

2022

## **Relationship Between Mentorship and Career Advancement: African American Women in Higher Education Leadership**

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# Walden University

College of Education

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Torialyn Draper Crook

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

Relationship Between Mentorship and Career Advancement of African American Women in  
Higher Education Leadership

by

Torialyn Draper Crook

MS, Kaplan University, 2012

BS, Mississippi University for Women, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2022

## Abstract

The problem that was addressed through this study is the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore to what extent mentorship predicts the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. Guided by Kram's mentoring framework, 74 African American women who applied and obtained career advancement in the past 5 years in higher education leadership positions completed Toland Mentoring survey. The logistic regression model results showed statistical significance  $X^2(1) = 38.911, p < .001$ , meaning mentoring was a predictor of career advancement for African American women. The Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .54$  indicates that 54% of the variation in getting advancement or not was based on mentoring. The recommendations for further study include comparing female and male mentoring, establishing best practices at institutions where the presence of African American women in higher education is increased, and exploring the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs at institutions of higher education. Mentorship can lead to positive social change by cultivating an institutional climate that reflects the overall student population proportionally. From a social change perspective, increasing the mentorship opportunities of African American women within higher education institutions can provide crucial role models and reveal new approaches to address the populations they represent.

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## Dedication

I thank God for this journey, for without Him, it would not have been possible. This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my first-born son, Ian M. Crook. Also, I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my Grandparents, Arther and Annie Bell Draper and Julius and Allie B. Mason. I stand on the shoulders of your hard work, perseverance, and wisdom, and I hope I have made you proud! To Tylon, thank you for inspiring me to be my best self. This journey has been filled with triumphs and challenges and I thank you for standing with me. Langston and Noah, thank you for being my driving force. You encouraged me to push through and keep going! To my parents, Robert and Dorphine, you have given your all so that I could be my all. Thank you for your prayers, unwavering love, and support. It was your strength that helped to undergird me; constantly reminding me that with faith in God, all things are possible. To my sister Dawn, thank you for your encouragement and support throughout this process. I am grateful for our sisterhood, love, and lots of laughs. To my brother Tryence, thank you for supporting your little sister! Thank you to the Draper, Mason, and Crook families for the prayers, love, and support you have given me throughout this journey. Thank you to my friends (old and new) who showed me what it meant to have a great support system throughout this journey. To my mentor, Art Brooks, thank you for your mentorship and belief that I could make a difference in the lives of others. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to African American women aspiring to serve in higher education leadership who feel unnoticed.

## Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge my Doctoral Committee Members who were instrumental in my dissertation completion. First and foremost, I want to thank my Committee Chair, Dr. Sarah Inkpen. Thank you for seeing my vision and helping to bring it to life. When I faced what seemed like insurmountable odds, you continued to encourage me, provide wisdom, and advocate on my behalf when I needed it most. I am thankful for your influence, guidance, and expertise. To my Second Committee Member, Dr. Jamie Patterson, thank you for your invaluable contribution to this dissertation process. You have been a pleasure to work with and I appreciate you more than you may know! To Dr. Beate Baltes, thank you for lending your expertise to my dissertation process. Your feedback and insight helped to strengthen my research study and assist me in becoming a solid researcher. To the Walden administrators, instructors, and informal cohort members I was fortunate to cross paths with, thank you!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In career advancement in academic settings, mentorship is a fundamental and critical component of administrative leadership positions (Jackson, 2020; Jackson & Brouhard, 2019). Career mentoring focuses on the effects of professional and personal development (Townsend, 2020). As higher education institutions seek to have higher education leadership represent the ethnic student demographics, there is a shift toward a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable leadership representation (Johnson, 2021). In a recent survey conducted in 2019, minority women-led undergraduate and graduate enrollment, with African American women leading with 15.5% postbaccalaureate enrollment. The Association of American Colleges and Universities found that 62.2% of undergraduate and 70.2% of graduate students were African American women (Espinosa et al., 2019). By exploring the effect of mentoring on career advancement for women of color in postsecondary settings, the findings can contribute to more equitable learning environments. Students adequately represented within the campus environment have increased motivation relative to their academic performance (Washington Lockett et al., 2018). Further, in higher education, leadership is vital to academic and administrative success as it pertains to organizational development (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Sulastrri et al., 2020).

