to person" for faculty and staff and being a woman of color has advantages and has not created impediments.

Miriam also described her experiences of being the "only Native American woman" at the university and the Native American educational and cultural center director. She liked working in inclusive work settings. Previously, Miriam worked as a recruiter in the College of Agriculture and had been at the same institution for 13 years. As the only Native person in a leadership role, she reports to the Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion. Moreover, she described having worked with people of color, including diverse groups, but has not experienced working with other Native American women in a higher education environment.

Deborah described her experiences as being the second female and person of color in an executive role at her previous institution and that males typically dominated those spaces. She stated:

I'll go back to executive education, which again, I was the only second woman

and the only person of color to run executive education about 35 years that they

were in existence, almost 40 years. So you've got to look at it from that

perspective; it has always been White men.

Faith's experiences and perceptions resonated with being in a "lonely place," one

of two African American women and the only dean of faculty in her office of color. The

other African American woman is a direct report. Both work in a small private liberal arts

college, experiencing some growth. She recently saw more women of color occupying

spaces as deans in the northeast while participating in a Zoom meeting, bringing

contentment.

The women described their experiences and perspectives navigating leadership

pathways. They focus on their educational backgrounds, work experiences, supervisors

and bosses, and the only ones. Some women described their perspectives by providing

advice and not wanting others to make the same mistakes. While most had some positive

experiences while working at PWIs, a few did not and were transparent about career

traps, pigeonholing, and working in male-dominated spaces.

Theme 3: Multiple Identities of Women of Color

The third theme focused on the experiences and perspectives of women of color

in leadership paths at PWIs. It characterized sharing the significance of their multiple

identities, and concerns over acknowledging those identities emerged as themes. The

majority discussed their experiences and perspectives regarding the significance of

having multiple identities. They included understanding cultural uniqueness, solidarity

practices, shared commonalities, and mainstream ideologies. Many stressed dissonances with mainstream treatment and the lack of understanding of their respective racial and ethnic customs, traditions, and practices, primarily disregarded although working as academics.

Elizabeth understood and expressed herself through the lens of being a Black woman and dean at that time of the study and stated:

So, although we are collectively together, how we intersect with our multiple identities, it creates a unique experience. It doesn't mean that I'm not empathetic to the struggles and some of the oppression and barriers that are faced by people that look like me. But then there's the essence of me being a black woman. That's a very different experience than someone that is Native American. A Native American woman, see her experiences are not going to be identical to mine, and there's [sic] things that I can't relate to because that's not my walk, but there's definitely commonality in our shared experiences, and so oppression doesn't just do justice to put us all in the same bucket. Ruth had intensive thoughts when she responded:

> I think anytime you add multiple layers of identity, especially when you're talking about [the] underrepresented, you know, identities. I think it adds more and more complexity. So, I think what I perceive it [as] not so much about the race factor I think that gender plays a larger role.

The women shared how their family and cultural upbringing helped support these aspirations, for instance, describing interests and dreams for careers in STEM, academics, corporate, elementary teachers, and higher education leadership paths. For example,

Mary grew up in Colombia, South America, and shared that her parents supported her

"dreams of becoming an astronaut" and did not stand in the way but also reinforced them.

At that time, Mary mentioned that her race never became an issue based on her country

of origin and being in the predominate population. Gender, however, played more of a

role.

Similarly, Bethany explained that coming to America from Malaysia helped fulfill

her "dreams of pursuing an education and learning about other cultures and people."

Esther's father had quashed her dreams of becoming a Spanish language teacher because

he thought being an "American was a gem." Esther's father was from Nicaragua,

preferred the "mother's European heritage," and, being of a "mixed-race," she finally,

with the help of peers, felt comfortable checking the box that she was a Latina. Miriam

mentioned operating in mainstream and shifting to "Indian Mode" when back home in

New Mexico. Euodia focused on the challenges she had encountered as a "Native

American undergraduate, graduate student, and a junior faculty member, becoming

tenured and an administrator." Her diversity and inclusion works started when she was an

undergraduate. Euodia augmented her efforts along these lines are now "being recognized

and with pay." Euodia described her experiences, stating:

> I just know this is a new position for me. And I was, I was really thrilled to take it
>
> on, especially in diversity and inclusion. I just thought it was important to bring
>
> some of what Indigenous insight and Indigenous experience can add to enhance
>
> how we think about the things that we want to accomplish in these positions. You
>
> know I'm somebody who's very committed to anti-racism but also decolonialism,

decolonization, and indigenization, and I think that those three sorts of threads together really speak to my approach in my position. These are my sort of three intertwining commitments, and I think that we need to go at them all at once. When we do go after them, we can create spaces that will benefit everybody, not just Indigenous people.

Miriam had experienced having a boss bring three directors' salaries in alignment with other center directors at her university and stated:

Quite by surprise, you know she recognized the role that I played with the University, and I was going into just my monthly meeting with her, and just before you get started, I do want to let you know we did an equity adjustment so as a result, here's your letter, and we're giving you a $20,000 raise so that you can be on par with everybody, I was like, I was blown away it was not what I expected.

Miriam had also shared experiences when her boss assisted with advancement, pay, and she "hit ceilings" and wanted to leave the university.

Clement discussed first-generation college students and their experiences of not having role models and mentors. Clement, an African American woman, mentioned that some did not grow up in a family of professionals and know the ropes to leadership roles. She stated:

You know, I'm first-generation college-educated. I didn't even know Black people who have degrees, you know, and so it took some steps for me to even see myself, you know, as an administrator at all, you know as a leader at all. And so,

it gave me reflection time and opportunities to understand that I had both the

skills and the disposition for these kinds of jobs.

Euodia perceived wanting to maintain the identities of her culture instead of

adapting to mainstream ideologies and keep with practices, acknowledging traditions and

communities by stating:

And so, and most of us, I do mean, I know people that their, you know, their

career and who they are, their identity in the academic world is so central to them,

and they don't know what they would do without it, but to me, you know, I go

home. You know I am, you know, women from six nations. I have a different

name in my community; you know, I have my relationships there. And that is who

I am, and these other things are just kind of added things, and I think that we just,

you know, really have to not lose sight of that.

Euodia also discussed solidarity practices, communities, and their traditions and

the preservation of languages and understanding of education hierarchies by stating:

I mean, I come from a very solidarity culture. You know, nobody's supposed to

be better than anybody else; that's why even the notion of the PhD and the saying

the doctor, we don't talk like that when we go home because nobody's supposed

to be different than bigger than anybody else, and yet you know, that puts us into

a hierarchy of expertise that just doesn't resonate in our communities where we

have our most brilliant people that have no degrees at all, you know. They've

been raised in our languages and steeped in our traditions, and they are our

knowledge holders, and they are our ... I guess we have a comparable thing they

are PhDs, and it's not sort of a person like me who would occupy that role, nothing self-evident about the hierarchy and so just sort of learned by butting up against it.

Miriam described her experiences of operating in two worlds and being able to delineate the differences when back home and feeling comfortable enough shifting to the Indian Mode (IM) and stated:

And some of us are still very strongly connected to our traditional upbringing, and we often say that it's a cliché to say that you know we operate in two worlds, but we really do operate in two worlds, you know; you're able to take your native hat off and be in Indian Mode, and I can be an administrator and contribute, but then you know, when I go back to my home community in New Mexico. But then again, it's something that, you know, it was something I was born and raised in, and my mother was one of the most influential persons in my life, so for a lot of what I know and how I present myself and how I tend to not only represent myself but also sometimes, I'm a representative of my tribal community. So in that respect, so you know, making sure that I'm honoring all the different identities that I have.

While Esther had some initial identity challenges and found it problematic to discuss her cultural background and heritages openly, she eventually made some drastic decisions to change majors with the assistance of some peers. That resulted in understanding her multiple identities as a student in higher education. Esther eventually majored in Spanish and discussed how working on self-identity and not fully

understanding her identity resulted in mixed feelings on decisions to check the boxes on

race disclosure and not wanting to receive any special treatment because of thoughts

behind application intake. After conversing with peers and letting them know her Dad

was from Nicaragua and having a peer suggest that she was either Hispanic or Latin,

added to the curiosity related to her last name, she revealed her identity. Esther reported

that her mother was of European heritage.

Those perspectives, not wanting to be a "diversity stamp for an institution," and

the sense of feeling guilty were the rationale for not checking the boxes. When she

enrolled in graduate school, she changed from being a Spanish major to higher education

and later became a student residence hall director. She believed that transferring to this

graduate program was transformational. She enrolled in courses in multicultural theory,

student development theory, and White identity and learned much about connections to

students' growth and development and intersectionality aspects.

Esther described understanding her cultural background and having multiple

identities and transformations as a graduate student, stating:

Originally I was going into the Spanish program, and it was around the very

beginning of the program; that [was] when I was working in student life. At the

[university], they offered me a [graduate position as a hall director], and they said

would you take this, this promotion, but to do this, you have to be in the master's

program in higher [education]. And so, but you would get tuition and room and

board for doing this, and so I ended up ending my contract as a Spanish TA. And

it was transformational because I started taking student development theory,

multicultural development theory courses, learning about how students grow and

develop over time, and just reading about even White identity theory and different

theories. I was like, wow, I am. There's so much intersectionality with what I

have been doing; like, there was a point in my senior year when I was elected to

be president of the Spanish honor society, and I could have had a more active role

in that.

The multiple identities of these women of color represent their understanding of

allegiances to cultural backgrounds, heritages and practices, and operating in two worlds

as leaders. Some continued to acknowledge those traditions despite mainstream

philosophies and honoring their families and communities. A few struggled with their

identities based on upbringings and not feeling comfortable. Overcoming those

challenges through education and with peers made it possible to understand the

intersections.

Theme 4: Embracing Intentionality

The fourth theme focused on participants describing their intentional experiences

as leaders and using their influence to empower internal and external constituents for

change. They shared testimonials of being courageous in meetings and provided

recommendations for women seeking advancements. Priscilla embraced intentionality

when she stated, "another instance when I spoke up" was at the monthly meeting of a

prominent group of city leaders in the west. She had requested to be on the agenda—

being one of the few Black women besides Black men and an Indian woman in the group.

The majority are White women and White men. Priscilla emphasized having a moment of

silence and discussion based on the insurrection at the capitol on January 6, 2021. She described addressing the leaders and, in particular, the attorneys involved in the law and policies that may impact Black and Brown individuals coming down pipelines to "say something," whether "intentional or non-intentional."

Priscilla further described the workplaces where they hear stories of "Black women being aggressive." She discussed having conversations on what the Black man may or may not be doing; she stated, "you need to say something," although they may lose some friends—stressing to those raising children to teach them about racism and White privilege in the country. Priscilla also stated that those conversations need to include revisiting "affirmative action" to clarify the rationale for the legislation, which was not designed just for people of color but to help poor White women seeking employment.

Afterward, Priscilla mentioned that they could "hear crickets." She mentioned that from her experience and reflected on a quote, "When your voice quivers, that is when you need to speak up." Her anger had stemmed from the insurrection and the persistence of racial and social unrest in the country. Priscilla stated that research is still needed to focus on the changing "Black woman diaspora and need for resources."

Deborah mentioned instances of being intentional in all aspects of her career planning and made tough decisions to acquire experiences that could lead to advancement opportunities. Deborah believed she had the toughness by stating:

That's [the] first thing. And can you be tough enough to be able or do you have a thick skin or are you able to walk into the board room, those types of things;

that's totally a question that a lot of people had in their mind about me walking

into this role, including the former dean, who tried to discount everything that I

was doing. This is the former dean, associate dean. So, walking into those

meetings, I had to establish trust right away. I try to move us in that direction

whenever we can. Trust is a huge thing. It absolutely is. People have to be able to

trust you, and especially if you're starting at a place where you don't kind of

represent what they think should be sitting in that seat. So you have to

demonstrate that you will always handle difficult issues; you have to demonstrate

competency; [it] is huge. If you at all appear like you do not know what you're

doing, you will get eaten alive, and that will cause so much conflict and so much

challenge to your leadership. Even in open spaces like meetings, I've had people

challenge me; even in [an] open team meeting, I've been challenged before.

Ruth described and provided recommendations on how to be intentional for

women seeking to advance when she had stated:

Whereas for women, it's a little bit different, so I think making clear what your

intentions are. And then, of course, being prepared. I think we have to be over-

prepared as women, and if you add that extra dimension, we talked about being a

woman of color. You may have to be quadruple prepared over, you know, a

White male colleague, so just having the preparation, getting those connections

networking, getting outside of your shell, I think you've got to be very

comfortable with connecting with people and networking because this business is

all about relationships, and not just internally [but] across the country.

Mary discussed the benefit of being on taskforces and providing opportunities to serve and meet with presidents. For instance, she served on the anti-racist task force and was selected by the chief diversity officer for her work at the university and charged with creating an anti-racist climate. When speaking up at a meeting in the president's presence, her concerns loomed about increasing the number of faculty and students of color without creating a nurturing climate because of the "systemic problem" and that they leave the university. She stated that the president listened and made notes.

Priscilla felt she had to be more intentional in seeking out professional development and training programs and stated:

But we also have professional development where we can go to conferences and learn, but I'll tell you that being a sister of color as a president, we have to be, obviously... I have to be more intentional about finding professional development opportunities so that I can continue to grow and be able to serve and lead my faculty and staff and students.

Mary also described experiences of being proactive about professional development by going to a conference when she stated:

And I think that for a lot of women, I know my friend from Texas; she has a lot of friends in this organization called AAHHE, [which] I think is the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education. And I actually went with her to one of those conferences to type of observe like everyone. And so, and for her, it was like going home, and going to this conference, which is exactly how I feel

when I go to Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native

Americans in Science (SACNAS) is like going home.

The "unexpected" seemed to resonate with the paths leading to multiple

appointments and selections to prominent leadership roles by most women. For instance,

at Sarah's institution, she always wanted to excel and meet her expectations. Sarah

suggested being a "good fit," as in the appointment after tenure to a distinguished

professor position as an endowed chair and managing a sizeable endowment. After six

years, she realized her "passion" was for administration rather than teaching but liked

research and strategic planning. Later, the college dean of arts and design stepped down,

and the associate dean became acting dean. Another opportunity was presented for an

interim associate dean position that the current provost had orchestrated. Subsequently,

she received more information, including a job description of the role after conversations

with the acting dean. Upon becoming the preferred candidate out of five or six applicants,

she was selected as the new interim associate dean and served in that role for 18 months.

When a new dean came, she asked her about the permanency of the position, and she

immediately appointed her to become the associate dean.

These women related needing to speak up based on their experiences and

perspectives as leaders during internal and external encounters with constituents. Many

intentionally found opportunities to inform constituents of racially motivated incidents in

meetings and the boardroom. While some emphasized having to show confidence in

handling difficult conversations and career planning, others educated constituents on

perceptions of Black women being aggressive. The women's experience of being

intentional and speaking up was a form of empowerment and challenging the resistance

against their barriers.

Research Question 2

The second RQ was, How do women of color describe their experiences with race

and gender in leadership paths at PWIs? The majority described their experiences at the

intersection of race and gender in leadership paths. Some women expressed being

subjected to stereotypes and biases, microaggressions, silencing, and wanting seats at the

table. They mentioned the challenges of barriers of working in male-dominated spaces

and having to frequently educate their peers and colleagues on topics such as hair

maintenance and styles and misconceptions about being "angry Black women." In

addition, the women experienced feelings of being minimized working in pervasive

climates and appeased supervisors and bosses that perpetuated power and privilege.

While the majority described more negative experiences at the intersections, few had

positive working relationships, felt empowered, and celebrated the accomplishments of

others. Through data analysis, four themes emerged from RQ2 to describe their

experiences at the intersections of race and gender, persisting through stereotypes and

biases and tones of patriarchal enforcements, and working in structured systems.

Theme 1: Intersections of Race and Gender

The intersections of race and gender concerns were prevalent for women. The

participants felt intersectionality impeded their leadership and development. Lydia shared

that through her perceived lens, "males dominate those spaces," the majority of women

and "women of color [were] silenced," and they decided as a result of silencing when to

speak in meetings. Moreover, the differences between individuals' participation in spaces depended on the audience, such as colleagues and board members, versus communities of interest concerning "authenticities." In these spaces, "code-switching" typically prevailed. Code-switching means adapting to mainstream culture for acceptance and changing back to one's own culture when convenient. Lydia stated:

> I feel like in PWIs, it's kind of like, how do you say this? People go in treading, like, treading lightly. I do feel like there's a lot of like; you kind of have to. It depends, you know because a lot of the spaces are male-dominated, so a lot of women do feel like they are silenced, and they just kind of have to pick and choose when they can talk or speak, or they're just not listened to. I do feel like a lot of women of color do hold back a lot on speaking out and speaking their minds.

Esther made code-switching a practice when it worked to her benefit by stating:

> And so, in each role that I've had as a professional. I do uplift the Hispanic part of my culture, not because I know everything about it but because it has provided me with this level of ability to relate in the most sympathetic kind of way to those who have visible diversity in a way to be able to advocate and educate my White peers in a very different way, where I have this; where I can; I can pass for White; like, I can sit with White people.

Elizabeth shared those experiences that people of color, including individuals from different countries, cannot be "lumped together" as far as their experiences. Esther also stated that in:

Spanish-speaking countries all kind of get lumped together, especially now that

we're in this political place of "look at all these Hispanics who voted for Trump."

Why would they do that? And that's not the case if you actually tease it out. There

are certain countries that tended to be more right or left-leaning based on history,

the history of different kinds.

According to the research, Lydia explained that feeling infuriated by how Whites

perceive Asian Americans and "bump" them up is non-acceptable, stating, "Few Asians

work and attend the institution, and the majority are STEM faculty." Elizabeth continued

by stating that those in leadership cannot assume that Black men and women are the

same, although there are some commonalities in struggles among racial and ethnic

groups.

The respondents discussed presumptions about expressing oneself in meetings,

being labeled an "angry Black woman," and maintaining and selecting hairstyles.

Deborah also discussed the need for toughness at times and labels attached to the

conceptions of being an angry Black woman "when you do speak up" sternly. Deborah

had experience coaching African American women and the trajectories they encounter in

their roles and themes, reverberating sentiments of being overlooked and bringing

attention to themselves in a non-threatening manner. Euodia's perspective captured her

experiences of being "angry" as a result of having feelings on name exclusions from

projects and stated:

[I have] been critical of different things like having my name left out of, you

know, left out of getting credit for work that I led; getting very angry about that, I

was told to sort of soften my anger about it, even though you know I'd spent years at this project and they weren't going to mention my name, you know. I think, yeah, we go through those things.

Mary had a different perspective in having problems professionally with gender when females are bosses. For example, she stated, "When I have felt most like my gender is a problem is when I am working with women." A story to support these experiences arose when discussing working with an African American woman boss. Conflicts ensued based on communication styles, temperament, and how "she would get angry for nothing." Much has to do with perspectives on the lack of "emotional intelligence." Priscilla also had a different perspective when she stated:

I wouldn't even say it's the intersection, but it is a woven type of material, and you know how when things are woven together, they'd like stick together, right? Whereas intersection can be taken apart for me as an African American woman leader. They see me before they see how I can lead, right? So, and because my [last] name is … they first assume that I am an Asian man, one, and then two they see that I'm a young, Black woman with tattoos, and then they try to be wrong.

In her discussion on the intersection of race and gender, Esther emphasized the differences between men and women, minorities, and work expectations. Esther focused on several obstacles that may prevent women from having "a place at the table." The significance of having a "seat at the table" resonated with most of the women. She discussed that minorities and women encounter "extra pressure" and "work hard" and "having to be constantly on" and meeting the same "basic expectation level as a male."

Even though she is not visible as a person of color, Esther explained from a feminist perspective the experiences of managing and lactating in a room with men and female faculty. She expressed that women delayed having children or did not have them due to working against their tenure clocks—operating in "chilly climates" as women faculty. Esther also mentioned that advancing to executive levels, fewer women are seen. Also, Elizabeth had perceived the same for persons of color advancing through the ranks.

For instance, Mary stated, "Yeah, and it is interesting because I do see all the women of color who are in some positions of leadership." Mary expressed that Latina women, not immigrants and raised in the United States, tend not to want to challenge the "status quo." These colleagues who are unwilling to challenge the status quo mainly become the candidates for promotion and salary increases because of their unwillingness to "rock the boat" and have more inclinations to "keep their heads down." Mary recognized the opposite and was unwilling to operate in these environments and "drink the Kool-Aid." Some have perceived her stance as being troubling and her continuity as questionable. Mary stated:

> I have colleagues that they're just very, they don't like to rock the boat. You know, they're very cautious, and for good reason. You know, and amazingly, they actually have done better in terms of titles and salaries than I have. And because I think, in these institutions, they reward people who do the work, keep their head down, and don't rock the boat. That's what they want.

Subsequently, Mary shared aspirations for becoming a leader like President Biden, choosing like-minded individuals, and delegating those desires for policymaking

and change, counterintuitively, suggesting the preference for the same does not exist in the leadership at her institution. Having a colleague in Texas with similar interests and background, Mary proposed writing an article on the Latinas' perspectives in PWIs, which helped her realize how complementary working relationships can be. She emphasized the impact of how individual backgrounds can determine our strengths and weaknesses, perspectives of immigrants versus non-immigrants, and the significance of the Latino community.

Clement's experiences and perspectives centered on misconceptions attributed to a lack of decision-making, toughness, and leadership skills typically perceived by the mainstream in the workplace regarding women, women of color, and people of color. She referred to the "double whammy" coupling discrimination practices and intersections and stated that people are "minimized" based on misconceptions. For instance, she mentioned they perceived "that no qualified African American women are available and therefore manifested in the limited numbers at PWIs and ascribed to they are 'rare breeds.'" The rarity of Black women and not considering those at HBCUs remains few at PWIs. Consequently, based on the biases and stereotypes, few obtain leadership roles.

In sharing a personal experience with a White female search consultant, Clement explicitly inferred individuals' preference for the institution's senior leadership role. The search consultant had predetermined perceptions on recruiting individuals for institutions that entailed "biases and stereotypes" in describing women, the Black man, or Black person as not "fitting the mold" for senior leadership roles. According to Clement, it has

been interesting personally and for people who continue to "navigate that space."