Mentorship is essential to career development among African American women and aids in practical skills development (West, 2017). This research study may inform leaders about the benefits of mentorship and career support (see Cross et al., 2019). Mentorship can lead to positive social change by cultivating an institutional climate that

reflects the overall student population of higher education colleges and universities (Seltzer, 2017). In this chapter, I will discuss the background, problem statement, purpose statement, research question and hypotheses, theoretical framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

### **Background**

Mentorship began as a concept from the mythical literature of *The Odyssey* (Homer & Wilson, 2018), which cultivated trust through direct instruction (Reis & Grady, 2020). Mentoring is described as a relationship between a less experienced person identified as the mentee and a more experienced person identified as the mentor (Reis & Grady, 2020). Mentoring has evolved into several methods that offer a unique option for the mentor and mentee that best fits the nature of their relationship. Though a mentor relationship is an overall benefit, its effectiveness varies among individuals. Early researchers defined mentoring as a two-dimensional relationship. Mentoring is often a relationship consisting of an exchange of behaviors between the mentee and mentor, a formal and informal communication process tailored to meet the mentee's needs and potentially the mentor's (Kram, 1983; Searby et al., 2015). In recent research, mentoring has been identified as essential to career development toward senior management positions (Jackson, 2020). Some researchers have defined mentorship as knowledge transfer, social capital, and psychosocial support related to career development (Mondisa, 2018; Searby et al., 2015).

In this study, I focused on mentorship as a predictor of advancement for African American women in higher education leadership positions. In the logistic regression analysis, the dichotomous dependent variable was whether the participant obtained advancement or not. The scale independent variable is the participant's score on the Toland mentoring survey. The dependent and independent variables are explored further in Chapter 2. This study is needed to ensure that diverse student bodies, such as African American women, have an adequate representation of diverse leadership within their institutions. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, higher education leadership is classified using three categories executive, administrative, and managerial. The focus of this study included all three categories.

### **Problem Statement**

African American women are underrepresented in higher education leadership positions in the United States (Jackson, 2020; West, 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, African American women comprised 7% of higher education leadership functions in 2016. Though more institutions seek to increase diversity and inclusion within higher education leadership positions, the lack of African American women in higher education leadership has been well documented (West, 2019). Despite growth in the amount of African American women contributing to the field of higher education, there continues to be a stagnation in the number of African American women obtaining leadership positions within higher education (Campbell & Campbell-Whatley, 2020).

In higher education, mentorship has been grounded as a mutually beneficial developmental relationship between junior and senior-level leaders (Cross et al., 2019; Hill & Wheat, 2017). Researchers have conducted multiple research studies indicating the importance of mentorship. For example, Cross et al. (2019) found that mentoring enhanced career development through professional growth. They also revealed that mentorship cultivated an environment of professional exposure, personal development, and job satisfaction. The gap in practice is the lack of research regarding the effects of mentorship on the career advancement of African American women. Examining the effects of mentorship on career advancement can lead to more opportunities for career advancement (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore to what extent mentorship predicts the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. The participants were 74 African American women who applied for career advancement in the past 5 years in higher education. A logistic regression analysis was used to determine the effect of mentoring on advancement in higher education. The dichotomous dependent variable is whether the participant obtained advancement or not. The scale independent variable is the participant's score on the Toland mentoring survey. The population was all African American women who applied for a higher education leadership position in the past 5 years.



A lack of mentorship may be one of the constraints that hinder the upward mobility of African American women in higher education leadership (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). One of the contributors to the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership is often not a lack of talent but a lack of mentorship throughout their careers (West, 2019). Currently, challenges in leadership advancement are often a result of the lack of talent development and guidance (Roberts et al., 2018). Within higher education leadership, it has been proposed that a lack of effective mentorship can lead to organizational stagnation and career stagnation for African American women (Jernigan et al., 2020).

### **Research Question and Hypotheses**

Research Question: To what extent does mentorship, measured by the Toland mentorship score, predict African American women's advancement in higher education leadership positions in the last 5 years?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: Mentorship, as measured by Toland's mentorship score, does not predict higher education leadership advancement for African American women over the past 5 years.

*H<sub>a</sub>*: Mentorship, as measured by Toland's mentorship score, does predict higher education leadership advancement for African American women over the past 5 years.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is Kram's (1983) theory of career mentoring. Kram's career mentoring theory addressed mentors and the mentoring relationship as having the potential to increase career and psychosocial development

functions (Ivey & Dupré, 2020; Webster & Brown, 2019). Kram's work has been used to measure multiple mentoring constructs, including the evolution of traditional face-to-face mentoring in the introduction of electronic communication in mentoring. Applying Kram's mentoring theory to this study helped to provide insight into the research problem identified within this study and emphasize the significance of a mentoring relationship and its relevance to career advancement among African American women.