Clement tenaciously described it, stating:

> I remember years ago, way before I came to this college, I was having a
>
> conversation with a search consultant, and they were looking for people to
>
> potentially go to this one institution. And one of the things, this is a White woman
>
> talking to me as well, and she was saying, "You know, I'm not sure they could
>
> see you in that role." So what does that mean, that they have a picture in their
>
> mind of what a senior leader should be? And that was neither Black person nor
>
> women and certainly not a Black man, you know. So it's been an interesting thing
>
> to navigate for my own personal career, as well as for the many people that I
>
> know that have and continue to navigate that space.

Deborah had a similar experience and concluded, "So there's this perception that someone that looks like me or, you know, another woman code or mindset would absolutely not be able to do that."

In response to this question, Faith mentioned that she had encountered several challenges, such as "being presumed incompetent" as described in reflecting on a book, working with faculty, and deciphering whether gender or not race or both pertained to the situation or presumably was a matter of "blatant disrespect." Faith summed these experiences and challenges, stating:

> I think it's always, you know, a challenge. I was just thinking about my own, you
>
> know, experience. There's this; I don't know. I guess one would call it. I think
>
> there's a book called presumed incompetent. And there's, you know, I've

encountered like a presumption of incompetence. You know, sometimes it's hard to tell, right, um, you know, whether it's because of my races because of my gender or maybe even both right. Um, you know, just sometimes just the blatant disrespect.

Furthermore, Faith tried to understand those differences as a Black woman at a PWI and questioning their intent and "set-up" she thought was a constant challenge when stating:

And I think that's, you know, just part of being, you know. I'm a Black woman at a predominately White institution. These institutions were never set up for us at all in the first place. And it's a constant process of sort of tension and resistance and moving and progress tension [and]… over and over again. You know, but, you know, I found that I just had to choose my battles.

The constant tensions of having to process that, move back and forth, make progress and contend with the resistance remain challenging. For instance, while conducting presentations at meetings and being the expert in the topic, she experienced question and answer period preferences for the White male responses. However, she mentioned they lacked the insight. For instance, Faith elaborated by stating:

You know I could be the person who's, you know, giving the presentation. I'm the one who is the expert; I am the one who's offering the insight—that perspective and the expertise. But when the question [and] answers come, you know they're going to the White man who doesn't know anything. Right? And,

you know, I mean it's those types of, you know, microaggressions [and] macro

questions that one faces on a regular basis. And, you know, that.

Faith mentioned that those are some of the microaggressions encountered regularly.

Nonetheless, knowing when to choose battles is perceived as essential. Similarly,

Elizabeth noted that challenges and barriers underlined the proclivities of

microaggressions and stereotypes and defending hard-earned credentials and voice during

meetings, particularly in the presence of White men. Deborah perceived and concluded:

Now some of that gender piece runs through the intersections of race and gender;

it runs across cross both, but some of it I do think is unique to women of color

that they really were trying to navigate something slightly different. And it's

nuanced; it's very nuanced. It's not ... Most of the time, it's nothing that you

could emphatically say this is what's happening, but there's no doubt that you are

feeling a certain way that something is happening.

Miriam's perspective as a director on the intersection of race and gender at her

institution focused on celebrating and acknowledging women's accomplishments when

she responded and stressed, "When one person succeeds, we all succeed, handling

challenges and problems together as colleagues." She stated that the group of women she

works with provides support for one another, celebrates successes, and converges to

address challenges and problems through emails, messages, and discussions. The women

promptly respond when someone receives awards and provide feedback to encourage

continued success. Miriam further shared her perspectives on celebrating others and the

differences between males' and females' communication styles. Those differences

alluded to how males and females behave and communicate differently in meetings. The

males in discussions tend to compete for the approval of the boss by seeking favoritism.

In comparison, the women are not as vocal in the meetings and not as

competitive; however, the acknowledgment of Native American women in "matrilineal

clan systems" in their leadership roles is accepted. As a result of this, her colleagues

respect this role. Miriam, for example, had become the only cultural center director at her

institution to serve as a principal investigator of an NSF STEM grant for Native

American graduate students. That leadership role, according to Miriam, represents the

work done, although the males typically assume the "paternalistic leadership roles."

Deborah was ecstatic when the institution president decided to support projects

concerning the intersection of race and gender. Her boss laid the groundwork for their

meeting. Paramount to this was promoting another African American woman co-worker

to work on a social change project to respond to the George Floyd incident and get the

senior leaders on board, the college community, and the police academy to have

dialogues. Those dialogues focused on the intersection of gender and race and health

inequities and policing. Deborah stated that this resulted from "asking for what you want"

and "with a price tag." Subsequently, she became the special assistant to the president for

equity, diversity, and inclusion, which resulted in receiving a financial contract to

advance the three. Deborah described the details of those events by stating:

> We hosted on October 2 a whole day of dialogue around the intersections of race
>
> and equity. After the killing of George Floyd, so we actually did a whole day-long
>
> dialogue with our entire campus community as well as community members

within [the] county to really talk about various aspects of the intersections of race

and equity, so we talked about police policing on college campuses because the

police academies [are] underneath my division. We talked about the

intersectionality of gender and race; we talked about health care disparities and

racism as a public health crisis. I mean, we had a whole day of dialogue from

10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. [It] included our senior leaders and all of that, and they

participated fully. So I asked.

The context of Ruth's conversation focused on the intersection of gender and

having multiple identities and dual roles as a woman. Specifically, regarding institutions

not being "female-friendly" and how consideration of their dual roles and people, in

general, remains a challenge because of managing child-care, transportation, spouses, and

parents' aging. Therefore, these matters remain overlooked because of male freedoms,

mostly in family work-life balance. For example, conferences and meetings are

sometimes inconvenient due to places and scheduling, the need to put children on the bus,

and helping school-aged children and teenagers with homework. Miriam also mentioned

the challenges of managing her household and having an aging parent. Euodia

emphasized that individuals should not focus solely on work but also on their families. In

addition, Esther described experiences of not having the proper accommodations at her

college when she was lactating and stated:

> Y'all got to see that this is not easy, and you have to. We got to design spaces and
>
> structures that are more inclusive of different kinds of experiences, so I won't say
>
> that it was a negative experience, but it was a lot of work, just to be at the table.

The intersection of race and gender posed challenges and barriers for women of color at their institutions. The majority of the participants had experienced at the intersections males dominating those spaces and wanting to maintain the status quo. Maintaining the status quo entailed minimizing the women, silencing in meetings, slights and microaggressions, and labels associated with stereotypes and biases. Others had benefited from their intersections and received acknowledgments for roles in social change by supervisors and bosses. However, some, because of working conditions and limited support for their dual roles, felt jeopardized.

Theme 2: Persisting through Stereotypes and Biases

The women of color persisted through stereotypes and biases at PWIs. Elizabeth and Priscilla encountered similar experiences describing their hair care maintenance and the selection of hairstyles. Both agreed that the explanation and selection of hair care is an individual preference. Elizabeth described the experiences of managing hairstyles, the significance of names, and their impact on attaining leadership roles when she stated:

> We were talking about hair, and I think when I started out my career and prescribed to having more traditional styles trying to get in. I now think that my position does allow me more freedom to be more expressive with my hair, and some of that, I think that I have gotten to a comfort level that I don't care what you think about what I do with my hair. However, I think that there is more openness to it. However, sometimes it's more about some of the advancement that you get [and] privileges, and that's still unfortunate that rank should equate to how you choose to express yourself so as much, the more openness to hair. We

have names sometimes that you can see on the paper that you probably know that they're Black or African American before you meet them, and just not letting that be a bias and so many of these other things. I remain cautiously hopeful that things will get better.

Esther described experiences of being heartbroken over name biases when she was working with students to develop their resumes and stated:

But on the other hand, I also know how sexism isn't just built into everything, as is racism, and so when I sit down with a student of color preparing for a job, and they say to me, "How can I make my resume more White?" It breaks my heart because I'm like yeah, you should not have to whitewash your resume. However, there are so many pieces of research to tell us that when put side by side with the two resumes, the employer is always going to choose the more White-sounding name, and there's so much work to be done, and so I have to have these like double-sided conversations with students, and that's exactly how I do.

After becoming president in 2017, Priscilla faced negative interactions with some team members returning from school break on her hairstyle changes. She received wrongful comparisons on hair type from a White woman, assuming that it was dog's hair. Priscilla, although angered by the conversations, decided against an immediate reaction. Instead, the following day, she approached it as a "teachable moment." The teachable moment involved educating them on the "dos and don'ts" on addressing and making references to the president's hair or another person's hair as dog hair. Discussions helped

them understand offensive statements and those concerning a Black woman's decision to change hairstyles frequently.

Sarah shared meaningful information when taking her stance on racial and gender biases in the workplace and educating people, mainly on stereotypes of a co-worker who indicated that he and his wife looked to learn about racism by viewing the movie "Boyz n the Hood." A good friend watched an episode of the show "Amen," where a marching band played at a black wedding. Having never attended a black wedding, she thought this was a tradition. Her take on having any sponsors and champions meant having people around who did not assume she was incapable of performing those roles. Nevertheless, having to be in board meetings with the president and leadership team about diversity issues and to hear the response to what is happening to increase the diversity at the senior leadership level is "why Sarah is here."

Lydia mentioned feeling fortunate at times being the only Asian American and having the benefit of remotely working, although having to contend with situations and stereotypes. For instance, being in meetings and feeling Asians may not be included in hiring decisions and understanding people's perspectives that may not "intentionally" exude racism and cruelty but ignorance. Giving others the benefit of the doubt infers reliance on patience and that people "only know what they know." Lydia seemed to be empathetic towards people that have limited experiences and perspectives.

Miriam's experiences and perspectives on handling conflicts and racial biases have centered on educating people on Native American culture in work settings, communities, and the classroom. For example, those pertaining to stereotypes,

pigeonholing, and images of Native Americans living in "teepees" and having "warrior mentalities." Even in the 21st century, she stated that these perceptions still exist in the media with "cowboys and Indians" depictions and association with John Wayne among young audiences. In addition, the education of audiences doing presentations and the number of tribes over "574 federally recognized tribal nations" and that she belongs to the "Navajo Nation." Her leadership role has not only included educating others on traditional but also non-traditional Native American experiences.

From Ruth's perspective, handling disagreements led to opportunities to "speak up" and educate others in meetings, consequently helping others understand that the prescribed categories for underrepresented groups were unfair regarding learning and development. Ruth viewed these individuals from a positional stance of coming up through the ranks and debunking stereotypes and biases. The majority of the women dealt with some form of racial and gender biases, and Deborah spoke of her prior boss, who had a constant preoccupation and stated:

> I was battling aspects of that the entire time during that position as the associate dean for executive education at the school of management. It is a unique position within higher education because it is really running a small business within higher education, so you have profit and loss responsibilities. I was responsible for bringing in millions of dollars every year that supports the activities of executive education and management school, which I intentionally took that job.

Persisting through stereotypes and biases was opportunistic for most of the women. They described turning negative experiences into educational lessons. Priscilla

and Elizabeth, for example, informed their colleagues about hair maintenance and style preferences. Sarah and Miriam discussed perceptions, stereotypes, and biases of people of color in the media. Ruth and Deborah discussed experiences of interacting with colleagues on stereotypes, racial and gender biases. Lydia explained that people are often uninformed on those topics.