### **Nature of the Study**

The study followed a quantitative, correlational design to explore the extent mentorship predicts the career advancement of African American women leaders in higher education. Quantitative research is social science research focusing on introducing change that affects selected outcomes through statistics (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A correlational research design is the exploration of relationships between two variables without control or manipulation from the researcher (Babbie, 2018). I used the Toland (2006) mentorship survey as a mentoring and career advancement instrument to best capture the responses of the research population.

### **Definitions**

*Career advancement:* For this study, career advancement refers to women who ascended to positions of power during their careers (Laukhuf & Malone, 2015).

*Higher education:* Studying beyond secondary school at an institution that offers programs awarding associate's, bachelor's, or higher degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

*Higher education leadership:* For inclusion criteria for my study, higher education leadership positions include assistant directors/managers, directors/managers, deans, chancellors/presidents, vice presidents, provosts, chief academic officers, board of director members, and department chairs (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

*Knowledge transfer:* Also referred to as knowledge sharing, is the recreation of the source's knowledge to the recipient in the sharing of experiences, skills, and strategies for professional development and execution of business strategies (Nan et al., 2013; Hannum et al., 2014; Zamfir, 2020). The mentor shares skills and knowledge with the mentee (Harris & Lee, 2018).

*Psychosocial support:* The support the mentor provides in the form of friendship, role modeling, and counseling that consists of professional and personal development for the mentee (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

*Social capital:* A network of individuals who share similar work and social environments (Timberlake, 2005).

*Sponsorship:* An aspect of the mentoring relationship in which the mentor recommends the mentee or protégé for promotions, later moves, and other recognitions, such as fellowship and research project recommendations (Searby et al., 2015).

### **Assumptions**

A few assumptions were made during this research study. The first assumption was that participants would answer the survey truthfully. My second assumption was that there would be an equitable distribution of the Toland survey. My third assumption was that the participants understood formal and informal mentoring.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

In this study, I focused on African American women across the United States in various higher education institutions who applied for career advancement within 5 years. The scope of this study was the effects of mentorship on career advancement among African American women in higher education leadership positions. The boundaries of the study consisted of African American women within higher education.

### **Limitations**

There were a couple of limitations within this study. A potential limitation was access to the sample—African American women in higher education who obtained career advancement within 5 years—however, the minimum number of participants (67) was met with a total of 74 participants. Another limitation of this study was whether participants answered truthfully (self-reporting).

### **Significance**

In this quantitative research study, I tested the effects of mentorship on career advancement for African American women in higher education leadership roles. The study's significance is to understand better the effect of mentoring on the professional advancement of African American women. If mentoring is effective, academic leadership may consider implementing mentorship workshops to aid the rise of underrepresented groups. The results of this study might also provide insights into best practices and leadership development strategies for higher education institutions to retain and advance African American women. Mentorship can lead to positive social change implications by cultivating an institutional climate that reflects the overall student population of higher

education colleges and universities (Seltzer, 2017). From a social change perspective, increasing the presence of African American women within higher education institutions can provide crucial role models and reveal new approaches to address the populations they represent (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

African American women are often placed into feminist theory conversations, not considering their unique lived experiences and attributions toward leadership (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The ideas relative to Black feminist, feminist, and sociocultural theories operate simultaneously, creating intersectionality. Though African American women are underrepresented in academia, obtaining family support, employing mentorship, and assisting others on the journey are ways to decrease underrepresentation (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

### **Summary**

Mentorship benefits women's career development and growth (Cross et al., 2019). Though there is research regarding career advancement among African American women in higher education, there is little research regarding the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership positions. In this study, I examined the effects of mentorship on career advancement for African American women in higher education leadership positions. In Chapter 2, I review peer-reviewed research as a basis for this study. In addition, this chapter will address mentorship, the search strategy, the theoretical framework, and recent relevant research regarding mentorship.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As mentioned, African American women are underrepresented in higher education leadership positions in the United States. In 2011, African American women leaders comprised 6% of managers, administrators, and executives in the U.S. degree-granting postsecondary institutions (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Additionally, African American women made up the total number of full-time employees at degree-granting postsecondary institutions compared to 41% of White women in 2011 (Hannum et al., 2014).