Theme 3: Tones of Patriarchal Enforcements

The majority of the women described enforcement encounters mainly with supervisors and bosses who berated, undermined, discounted, victimized, and sabotaged their leadership. Some were challenged openly in staff meetings and ridiculed in C-suites. For example, Deborah described her experiences and perspectives on having a boss possessed with paternalism and that she would never back down, which is a form of resistance; she stated:

So when we would meet, he would talk at me. I would say, in a very kind of paternalistic way. And it was not good; it was unnerving. I actually chose to leave because of that; I chose to leave. And [I am so] happy that I did. I mean it really; I'm happy I had the experience, and I'm happy that I started there with two really good, you know, senior leaders who were very supportive of me. I'm glad I didn't start with him. It taught me a lot, which these experiences always do. But it also taught me though I didn't, I was never disrespectful, of course, but I never backed down in terms of what I thought would help move the business forward, and we can agree to disagree, but I never backed down on that. And I was happy to move

out of that role into the role that I'm currently in, which I think is fantastic; [it] is a great role.

Esther described her experiences of being humiliated in an admissions meeting with a new director when she had provided her perspectives; she stated:

Yeah, I remember sitting in a meeting with admissions. So from a career center perspective, we're sitting down with admissions, and there was a new admissions director coming in, and she was sharing about the numbers of what our applications look like and the breakdown of different races and ethnicities, and this is when the term Latinx was still very new. And she was using it like left and right, and so someone in that group asked, what does that mean because they weren't sure about it, and she tried to explain it. And I don't even remember how she said it, but it was just, like, really! It was a very their kind of conversation. She is a White woman, and she was like, "well, this is how they want to be called, so we're just calling it Latinx now, instead of what I know of it now to be much more inclusive in terms of Latino and Latina, there is, you know, gender is fluid." And, in that moment, I had mentioned that ... I was like, "Oh, there's some great research about why that term exists, and I'm happy to share it." I actually was reading about it, and I tried to make it very, like, I'm not going to be the diversity police in here because I'm not the end all be all, but I said I just happened to read about this, I'm happy to share it, and people like ... I heard a chuckle around the group, and I still don't know who it was that laughed, but I was like, "Oh, was that funny?" And that was one of the moments where I was like, I am silenced. I

can't share that kind of stuff, even when that's information that I read about, because it impacts me.

Euodia perceived that women in leadership are not taken seriously and occupy different strata than males at the intersections in their institutions and communities by stating:

You know those two hierarchies, and in occupying a lower place on both of them, just the way that you know prohibits women from being taken seriously as leaders by both within a lot of times, their own, you know, members of their own community on campus as well as the broader community, right? It's very hard. I've had a very hard time asserting myself as a leader and being permitted to be a leader, and not having had my accomplishments undermined or claimed by others. I think as the two, you know, the big thing I think that you know, sort of double or added additive form of marginalization, it's very hard, you know; it's a patriarchal institution.

Mary described her experiences of feeling victimized when she stated:

Um, so I think that there are some times where I have been the victim of those things, but I, at first ... I don't recognize them as that. And so, when I was younger, I think I would just think that maybe I did something wrong or that I wasn't up to par. For example, in my graduate training, that would be a thought that I had, especially after my master's because my master's was actually supposed to be a PhD, and I decided to cut it down to a master's because I wasn't

in a good environment, and at the time I thought maybe I'm not cut out to have a PhD.

Deborah, Esther, and Euodia, and Mary provided insights on their experiences of how females and males communicated with them. The four presumed that the males instilled controlling atmospheres and would talk in demeaning manners, including the female admissions director in Esther's case. Mary had expressed feeling victimized in her graduate studies when a male advisor would only communicate with the male students and talk about sports. Deborah saw sports as an opportunity during meetings to communicate with her male colleagues. They all had experienced the tones of patriarchy.

Theme 4: Working in Structured Systems

The majority of the women of color explained being "unfamiliar and feeling not welcomed in PWI structures and systems." Being conscious of the structural dynamics and having experienced working in PWIs, Deborah perceived women of color were "navigating something slightly different and nuanced." Bethany discussed that her experience was somewhat different because she had a White male banker that championed and made her feel welcomed. Lydia's experiences and perspectives focused on being the only Asian American female at PWIs. They included feeling tokenized where expectations were for her to speak on behalf of non-White individuals and discussed living mainly in the south. Some have perceived women of color and people of color in leadership roles as not equals and making them feel uncomfortable. She described how stature and perceptions of being younger create underestimations that lean toward performance as a leader. The endurance of stereotypes and experiences as an

Asian American female starting in organizations continues to be similar. Lydia shared

those experiences working in structured systems and what she had perceived; she stated:

> My perceptions; yes, so pretty much all of the institutions I've worked at have
>
> been predominately White, and I'm usually the only Asian American female. And
>
> most of the time, the places I've worked I'm usually like one of [the] people of
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> color, period. So my perceptions are, I really feel like a lot of my experiences I've
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> been kind of like a token, in a sense, kind of like, you know; like, they'll look at
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> me like okay she isn't White, so she can speak for everyone. Yeah, it depends on
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> where I've lived too. I've mostly lived in the south. You know there are some
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> people who are not used to being under a woman of color or a person of color, so.
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> And then, also, or equal to a person of color, so I do sometimes feel like it is a
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> little uncomfortable for them at first until they get to know me, and then I also
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> feel as an Asian American female who's also kind of I guess you would say small,
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> and I look young for my age I do feel like I'm underestimated a lot.

Sarah stated that less than 5% of women of color are in leadership, referring to

finding qualified candidates of color and not looking in the right places, such as the

Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. She shared that Isabel Wilkerson's book on

"Caste" explains the thinking behind these perceptions of White privilege in the United

States. The differences between women of color and White women may show slight

changes based on the latter doing better than the former in leadership roles and more

challenging for men of color. The challenges for women and men of color exist because

of predominately White men in those roles and 37% being women and 11% faculty of

color. Sarah also shared that in her 22 years at the institution, only three women of color have worked in senior-level leadership roles. A former dean in the college of business, the chief information officer who retired, and at present, an interim dean for the college of liberal arts. Sarah also had discussed that she experienced being excluded from meetings; she stated:

> And so, all of a sudden, I noticed that faculty who came after me, they were going to meetings about, you know, research at the center, and nobody said anything to me. And I was like stumbling around trying to figure out, well, how am I going to get my research done. So finally, I marched down to the dean's office and said ... I think I went right past the administrative chair to the dean's office and said, "Why are all these people, part of this and nobody's talking to me?" That's where the angry Black woman comes in. Yeah! Wait a minute! Oh, what! Oh no, it's open to anyone. I said, "Well, when were you gonna tell me?"

The participants perceived that working in structured systems had impacted them. They experienced and had a sense of knowing that differences prevailed while working in PWIs. For example, some of the women had experienced feeling tokenized, excluded, and not welcomed in their institutions. They also described the structures and systems that did not always include women of color in leadership roles.

Research Question 3

The third RQ was, How do women of color describe their mentoring experiences working at PWIs? The majority revealed their experiences of having zero to few mentors in their leadership paths. Some had encountered challenges and barriers finding mentors

and role models, establishing trust, and transparency discrepancies. The participants

lacked informal and formal mentoring networks and personalized their learning

experiences with internal and external constituents. However, most had become mentors

and developed mentoring programs due to no mentorship while navigating their career

paths.

Through analysis, six themes emerged from RQ3: (a) focusing on the participants

as sought out mentors and role models, (b) the experiences of not having mentors, (c)

having predominately White male mentors, (d) personal mentoring models, (e) building

mentoring networks with caution, and (f) informal and formal mentoring. Some of the

words, phrases, and quotations that describe those experiences included "non-existent,"

"zero to little," and "locating someone organically and intentionally."

Theme 1: Sought Out Mentors and Role Models

The participants discussed their perceived experiences impacting other women as

mentors and role models. They experienced assisting colleagues in their leadership paths

by serving as mentors and role models and being sought out. The women provided those

navigating pathways with words of wisdom. Ruth perceived it organically happening

when she stated:

> I do have quite a few people who I mentor. Some of them have come to me
>
> directly and asked for a mentor; others, it just kind of happened organically, just
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> got to know somebody, and I said let's chat, or I see something in them.

Miriam emphasized the power of mentoring in assisting others in leadership roles when

she stated:

And I think that's very powerful to have that mentorship with you and not being afraid to share experiences with [the] new [and] upcoming. I've helped mentor administrators in their roles too, so I've been, you know, very open and talking about the way this is, how I've learned, or in being able to be very forthcoming and let them know. If there's a specific task you do, I'll explain to pass what's at hand.

Miriam also mentioned that her mom was her mentor. She is the caretaker for her dad and supports the family, and some are pursuing higher education.

For Clement, the advice on mentoring experiences and the impact have resonated with several constituents and students in doctoral and graduate programs. The students remain in contact and provide updates on life changes such as new births and employment. This influence has spread among them and in the higher education communities in which she has worked. Participation in a leadership program as a senior faculty member at an east region institution and being assigned a viable mentor helped identify the steps to navigate that led to her administrative pursuits.

Ruth, Miriam, and Clement described experiences of helping other women and students as mentors and role models. Ruth felt that mentoring should happen naturally and on personalized levels. Miriam had perceived mentoring as sharing knowledge and did not feel threatened by assisting others. Clement developed a reputation as a mentor in higher education and for her willingness to help graduate students.

Theme 2: Experiences of Not Having Mentors

The majority of the women described experiences of not having mentors. A few had positive ones, while some also experienced frustrations and found it challenging to have matching mentors. Deborah described that mentoring was non-existent, "zero to little," and was encouraged by a family member to write a book on "how to advance without a mentor." For example, mentoring in a doctoral program was not something that the White female faculty embraced for females of color but did mentor the White females.

Through Esther's lens, mentoring was one of the biggest challenges, along with locating someone "organically" and women in positions of power other than Hispanic or Latina. Consequently, the mentoring loads of faculty of color in the field are often too much for them to handle and create frustration for both students and faculty. The turnaround came for Deborah when the "president at the institution said she would love to mentor her." She reported it being the first time someone did that from a career perspective. Finding someone beforehand would have helped because of her status as a "first-generation college student."

Ruth discussed several cases of mentoring that included "knowing when and how to ask for it" and believed that it happens "organically" and "intentionally." Perceiving that sometimes individuals will think mentors have to be in advanced leadership roles, she thought "pairing" them would not work the best. She explained that mismatches happen and can leave individuals uncomfortable; therefore, she preferred intentional

meetings. Some of the best mentoring happened when seeking out individuals who could grow at the institution and have a coffee cup with them. In contrast, some of the best mentors were people in other levels to learn from at the institution. Ruth also emphasized how connecting women of color intentionally has not happened much, and there needs to be more of it done. Ruth described those experiences as:

I think it's hit or miss. I don't think we do a very good job of intentionally connecting women of color with each other. I feel conflicted about this because I felt like the best mentoring relationships happen organically. In situations where I've tried to pair people or been paired, it's been this icky feeling.

Few women experienced having positive mentoring relationships and felt frustrated and not extended the same opportunities as their colleagues. Deborah, for example, felt slighted by female faculty in a doctoral program when they embraced her White colleagues and mentored them. Esther and Ruth both thought that mentoring should happen organically or be natural. Deborah finally caught the attention of her president, and Ruth mentioned that women of color need attentiveness.

Theme 3: Predominately White Male Mentors

The realities described concerning women's exposure to mentoring have included White males in leadership roles. However, it also has included sharing the differences between male and female mentors and having native and women of color mentors. Clement described her varied perspectives on women of color's mentoring experiences in leadership roles at PWIs. For instance, she stated that "there were never any women of color in leadership," or any women vice presidents or deans in those institutions in her

career. After becoming the first African American woman department chair, she had one male predecessor in philosophy, which supported her conclusion that "your mentors had to be by definition White men."

Several other experiences shared and described included having all White males as mentors. Clement had experienced the preferential treatment received by White men. She had noticed that when they engaged with another White male, help ensued to establish connections. The result of this experience became the motivation for wanting to be "the mentor that I wish I had" and "having to do much of the work alone." However, when working alone, she emphasized that it can take longer; there is a tendency to make more mistakes and for literally "putting your foot in your mouth a bit more."

Miriam discussed that her mentoring experiences were positive, and she had experienced women supervisors. She also described the differences between female and male mentoring "styles and skills" and the advantages of having "women of color as mentors." In the interview, Miriam also discussed having "native mentors" to share any challenges and articles of interest through meetings to brainstorm on goals for Native American students. After graduation, the students are encouraged to return to their tribal communities to make a difference with some successes. She explained that 80% of those completing thesis and doctoral programs have returned to their homes. Accordingly, mentoring is a way to hand down knowledge and tasks to upcoming leaders and help leaders who do not have those capacities. Miriam believed that "mentorship can be powerful."

Mentoring in leadership roles can take many forms. Clement and Miriam had varied mentoring experiences in their roles as leaders. Clement described that her mentoring experiences included having all White males. In contrast, Miriam described her experiences as being broader in context. She had female and male mentors, natives, and supervisors and attributed them as positive. Miriam also mentioned the impact of mentoring on Native American students at her institution and bridging it to their communities.

Theme 4: Personal Mentoring Models

The preference for personal approaches to mentoring may be situational. Faith expressed that her mentoring experiences were in many forms. She emphasized that finding a mentor was challenging and preferred having "personalized mentoring models" based on the situations and does not necessarily mean excluding other forms. However, Faith mentioned having one-on-one weekly mentoring with a woman of color at the institution, who informed and advised her through listening only. Thus, she found that due to "multiple issues and multiple situations, she has had to find multiple people." For instance, she perceived how the college's current president, a White woman who had served as the chief academic officer, could mentor her and have leadership experiences. Similarly, she believed that seeking mentors outside of the institution, such as Black women and women of color vice presidents for academic affairs, provosts, and deans of faculty, may be helpful because of their experiences on race and gender and having those conversations. Moreover, she considered a "staff member" having budget expertise as a mentor because she managed large budgets in academic affairs.

Individual learning situations may impact a personalized approach to mentoring. For example, Faith was interested in more in-depth learning based on advancing as a leader. She found colleagues that had expertise in those areas and considered them as her mentors. Overall, finding personal mentors can benefit leaders.

Theme 5: Build Mentoring Networks With Caution

Some women advised others to build their mentoring relationships with caution because of betrayals and intentions. Elizabeth's perspectives on mentoring entailed stating, "mentoring supports are useful, and programs are open to individuals, but caution prevails in selecting mentors and networks." Priscilla's preference for mentoring definitions focused on committee formations by mentoring, networks across the United States, and peers' advice when critical issues surface. She stressed that "as you rise in leadership, friends may decrease, and learning everyone is not your friend." Esther wanted to mentor students because of her experiences and not knowing certain things as a professional. She felt betrayed by an African American woman that was an assistant vice president who had befriended her and was in a position that she had aspirations for at that time. Esther described her experience and stated:

> My last boss was a black woman. And, I remember feeling really close with her as my search committee chair. And then, when I started at the institution, she was like my friend. Like, I remember inviting her to my dog's one-year birthday party. How funny we are before we have children. And she came, and she brought her dog. And we were friends. And then she became my boss because I moved into a different role, and it's like this; something changed to the point where I was like,

who are you now. And it felt competitive. It felt like I don't even know how to describe it, and it was really... It was distressing to me for a long time because I thought, okay, this is someone who was an assistant vice president, and that's a role that I aspired to, and we were friendly before this, and now she gets to be my boss, and I can ask all these questions. And it really devolved into a relationship where I was questioning everything that she was doing, and there were lots of things that I was doing that I felt she was taking credit for or not giving me the recognition that I deserved, and that was like the antithesis of a mentorship experience.

Esther also wanted to teach students how to sustain their mentoring relationships, join a mentoring network, and she provided examples on the "antithesis of mentorship experiences." Elizabeth, Priscilla, and Esther urged individuals to take the precautionary steps before selecting mentors, networks, and groups. The women shared experiences of seeking mentors to fulfill varied roles based on their needs. Some felt that bringing awareness would help others avoid selecting unsuitable mentors. The selection of mentors can be pivotal for women in the pathways.

Theme 6: Informal and Formal Mentoring

The mentoring experiences described entailed locating them internally and externally. Some women perceived that finding mentors to assist with the navigation process could be challenging. Elizabeth, for example, mentioned that informal and formal mentoring is needed because of the unknown through the ranks and understanding what she called the "secret sauce." The transparency can remain "hidden" to some but revealed

to those aspiring to specific positions. Mentoring supports and programs are helpful, but caution prevails in selecting mentors and networks. Bethany's mentoring story and involvement with the fundraising professionals' association denoted her willingness as an Asian American to collaborate with an African American woman. Her colleague was an assistant director of giving whose background was in music. She was interested in establishing formal mentoring programs to engage and increase the number of professionals of color in fundraising. In the past, mentors from the mainstream had been requested for the formal mentoring program.

Sarah concluded that mentoring depends on the person. She stressed that the benefit of having someone assist in the "navigation of the progress" was more urgent for her because of the professional mindset she had coming to the institution from corporate America. Sarah also discussed the social unrest in the United States in 2020; several universities started evaluating support systems for faculty of color and not bypassing their needs or locating them in spaces where they may feel "isolated" and the students.

Overall, the women believed that informal and formal mentors played a significant role in helping them to navigate leadership pathways. They mentioned that without mentors, seeking advancement in higher-level roles may not be fully understood due to the internal and external hidden processes. Locating mentors to confide in may be equally challenging. However, more transparency would help to improve their status.

Summary

The first RQ focused on understanding the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The four themes that emerged included their

experiences in leadership development and training programs, navigating the pathways and multiple identities as women of color, and embracing intentionality. The participants described their experiences in leadership paths through traditional and non-traditional routes, participating in signature leadership programs to assist women in advancing to the presidency. They believed those programs encouraged and provided the uplift to envision themselves as leaders. The three presidents have participated in ACE, Kaleidoscope, Kellogg's, Mandel's, and state and city-led leadership programs. A few vice presidents and deans also had attended, and one participated in Harvard's graduate faculty training.

Two women deans received nominations from their supervisors and bosses, and one by her president for Aspen Fellows Program, which is highly selective. The directors mainly had experienced some leadership development and training and discussed not having those programs accessible. The majority discussed the positive and negative aspects of being a leader and helping other women advance in leadership based on their experiences navigating pathways. The participants attended conferences for professional development and in-house training and felt comfortable among their peers. For example, they attended conferences such as AAHHE and SACNAS, where their experiences could be validated. After attending leadership development and training, professional development, and conferences, the majority felt empowered and shared those experiences with other women through coaching and launching similar programs at their institutions.

The participants shared how their multiple identities impacted them in leadership roles at PWIs. The majority focused on the significance of their cultural backgrounds, traditions, customs, and allegiances instead of adapting fully to mainstream ideologies.

They felt the need to educate the mainstream about their culture, languages, and tribal affiliations. The participants stressed the need for institutions to not lump racial and ethnic groups together because of holding their own identities. A few discussed their allegiances, feeling more comfortable returning home to unleash mainstream modes and titles. The women also described instances of embracing intentionality in their leadership roles when they felt the need to speak up in meetings, advance their careers, and fight against challenges and barriers.

The second RQ focused on exploring their experiences and perceptions with race and gender in leadership pathways at PWIs. The participants described multiple experiences at the intersection of race and gender. Four themes emerged from their responses and entailed the intersection of race and gender, persisting through stereotypes and biases, tones of patriarchal enforcements, and working in structured systems. The women expressed feeling silenced and unable to contribute at times in male-controlled environments. Specifically, the participants were persistently stereotyped and labeled as angry when speaking up, discounted, and undermined. However, they used the moments to educate their colleagues. Others found it challenging to navigate the pathways based on being underestimated as leaders, constantly being in teaching modes, and defending their credentials and accomplishments. A few benefited from the intersection of race and gender in their roles encountering social change platforms.

The third RQ focused on how women of color describe their mentoring experiences while working at PWIs. Six themes emerged: sought out mentors and role models, experiences of not having mentors, predominately White male mentors, personal

mentoring models, building networks with caution, and informal and formal mentoring programs. The majority described experiences of not having mentors and role models but were intentional about finding those who fit their needs. While the participants wanted to have mentoring experiences, some suggested taking precautions. Mentors were found in informal and formal settings, although not as transparent. The participants relied on peers and colleagues, internally and externally, to form networks.

A few women had high-level leaders to serve as mentors and role models. They related having predecessors, chairs and deans, supervisors, and bosses who encouraged and provided assessments of their leadership pathways. These leaders planned their next steps behind the scenes and served as their champions and sponsors. While some had positive experiences, others felt betrayed by mentors who took credit for their work. The majority wanted to have mentoring experiences, although some managed to do well on their own.

In Chapter 5, I discuss an interpretation of the findings and a review of the research literature in Chapter 2 to interpret and analyze the findings. Also, I discuss the conceptual frameworks, limitations of the study, and recommendations. Finally, the chapter provides an implication for positive social change and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand the experiences of women of color in high-level leadership roles at U.S. colleges and universities that are PWIs. I interviewed African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Latina, and Native American women about their experiences and perceptions in leadership pathways and the intersection of gender, race, and mentoring. A purposive sampling approach was used to identify informants who participated in 45- to 60-minute semistructured interviews, the data from which were coded and thematically analyzed to reveal findings.

The findings from this study confirm and extend the knowledge of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Through thematic analysis, 14 themes emerged describing the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. In addition, four themes emerged from RQs 1 and 2, respectively. The themes that corresponded with RQ1 included experiences in leadership development and training programs, navigation of pathways, multiple identities of women of color, and embrace of intentionality. The themes from RQ2 focused on the intersection of race and gender, persistence through stereotypes and biases, tones of patriarchal enforcements, and work in structured systems. RQ3 focused on mentoring experiences; key themes included being sought-out mentors and role models, not having mentors, having predominately White men as mentors, personal mentoring models, building networks with caution, and engaging in informal and formal mentoring. The themes discussed will both confirm and extend the knowledge for this study. The three RQs that I sought to answer in this qualitative study were

RQ1: What are the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs?

RQ2: How do women of color describe their experiences with race and gender in leadership pathways at PWIs?

RQ3: How do women of color in leadership roles describe their mentoring experiences working at PWIs?