Adequate representation and engagement of African American women within higher education leadership positions is critical to the cultural development of an institution, as mentoring serves as a career development tool (Nixon, 2017). But women from underrepresented groups have sparse access to mentoring opportunities (Grant & Ghee, 2015), limiting the chances of developing mentoring relationships. Though some researchers have asserted that female leaders are more effective than males in the education sector (Freeman et al., 2019), barriers to advancement include the glass ceiling effect and career pipelines (American Association of University Women, 2016). African American women have further experienced gender and societal barriers that influence their ascension to higher education executive leadership roles (Brower et al., 2019). Environmental barriers that may impact the career advancement of African American women include a lack of mentoring opportunities and non-inclusive campus environments (Townsend, 2020). According to research, African American women are

thriving academically; however, they are underrepresented in higher education leadership positions in the United States (McChesney, 2018).

Because mentoring has a significant impact on whether women choose to pursue career advancement (Couture et al., 2020), this quantitative study explored the effects of mentorship on the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. The literature review focuses on the theoretical framework, a literary review of relevant previous research, which includes the mentors and mentees, and synthesizing the literature. The chapter ends with a summary.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I searched for literature to review for this study by utilizing the Walden University library databases for peer-reviewed journal articles and eBooks. I also expanded my search to include Google Scholar and Higher Education Resource Services (HERS). The investigation began using the broad topic of mentorship. Because there was an overwhelming amount of literature regarding mentorship, I narrowed the search to African American women in leadership and mentoring. Key search terms included *African American higher education leadership, mentoring, career advancement, workforce diversity, professional development, women in leadership, African American women and career advancement, underrepresentation, higher education leadership, higher education administration, leadership, and leadership pipeline knowledge transfer*. Another source of related literature came from Walden University Real-World Solutions to Real-World Problems: Expanding the Women-in-Leadership Advantage virtual conference presentations, which consisted of conversations surrounding mentorship and

career advancement among women. These presentations gave me critical information and resources to incorporate into my research study. The scope of the literature I searched for consisted of current peer-reviewed journal articles published within the last 5 years, apart from seminal literature, which predated 5 years to help establish validity.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A significant function of a mentoring relationship is to facilitate a person's career growth and success (Eastman & Williams, 1993). Shared empathy and congruence can enhance the mentoring relationship (Long, 2018). However, the scarcity of mentorship among African American women in higher education leadership positions is a contributing factor to the low representation of this population (West, 2017).

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Kram's mentoring theory, which involves career development and psychosocial perspectives. Kram delved into the inner workings of mentoring within a career development lens, supporting strategies such as formal and informal mentoring relationships and programming. Kram and Isabella's (1985) pivotal work was the first to identify the psychosocial and career dimensions of mentoring. Kram's seminal works suggested both the mentor and mentee would benefit. Kram indicated that when a career and psychosocial functions are in place, that is the cultivation of a mentoring relationship. Williams expounded on the seminal work of Kram, summarizing mentoring functions into the career and psychosocial functions (Eastman & Williams, 1993). Though career mentors provide career guidance, exposure, and networking opportunities, psychosocial mentors take a holistic approach, offering



emotional support (Murrell et al., 2021). The primary component of the psychosocial aspect of a mentoring relationship contains trust and respect (Beech & Brockbank, 1999).

Kram and Isabella (1985) also identified four phases of mentoring: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Kram's phases of the mentor-mentee relationship are outlined in the following sections. These phases are related to the current study's topic.

### **Initiation Phase**

The initiation phase is comprised of the mentor and mentee getting acquainted, establishing expectations, and learning more about work and psychosocial behavior. Psychosocial support is critical to the development of mentoring relationships. With underrepresentation comes the essential nature of psychosocial support. The African American women in this study provided more understanding of barriers perceived in developing similar relationships as recommended by Kram (1983). Mentoring within the workplace provides psychosocial facilitation, thus leading to a more comfortable work environment (Webster & Brown, 2019). Psychosocial support strengthens the protégé's identity, feelings of competence, and success at work (e.g., counseling, friendship, acceptance; Ivey & Dupré, 2020; Murrell et al., 2021). The psychosocial element encompasses assisting mentors with the emotional realm relative to the social, cultural, environmental, and personal acclimation that may impact their career development (Ross & Shannon, 2008). Several researchers addressed the benefits of psychosocial aspects of career mentorship (Searby et al., 2015). Through the infusion of psychosocial functions,

Kram and Isabella (1985) emphasized that peer relationships can support employees' beliefs and expertise within their professional roles.