Interpretation of the Findings

Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality Conceptual Frameworks

Black feminist thought (Collins, 2009) and intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016) conceptual frameworks undergirded this study on the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. Few women of color advance to the presidency in higher education institutions, and almost all encounter persistent challenges and barriers in male-dominated spaces (Cheaupalakit, 2014; Gray et al. 2018; Hill & Wheat, 2017). The Black feminist thought constructs of knowledge, consciousness, and self-empowerment may serve to mitigate the obstacles and barriers of women of color who reach the presidency. Only three women in the study were presidents, and all were African American. The majority served in other high-level leadership roles at their institutions. In the study, Clement, Priscilla, and Ruth described their experiences as presidents, although Priscilla and Ruth both took nontraditional paths. Clement shared her experiences taking the traditional route and "not missing any steps on the ladder." Clement was knowledgeable, conscious, and empowered to seek leadership development and training to improve her chances of becoming a president because she did not see

herself in that role. Priscilla also mentioned that she knows how to "get to the seat of the president." Ruth explained her steps to the presidency and the preparation. Deborah, a dean, was conscious when she stated that "you have to ask for what you want and with a price tag." Deborah had experienced her colleagues advancing in their leadership roles and later spoke up about wanting the same.

Black feminist thought also focuses on the impact of institutional domains of power. Collins (2009) described four institutional domains of power that had prevented women of color from advancing to high-level leadership roles because of the intersection of race and gender. The four domains of power include interpersonal, cultural, structural, and disciplinary as the matrix of domination. In this study, the interpersonal refers to the treatment of individuals and their feelings of exclusion or as outsiders. For example, Sarah felt excluded when not asked to attend crucial meetings to receive her tenure and work on team research projects. Sarah's refusal of such treatment led to her bypassing bureaucratic layers to confront the chair. The disciplinary aspects coincide with maintaining the status quo through speech tones and administering punishments for resistance (Collins, 2009).

The culture of an institution reflects its commonly held traditions, belief, values, and behaviors of individuals and refers to its climate (Carroll, 2017; Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Vakalahi & Davis, 2015; Vargas, 2011). The structural dynamics describe the patronizing hierarchal authorities that may represent each level. For example, Esther felt ostracized at a leadership meeting for admissions when she provided her input on the preferred definitions for racial and ethnic

groups. She mentioned doing some research focused on the differences between *Latina/o* and *Latinx* to the leaders. According to Esther, the terminology is "gender fluid." After that, she heard chuckles, was silenced, and was told that "the university preferred to use just Latinx." Esther felt humiliated and said it was a "they kind of conversation." She did not want to speak on that topic again because it had impacted her negatively.

Black feminist thought initially underscored the experiences of Black women, although Black women and other women of color had experienced similar challenges and barriers in the workplace and society (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Particularly, women of color shared similar challenges and barriers at the intersection of race and gender, and those experiences led to multiple discrimination cases. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Harvard legal scholar, developed the term *intersectionality*. According to Crenshaw, intersectionality kept women of color from advancing in leadership roles, and those intersections also dominated criminal justice cases (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Thus, intersectionality plays a role in helping women of color understand their multiple identities at the intersections in higher education and societal levels.

Experiences in Leadership Development and Training Programs

I interviewed 13 women of color in leadership roles at PWIs. Only three were presidents, and the remaining 10 served in other high-level leadership roles. The contemporary literature mirrors that few women of color advance to the presidency (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Espinosa et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2018). In addition, the experiences of women of color in leadership development programs are limited (Carroll, 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gray et al., 2018; Maranzan et al., 2013; Sy et al.,

2017). Two of the women presidents, Clement and Ruth, had participated in signature
leadership programs at ACE, Bryn Mawr, and HERS for women advancing to high-level
leadership roles in higher education. Priscilla had participated in a civic leadership
program and in-house training. Deborah and Faith had a combination of experiences in
signature leadership programs. Deborah's president extended an invitation for her
nomination to become an Aspen Fellow, a program her president had completed.

Esther, Euodia, and Mary expressed concerns regarding their non-participation in
leadership development and lack of availability. A supervisor told Esther she was
"inarticulate when it came to talking about career development." Esther stated:

> And I was just like, oh, wow! You tell me that; I'm going to change your mind.
> And so I went, and I took a Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF)
> course, and I ended up becoming an instructor, and I published articles in the
> National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and, I mean, I did all of
> these things because that's how I've grown up. Anybody who told me I can't do
> something or I'm not good at something that was exactly the impetus I needed to
> prove them wrong.

Euodia mentioned that leadership development was challenging for her and stated: "I've
had no formal preparation." Mary, for instance, felt the leadership development programs
such as the Big 10 Academic Alliance were "not accessible" to someone like her. Some
had not participated in formal leadership development programs but pursued informal
training and learned from their colleagues. The participants helped other women along
their career paths and, in some cases, developed leadership programs. Many felt

empowered to orchestrate programs at their institutions as a result of not having themselves. Collins (2009) described this as the politics of empowerment when women, through their experiences, advocate for change and become insiders.

The participants had experiences in nontraditional and traditional paths to leadership. The majority advanced through entry- and midlevel roles. Gray et al. (2018) mentioned that nontraditional and traditional leadership routes could lead to the presidency. A few of the traditional paths involved serving as faculty and in midlevel and senior executive roles. The participants pursued advanced studies and PhDs and were aware of the credentials needed to succeed in higher education, although their qualifications and skills were often microinvalidated (Carroll, 2017). Microinvalidations refer to subjecting individuals to negative experiences that mostly lead to undermining. Similar to the women in this study, Carroll described not receiving the same treatment as her White counterparts as a faculty member having those credentials at PWIs (Carroll, 2017).

Navigating the Pathways

The participants had varied experiences navigating pathways at PWIs. Researchers have emphasized that paths to leadership for women and women of color are complicated and lack transparency (Gray et al., 2018; Hekman et al., 2017; Maranzan et al., 2013; Sy et al., 2017). The participants described their experiences navigating pathways that entailed understanding expectations, advancements, educational pursuits, the role of supervisors and bosses in the process, and "being the only one." Cheaupalakit (2014) found that one of the barriers to women advancing was the lack of preparation.

Deborah perceived that she had to prioritize career planning to legitimize advancements intentionally. She felt that having a PhD would minimize disruptions such as pigeonholing when pursuing high-level leadership roles and ensure that her qualifications, skills, leadership development, and training matched those expectations.

Moreover, Deborah described the need to have the "credentials of the academy." Elizabeth perceived from her experiences that having the credentials did not guarantee acceptance and was met with skepticism in meetings when providing input. Elizabeth had experienced three different moves and stated, "even with that can be very isolating, and the more you move up the ranks, the number people of color that you see sometimes is very limited." Hill and Wheat (2017) found that women's agency helps them understand their needs, such as advanced education, development, training, and mentoring. Elizabeth articulated that she wanted to advance and realized it could be isolating.

Some participants knew what it would take to navigate their pathways. Clement expressed that she "did not miss any steps on the ladder" and had followed the traditional path to the presidency. She had experiences working in five different PWIs over her 30-year career in the United States, and in that time, no women of color were in leadership roles. Her portfolio has included working as an academic, a provost, and currently serving in a presidency. Clement's participation in the ACE leadership development program prepared her for the presidency. The prerequisite for ACE entails moving through a highly selective nomination process. When she worked at another institution with the provost, she felt that the president was not relational like her president. Through

an assessment, she eventually learned the "do's and don'ts of leadership," and the provost helped her understand more about connections.

Sarah primarily navigated her leadership path without the assistance of supervisors and bosses. She described unexpectedly navigating paths when she started as an adjunct faculty, assessed the qualifications for a funding program seeking industry professionals, and managed an endowment. She had become a graduate program director and stated that "she did not have good mentoring" and would not recommend this path while on a pre-tenure track. Those unexpected paths led to becoming an associate provost. The institution because of this later developed a better mentoring program for faculty. Cheaupakalit (2014) also emphasized other factors contributing to women not advancing to the presidency, such as an absence of mentoring.

Furthermore, Miriam received the support of her supervisors and bosses who had navigated pathways, although she felt "juggling" those aspirations included receiving validations from White males in leadership. Bethany had experienced pursuing advancement as a director with a male boss and, she did not receive the position. Afterward, she went to her boss that stated she was not a "thoroughbred." Bethany's colleagues encouraged her to seek assistance from human resources and refused, mentioning "taking her talents elsewhere." Liang and Peters-Hawkins (2017) found that stereotypes and biases and not receiving advancements led to self-assessments for a group of Asian American women. The women were resilient to negativity, which aided them in developing forms of resistance.

Multiple Identities of Women of Color

The participants expressed their multiple identities as women of color through the lens of their cultures, traditions, upbringings, and leadership roles. Baca-Zinn and Zambrana (2019) emphasized that scholars continue to exclude Chicanas/Latinas' voices. Collins (2009) and Davis Maldonado (2015) described that Black women are treated differently from Black men and White women who tend to receive privileges. According to Liang-Peter Hawkins (2017), Asian American women's perspectives are not included much in higher education research. Also, Euodia and Miriam described experiences of not having the Indigenous perspective adequately understood.

According to Elizabeth, an African American woman, the precautions concerning lumping racial and ethnic groups together are essential to understanding individuals' perspectives. Lydia noted that bumping Asian Americans to Whites was not warranted because most were STEM faculty, and few students attended the university. Few African American women had shared their childhood and cultural upbringings compared to the other women of color. However, Clement mentioned that she did not grow up in a household of professionals.

Clement took the traditional route to the presidency. Davis and Maldonado emphasized that other factors such as childhood experiences helped shape the identities and development of African American women leaders in their study. Mary, Esther, and Bethany shared their experiences from a cultural perspective. They threaded the needles from a cultural perspective when describing their cultures, traditions, and upbrings, and pathways to leadership. Murakami (2018) emphasized that multiple identities can impact

leadership paths. Mary shared her experiences of having parents' that supported her dreams of becoming an astronaut, being from Colombia, South America, and the predominate culture. Mary later became an administrative director in higher education. In her experience, her race had never been an issue, but gender has been.

Similarly, Esther shared her experiences of having parents from two different cultural backgrounds. Her father was from Nicaragua and mother of European descent, and he preferred the latter over the former. Esther's identities were in flux until she learned about her Latin heritage.

Murakami et al.'s (2018) study of Latina administrators mentioned that childhood experiences impact identities. Esther pursued becoming a Spanish teacher as an undergraduate and changed her major in graduate school to higher education. She also expressed an affinity for helping underrepresented students as a resident hall director. Although not visibly a person of color, Esther described her experiences when in positions of power. She used her positions of power to speak on behalf of underrepresented students as a career development professional, which Collins (2009) referred to as advocacy. Esther also practiced code-switching and hypervigilance when using her positions of power (Apugo, 2019). Bethany came to the United States from Malaysia and desired to learn more about the American culture as an undergraduate student at a small college. She stated that she did not prefer just mingling with the Asian American students. As a result, she participated in extra-curricular activities that led to relationships with students from diverse backgrounds.

Embracing Intentionality

The women voiced their willingness to educate others as a form of resistance

against the challenges and barriers experienced. They served in their leadership roles and

as educators to resist oppressive institutional practices and systems (Collins, 2009;

Collins & Bilge, 2016). The participants deemed moments to "speak up" when they felt

empowered, discounted, and in positions to make a difference. For example, Priscilla

took tactical steps to discuss the United States' insurrection at a city leaders' meeting.