### **Cultivation Phase**

The cultivation phase expounds on the exposure and networking aspects of the mentor–mentee relationship. Kram (1983) asserted that cultivation requires an established mentoring relationship between the mentor and mentee and that the relationship matures over 2 to 5 years. Kram emphasized that the importance of the cultivation stage is to promote career advancement and visibility for the mentee. The advantages of a mentoring relationship include increased visibility in the organization, an elevated confidence level of the mentee, and improved professional networks (Randel et al., 2020). The emphasis required in the cultivation process of mentoring adds value to the career advancement process for African American women and organizations that embrace these principles. Mentoring relationships are more impactful when supported by higher education institutions (Graham, 2019). But as African American women attain college degrees at higher rates than most other demographics of students and represent an ever-growing percentage of college-going students, they are not obtaining leadership positions at the same rate. As of 2019, African American women made up the smallest percentage of total women employed in management, business, and financial operations leadership roles in the United States (Catalyst, 2020).

### ***Sponsorship***

The most valuable aspect and function of mentoring is sponsorship. Sponsorship can aid in talent development through increased professional visibility. Sponsorship and

advocacy are keys to women advancing their careers in education (Paterson & Chicola, 2017). Mentors intentionally promote the mentee while giving the mentee critical responsibilities. Some researchers have suggested sponsors within the mentor–mentee relationship have the power to influence the mentees’ career advancement opportunities (Searby et al., 2015). Sponsorship is advocacy, personally exposing a mentor to opportunities and advancement (Ivey & Dupré, 2020). Sponsors differ from mentors as their role is to focus on recruitment and career advancement (Reis & Grady, 2020). Sponsorship is a crucial component of mentoring and can accelerate the exposure process for mentees due to mentor influence (Randel et al., 2020).

Developing the identity component within the mentoring relationship could also increase career advancement opportunities among African American men and women. Cross-race mentoring, or mentoring across various races, was introduced to establish the benefits and barriers of mentoring relationships among African American men and women. Mentoring literature has implied that cross-race mentorship benefits White mentors who may have more access to networks and opportunities (Randel et al., 2020).

### **Separation Phase**

The separation phase of Kram’s developmental theory is significant because professional independence is evident for the mentee. According to Kram (1983), separation involves a period of adjustment for the mentee and mentor for various reasons. The basis for separation might consist of professional or personal growth or relocation. The mentoring process encourages professional women to embrace change and overcome obstacles in the career advancement process. Participants in this study noted that the

separation process could provide an opportunity for African American women to recognize the significance mentoring can have on the career advancement journey and encourage sharing the experience with other women.

### **Redefinition Phase**

The final phase of Kram's developmental mentoring theory is redefinition. This phase focuses on understanding the new dynamics of the mentoring relationship. The mentee's need for a mentor is not the priority during this elevated level in the career process (Ross & Shannon, 2008). The mentor and mentee agree to remain as peers or dissolve the relationship. It is in this phase mentees identify the responsibility of paying it forward. As leaders grow, they should use the mentoring tools learned to serve others, realizing that not sharing their talents can negatively impact individuals who seek guidance (Perry, 2018). The developmental mentoring theory addressed by Kram (1983) could benefit African American women and organizations to develop standards for improving the corporate culture for mentoring practices in the workplace. This study adds new information on the mentoring experience for African American women in the workplace.

## **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

### **Mentorship**

Mentoring scholars have synthesized the literature to reflect evolving mentorship, mentee (protégé), and mentor definitions and meanings. The term *mentorship* has taken on many facets by several researchers. According to Black and Taylor (2018), the similar term mentorability was initially introduced by Dr. Richard J. Reddick while addressing

individuals at the Association for the Study of Higher Education's Council on Ethnic Participation Pre-Mentoring Program in 2014 (Hannum et al., 2014). Mentorability is the ability to participate in a valuable developmental relationship (Black & Taylor, 2018). In the mentoring relationship, mentors often receive a blueprint of what to expect, but mentees may not receive the exact blueprint. While researchers believe mentorship occurs at the entry-level or mid-level for mentees, it is essential to reference mentorship can occur at any stage in a mentee's career while serving in any role. Mentorability expounds on the mentoring relationship focusing on both the mentor and mentee.