She felt the need for a moment of silence and requested to be on the agenda. Priscilla, one

of few persons of color in the city's leadership program, afterward discussed with leaders

in the room their need to speak up against social injustices and misconstrued legislations

that maintained the status quo. She had reminisced on the silence after her speech.

Priscilla felt compelled to speak on those topics because of her experiences with having

"voice quivers."

Denise and Deborah provided insights on being intentional about advancements.

They agreed that leadership preparation, competencies, and speaking up regarding their

expectations were vital to advancing. Senior executives in corporations emphasized that

leadership preparation, decision-making, and confidence were necessary for women to

pursue advancements (DBPI, 2017). Deborah had discussed having a boss that

discounted and sabotaged her as a leader and did not back down. Sarah had expressed

that setting high expectations for herself led to understanding faculty and administrative

leadership tracks and discovered a passion for the latter. Mary's involvement in an anti-

racist task force allowed her to speak up, intentionally perceiving climates on her campus.

Intersection of Race and Gender

Few studies have focused on the intersection of race and gender of women of color in leadership roles at PWIs. Women of color in leadership stories are few concerning their development at the intersection of race and gender (Davis & Maldonado, Jean-Marie, 2011; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011). In the past, their voices were unheard and shared from a male's perspective (Gipson et al., 2017; Hannum et al., 2015). The participants in this study described their experiences at the intersection of race in leadership paths at PWIs. They shared the positive and negative aspects of leading, persisting through stereotypes and biases, tones of patriarchal enforcements, and working in structured systems. The participants experienced intersectionality in these aspects and described their challenges and barriers as leaders. The women shared their stories of being labeled as angry, the lumping and bumping of racial and ethnic groups, speaking up in boardrooms and meetings in non-threatening manners, maintaining the status quo, reckoning with code-switching, and asking for what they wanted.

While the women mentioned celebrating accomplishments, some had different perspectives on the intersection of race and gender, such as Mary, Priscilla, and Ruth. Ruth, for example, perceived it not so much as the intersections but mainly as a gender issue when she stated institutions are not "female-friendly" and tend to accommodate males. She emphasized tendencies to overlook their dual roles and multiple identities in managing childcare, transportation, spouses, and caregiving for aging parents. Several

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researchers described the significance of having family involvement and support in higher education and as leaders (Angel et al. 2013; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Maranzan et al. 2013; Oxendine et al. 2018). Fundamentally, women need more supportive structures in the workforce.

Persisting through Stereotypes and Biases

The persistence of stereotypes and biases has kept women of color from advancing in high-level leadership roles (Beckwith 2016; [DBPI, 2017]; Gray et al., 2018). Most participants expressed daily encounters with stereotypes and biases, microaggressions, silencing, having seats at the table, "working twice as hard," and having to operate in "chilly climates" at their institutions. Those challenges and barriers occur at the intersections of race and gender in the matrix of domination (Collins, 2009; Collins, Bilge, 2016). Some participants had experiences of not being perceived as the supervisor or the person in charge, trouble entering faculty clubs, and assumptions about their qualifications. A few had experienced negative labels and attachments about their hair maintenance and styles. For instance, Black women's expression of their identities through hair braiding, cultures, and spiritualties have not received much acceptance (Curtis, 2017). Elizabeth and Priscilla both agreed that those are individual preferences.

Mainstreamed cultures have depicted beauty standards and images for women of color (Collins, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Lewis et al., 2016). Women of color's beauty and images are often viewed negatively in the media. Sarah mentioned that a co-worker and his wife viewed "Boyz n the Hood" to understand racism. Miriam described her experiences as an education advocate on the perceptions of Native Americans, their

portrayals in the media and "John Wayne movies, having warrior mentalities, and teepees."

Lewis et al. (2016) found that Black women in a focus group described examples of being labeled and perceived as angry and having names applied to their bodily features. They also found that labels and names are thematic and unique to racial and ethnic groups and required exploration. The Black participants described being labeled "angry" or "angry Black woman when "speaking up" in boardrooms and meetings. In addition, Faith found that educating her peers often led to aggravation in meetings as the leader. They mostly deferred to the White males during the question and answer period, although she had the expertise. She described this as being "presumed incompetent." Euodia described feeling angry and discredited when her contributions to scholarships did not receive validation. Those experiences endorse the politics of empowerment (Collins, 2009). Specifically, Collins (2009) stated that political structures perpetuate stereotypes and biases that benefit mainstream cultures. Nevertheless, the women persisted through stereotypical biases and helped educate their constituents as social change advocates.

Tones of Patriarchal Enforcements

The participants encountered challenges and barriers that had impacted their leadership roles. They described experiences of being scrutinized, penalized, humiliated, and subjugated in male-dominated hierarchies (Collins, 2009). Maranzan (2013) found that First Nation women in leadership workshops' perceptions resulted from the disparities they had encountered through patriarchies. Deborah, Euodia, Mary, and

Miriam described experiences of being sabotaged, victimized, and reminded of their places in the patriarchies. Miriam mentioned that her "matrilineal clan systems" leadership role was not problematic but respected. However, she exclaimed that males are primarily paternalistic leaders. Mary, as a young girl, believed that something was wrong when people treated her differently. She experienced mistreatments of a graduate school advisor who preferred speaking to males. The males would approach him, knowing he liked talking about sports. Deborah used it as an arsenal when in meetings with males. She also had a boss who intensely sabotaged her work when he came on board, and their meetings were disruptive because of his patriarchal tendencies.

Working in Structured Systems

The participants worked primarily at PWIs during their leadership journeys and described the impact of those experiences. The women expressed their experiences as feeling not welcomed, excluded, and tokenized. Some believed that institutional structures had prevented them from advancing as faculty and staff of color (Jones et al., 2015). Jones et al. (2015) found that they lacked transparency concerning tenure and promotions, did not receive fair treatment, and had heavier workloads. They also had mentoring, and retention concerns for having a diverse workforce, including women of color. Discovering what is pertinent for tenure could lead to more women of color in paths to the presidency because of institutional traditional pathway expectations (Johnson, 2017).

Women of color's advanced degree attainment has not impacted their advancement and earnings at elite institutions. Researchers have consistently noted that

women of color experience systemic challenges and barriers resulting in their lack of pipeline accessibility and earnings potential (Silbert & Dubé, 2021). Silbert and Dubé (2021) also discussed recommendations for instituting accountability and transparency policies to ensure institutional compliance to circumvent gender and race barriers. Few women of color are in higher-level roles at elite institutions due to imposed pipeline power and pay gaps. Having women of color in leadership paths may positively impact higher education institutions.

Because of her experiences as an adjunct faculty, Sarah mentioned that early in her career, she did not believe that mentoring was too good for faculty. Sarah discussed that in her 22 years of working experiences, only three women of color had advanced to high-level leadership roles, and she referred to caste systems. Bethany mentioned that levels of comfort with people of color as leaders were challenging for mainstream culture. Only three women had served in their leadership roles for more than six years. According to Beckwith et al. (2016), the glass ceiling has kept women of color from advancing to high-level leadership roles in corporations and structuralized mechanics, including stereotypes, biases, exclusions, and discrimination. In essence, working in structured systems has imposed limitations on women of color navigating leadership pathways.

Mentoring Experiences

Researchers found that mentoring impacts women and women of color advancing in leadership roles (Apugo, 2019; Brower et al., 2019; Tran, 2014; Hill & Wheat, 2017). The participants described their mentoring experiences in leadership paths at PWIs as

very clear regarding their desire to have mentors and role models. The participants

decided to become mentors because of their lack of experience with mentors. Clement

stated that "I wanted to be the mentor that I wish I had" because doing the work alone

was challenging. Clement also discussed that "mentors by definition had to be

predominately White males" because no women of color were in high-level leadership

roles. Hill and Wheat (2017) found that the men compared to women in leadership were

not complementary and resulted in continuity gaps. While they concurred that mentoring

could be impactful, reservations ensued regarding helping the women along their career

paths. They felt the women had used their experiences and strengths to advance, which

entailed having multiple dimensions. Faith and Priscilla described having multiple

sources for mentoring depending on the situation. Faith discussed pursuing mentors with

expertise to understand other managerial areas.

        After completing a leadership program at Bryn Mawr, Deborah expressed feeling

transformed, motivated, and she eventually led a leadership program for women seeking

to advance with her colleagues. She experienced not having mentors; therefore, a family

member encouraged her to write about those experiences. Miriam discussed that

mentoring could pass knowledge through the ranks. Several women were sought out as

mentors and had earned reputations for their expertise and knowledge. Tran (2014)

emphasized that women at HSIs were "solicited in action" (p. 313) for mentoring because

of their talents to lessen their exclusions. Tran also discussed the women having male and

female mentors, multiple dimension aspects, informal and formal mentors that included

family and friends.

Furthermore, the participants discussed the impact of being intentional when pursuing mentors. Ruth advised against just seeking mentors in high-level positions. She had sought mentors not just in leadership paths because of her learning interest as a president. Ruth also believed that matching was not an option and suggested letting it happen intentionally or through casual meetings. She found impromptu meetings worked better than matches and did not make those experiences seem awkward. Clement charged her leadership team with finding people who are not just seeking titles and promotions but loyal and hardworking for leadership roles.

Black feminist thought and intersectionality conceptual frameworks were used to understand the experiences and perceptions of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. The themes that emerged helped to describe the positive and negative aspects of their experiences navigating leaders' pathways, leadership development and training, and persisting through stereotypes and biases, and working in structured environments that were mostly male-dominated. The women of color had experienced prolonged periods of not having mentors and role models and had become mentors due to working in non-supportive systems. However, the majority found that being in leadership roles also provided them with channels for teachable moments. Both frameworks supported the interpretation of the findings for this qualitative study.

Limitations

In the initial proposal for this study, one of the limitations was the potential concern that the participants would not be accessible due to their high-level positions. However, this proved incorrect, and most women of color in leadership roles at PWIs

were accessible for interviews. Through Linkedin professional networks, organizations, and public websites in the United States, targeted women received notifications. The participants mainly were from the Midwest and Northeast regions. As a result, women's voices in the west and southern regions regarding their experiences in leadership did not appear in the study. The women responded promptly to email invitations and phone calls and, because of COVID-19 school mandates, understood that face-to-face meetings were not permissible. Because of the pandemic, Zoom meetings were approved for the interviews, making it possible to observe verbal and non-verbal nuances of the participants. As a result, I was unable to observe the women in their natural settings. However, Zoom meetings worked due to limitations of travel that would have made it challenging to interview women in different regions.

The transferability of this qualitative study may pose limitations. The research design, sampling, methods, and RQs were to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs. Women of color in leadership roles at HBCUs, HSIs, TCUs, were excluded from this study. Therefore, the transferability of this study is limited based on contextual intentions and not generalizable. However, the voices of women of color from those institutions may have provided more depth to the interviews.

Some potential biases may also have impacted the study, providing limitations. For example, I am African American and female. Also, I have worked in leadership roles at PWIs and may have tendencies due to those experiences and perspectives. However, to interrupt thoughts of having shared similar experiences, reflective journaling helped to minimize biases. Data collected after the interviews were later transcribed, summarized,

emailed for feedback, and ensured accuracy. This process entailed member checks that included the participants. The researcher's positionality is vital for qualitative research because of the researcher's involvement in the interview processes (Patton, 2015). I was careful not to reflect or influence the participant responses during the interviews.

Recommendations

The experiences of women of color in leadership paths entailed understanding their perspectives at the intersection of race and gender and mentoring at PWIs. From the study, recommendations ensued concerning extending the voices of women of color in leadership roles at PWIs. The first is a longitudinal study to track the women's experiences from entry to mid-level and high-level leadership roles. The tracking could help to evaluate those experiences and implement any changes that may impede their advancements.

In the study, the women described experiences of not having mentors and role models. The research suggested that mentoring can impact the development and progress of women of color in leadership—few women of color advance to the presidency (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gasman et al., 2015; Espinosa et al., 2019). Thirteen women participated in the study, and only three were in presidencies. Self-empowerment reinforced and impacted their leadership, development, and training. Some suggested that women aspiring to leadership need to ask for what they want, be intentional, and have the credentials. However, advanced degrees and credentialing do not guarantee their recruitment, promotion, and selection to high-level leadership roles. Women of color have outpaced men of all races and ethnicities pursuing advanced degrees (de Brey et al.,

2019), suggesting that senior leaders could implement promotional strategies along leadership pathways for women of color with their supervisors, bosses, and human resources. The second recommendation is to track aspiring women of color in higher education leadership and doctoral programs at PWIs. Faith offered some concluding thoughts, particularly for Black women, when she stated:

> And we still have a long way to go in terms of working on some of our pipeline issues. And certainly, certain fields as well, so we need to get, you know, young Black women into PhD programs. Get them through successfully and encourage them to come back and work at different institutions and especially predominately White institutions.

Some of the women had no mentors or role models at their postsecondary institutions. From the results, the women mentioned that finding them was limited. A participant shared being overlooked in her graduate studies program when White female professors offered help to students of the same race. Furthermore, having access to mentors in graduate programs and careers and implementing strategies for their success would be impactful. The participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of having mentors as leaders. A few had mentioned having male and female mentors and the importance of White male involvement.

The third recommendation is to compare White women and women of color in leadership roles at PWIs in a similar study to understand their experiences at the intersection of race and gender and mentoring. White women or men were not candidates for purposive sampling for this study. This study could assist leaders with understanding

more about any differences, the variables identified, and where gaps may reside. For example, white women tend to advance more to presidential roles than women of color. The findings from Hannum et al. (2015) included the experiences and barriers of both groups but not at the intersections. The White women and women of color reported instances of sabotages, scrutiny, and lack of support systems and felt the need to make a difference in their roles. However, the percentages reported were more significant for women of color than the White women in those categories. They also perceived accountability differences between the men and women.

Implication

The understanding of the experiences and perspectives of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs is limited. Few research studies have focused on their accomplishments, social change as leaders, and desire to dismantle the marginalization, discrimination, and alienation that persist in the corridors of those institutions. These persistent challenges and barriers entail revisiting the mission, purpose, and strategic plans at the mega, macro, and micro levels to evaluate the performance of non-compliant leaders (Kaufman et al., 2003). For instance, the internal and external constituents, including presidents, cabinets, board of trustees, accreditation, and governances, must also be revisited. The constituents' allegiances to implementations and vision impact women of color in leadership paths. Leaders who champion change and the vision assess their readiness for change (Spiro, 2011). Those in leadership roles must be willing to change the capabilities and identify individuals, groups, and institutional levels of resistance. In this study, the aim was to explore the experiences of women of color in

leadership paths at PWIs. Several of the results, themes, and findings spoke to their career path trajectories as leaders.

Identifying problematic systemic areas may be impactful for leaders at their institutions. Leaders can seek to understand the experiences of women of color in leadership paths at PWIs through the lens of champions. Researchers have studied the significance of champions for women in leadership roles and their advancement (Apugo, 2019; Beckwith et al., 2016; Brower et al., 2019; [DBPI, 2017]). Champions understand leadership's positive and negative aspects and have investigative natures concerning their institutions' structural, interpersonal, disciplinary, and cultural dynamics at the intersections.

The findings revealed under the 14 themes that women of color leaders experienced isolation, being the only one, working twice as hard, constantly educating and defending themselves, speaking out on social injustices, having unique identities, and not backing down and the challenges of locating mentors. Educational institution leaders should consider setting up town hall meetings, forums, and informal and formal mentoring programs that encourage women of color in leadership paths and those not desiring those pathways to humanize the climates for all. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, crafted in 1948 and translated into 500 languages, set forth standards for adopting 70 human rights treaties and preambles globally (U.N. Charter art. 1-30). The declaration included the voices of people from different nations. Likewise, higher education leaders must build progressive networks, commit research dollars, and provide incentives for scholars to uplift the voice of the people and marginalized.

Moreover, champions could successfully influence individuals at all levels to understand the persistent challenges and barriers of women of color at the intersection of race, gender, and mentoring relationships since they are aware that diversity implementations are necessary for the overall growth of the institution. Consequently, they can ensure women are not kept at the margins, have voices and seats at the table, are visible and respected along their leadership paths. Harts (2019) emphasized for women of color to no longer settle on working hard and stated, "We are ready to build our own tables, sit at yours, and create our own place settings if need be" (p.7). The women of color described experiences of embracing intentionality to confront those challenges and barriers in their leadership paths. In *Becoming, Barack* and *Michelle Obama*, the former president and first lady, respectively, of the United States, talked about having a seat at the table. Michelle, a graduate of Harvard Law School, wanted to secure her seat at the law firm of Sidley and Austin. Barack mentioned that she must look beyond just having a seat (Obama, 2018).

Champions must patronize their leadership development and find ways to increase women of color in those roles through mentoring. The participants discussed having "zero to little" mentors in their leadership pathways. However, some of the women had become champions and sponsors, and mentors. Finding mentors and role models at the onset of their leadership paths requires prioritizations among leaders at PWIs. Prioritizations include opportunities for informal and formal mentoring, welcoming initiatives, and building diverse networks. Positive social change can happen when champions engage in proactive mentoring approaches, equity assessments at all levels,

implementations, celebrate accomplishments, inform policies and practices, and involve internal and external constituents. Surna (2018) stated that "the challenge is to include all voices at all levels of leadership" (p. 52). This study will help inform policymakers, researchers, practitioners, and women of color who aspire to leadership and navigate the ranks.

Conclusion

This study provided a platform for women of color to share their experiences and perspectives in leadership paths in PWIs. Moreover, to understand the intersection of race and gender, including mentoring. The women were experienced trailblazers, resilient, and had multiple identities and uniqueness. They helped thread the needles and emerging themes words, phrases, and quotations. Although few had them, they became champions, sponsors, and mentors for women. The participants were enthusiastic about the study and Zoom meetings while leading through the COVID-19 pandemic, elections, riots, protests, and insurrections. The majority were empowered to speak up for social change in their leadership circles and campuses.

Few women of color have progressed to the highest level at PWIs. Some have led at elite or Ivy-league institutions, serving as presidents, provosts, deans, chairs, and vice presidents. The highest-paid woman working at an elitist institution is an African American, Shirley Ann Jackson, President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Silbert & Dubé, 2021). The impact of having strategic pay-scale and navigation monitors could increase, attract and retain women of color in leadership at PWIs combating systemic obstacles. Women of color pursuing higher-level positions must be prepared to meet the

challenges and barriers of operating in not always welcoming climates. However, to survive in those environments, women will need to understand their purpose and examine the mission and vision of prospective higher education institutions. Analyze and evaluate their strategic plans to determine fidelity to implementation at all levels and alignment.

The women in the study were primarily confident about their leadership development and training, education pursuits, and willingness to work hard to advance. The participants provided words of wisdom for aspiring women of color seeking advancement from "do's to don'ts." This study served as a platform for women of color to give a voice to the scholarship on leadership. Some spoke of the realities of being the only ones, overcoming stereotypes and biases, negotiating salaries, and embracing self-empowerment, and having to wear multiple hats—a few shared experiences related to gender and not a race. They shared struggles with female bosses and supervisors and experienced feelings of betrayal. My final thought is for women of color aspiring to advance is to do their homework and seek out mentors and role models in higher-level roles (see Harts, 2019). Also, to humanize their missions and visions for the 21st century and beyond, policymakers, leaders, and cabinets must enforce governmental mandates and interventions for higher education institutions.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Question 1- Can you tell me about your perceptions and experiences as a woman of color

in leadership paths at a predominately White institution?

Probing Questions:

    a) How would you describe yourself as a woman of color?

    b) What is your definition of a PWI or mainstream institution?

    c) Are there any positive or negative aspects of leadership advancement at a

        PWI? If, so can you share those experiences?

Question 2- How do women of color describe their experiences with race and gender in

leadership pathways at PWIs?

    Probing Questions:

    a) Can you describe the institutional climate on race and gender concerns at

        your campus?

    b) How has your culture and background influenced you in pursuing career paths

        as a woman?

    c) Are you perceived as being different compared to other minority women in

        leadership because of your upbringing? And, can you describe any differences

        that you may have encountered?

    d) What kind of stereotypes have you been challenged by, and how have you

        dealt with them as a leader?

Question 3- What experiences have you had with racial and gender biases at your workplace? If so, can you describe them and provide some examples?

Probing Questions:

a) What are the challenges and barriers of leading as a woman of color at a PWI? Have you experienced them in other workplace settings?

b) What are your perspectives on institutionalized racism and sexism?

c) Have you ever experienced being excluded because of your race and gender as a leader? If so, can you describe how it may have affected you?

Question 4- Have you experienced conflicts when sharing your perspectives in departmental meetings? If so, how have you handle them?

Probing Questions:

a) How would you describe your professional working experiences with supervisors and bosses as a leader?

b) Have you personally experienced being made to feel invisible among your White male or female counterparts?

c) What leadership style (s) do you prefer when working alongside your peers or subordinates?

Question 5- How do women of color in leadership roles describe their mentoring experiences while working at PWIs?

Probing Questions:

a) Can you describe your experiences with role models and mentors on your campus, and explain how they played a role in your development as a leader?

b) Have you had the experience of being mentored by both females and males?

c) Were there any differences that you perceived between female and male mentors?

Question 6- How would you describe any experience of being championed by senior executives, board members, emeritus, or someone outside of your organization?

Probing Questions:

a) Can you tell me about any specialized work assignments that you may have had, and who was responsible for your growth and development?

b) How have you negotiated for any pay increases on special projects, and did you request additional work assistance?

Question 7- What role do senior leaders play in sponsorship opportunities that are available on your campus?

Question 8- How would you describe your participation in leadership development and training programs at your institution?

Probing Questions:

a) Are there professional leadership development and training programs for women and minorities available on and off your campus?

b) How did you learn about advancement opportunities from mid-level to senior executive roles at your institution?

c) When was your last promotion, and how did you prepare for advancement?

d) If you were to design a leadership development for young women of color in higher education, what would you include in the curriculum?

Question 9- What advice would you give to aspiring women of color in preparation for

leadership in career paths at PWIs?

Question 10- Are there any other concluding thoughts or experiences that you would like

to include in your interview?