Solid mentorship could be an avenue for introducing a healthy work-life synergy that positively affects attrition rates within the higher education profession (Long, 2018). Mentoring is a crucial strategy for professional development among women who desire administrative leadership positions in higher education (West, 2017). Specifically, women have contributed to research studies as participants highlighting the disparities in career advancement opportunities.

Researchers have supported the notion that mentoring relationships contain significant benefits relative to an individual's success (Murrell et al., 2021). The benefits of mentoring involve facets of career development, role modeling, and psychosocial support (Brower et al., 2019). The impact of mentor relationships poses benefits discovered within earlier seminal works. Kram (1983) used a conceptual model to conclude the significance of the mentor relationship and its ability to strengthen developmental career stages. Through research, Murrell et al. (2021) expounded on the importance of developing unique mentoring relationships, which discourages a one size

fits all mentoring strategy. Mentorship can be a beneficial resource for women who seek to ascend to leadership roles (Reis & Grady, 2020).

The relational aspect of mentorship can be a beneficial experience. While several factors influence the effectiveness of mentorship, few are mentioned when referencing African American women and career advancement. Understanding the benefits and significance of mentorship can lead to compelling mentoring experiences and career advancement (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). Hill and Wheat (2017) expanded their research beyond female mentors and career advancement; they focused on the female ascension to senior-level leadership roles such as the president. Their qualitative study identified several key themes relative to the study, including a need for mentors and role models, the impact of gender variability, and the benefits of mentors and role models.

From an academic lens, mentorship can intentionally serve as a tool to merge theoretical practice and application. Arnesson and Albinsson (2017) concluded mentorship is critical to the learning process by linking theory to practice. Effective mentorship practices can also positively impact the campus climate of an institution from a student as well as faculty and staff perspective (Tarbutton, 2019). Mentorship can also catalyze the transfer of knowledge. It has been proposed that a lack of effective mentorship within higher education leadership left African American women without the guidance needed for career advancement (Searby et al., 2015).

The definition and characteristics of mentorship have evolved since it was initially introduced several years ago. While the concept of mentorship is not newly developed, mentorship structures, formal and informal, have become more distinct and

definitive. Mentoring is often a relationship consisting of an exchange of behaviors between the mentee and mentor; a formal and informal communication process tailored to meet the mentee's needs and potentially the mentor's (Kram, 1983; Searby et al., 2015).

While two types of mentoring structures exist: formal and informal, both contribute to the overall mentoring experience. It is essential to distinguish between formal and informal mentoring as both offer various benefits for the mentee and mentor relationship. (Couture et al., 2020). Whether formal or informal, the mentor and mentee determine which type of mentoring structure best fits their overall goals. Researchers have identified that mentorship relationships benefit career advancement (Davis et al., 2021).

Qualitative and quantitative research regarding mentorship and career advancement has been conducted to examine mentoring and career advancement of African American women at the administrative level in both the K-12 and higher education sectors; however, the effects of mentoring and career advancement among African American women have not been explored. West (2019) conducted a qualitative research study that identified mentoring as a crucial component of professional development among women who desire administrative leadership positions in higher education. Specifically, women have contributed to research studies as participants highlighting the disparities in career advancement opportunities.

### ***Role of Mentor***

There are many roles that mentors play. A mentor could be someone who assumes an active role in utilizing their knowledge to guide another individual through professional and personal development (Arnesson & Albinsson, 2017). Among the psychosocial functions described by Kram are role-modeling, counseling, friendship, acceptance, and confirmation. Mentors assist mentees with self-reflection and identifying strengths and weaknesses (Pomerenk & Chermak, 2017). Mentors can play a pivotal role in influencing the career paths of women mentors who desire to work in higher education administration. Also, mentors help mentees navigate the unspoken rules encouraging critical thinking and growth (Long, 2018).

### ***Role of Mentee***

The concept of mentoring's ideal focus is the career development of the mentee. The term mentee can be used interchangeably with the term protégé in literature. Protégé is defined as "one who is protected or trained or whose career is furthered by a person of experience, prominence, or influence (Merriam-Webster, (n.d.).

### ***Formal Mentoring***

Formal mentoring relationships often develop within a professional setting and tend to be more structured than informal ones (Couture et al., 2020; Ivey & Duprè, 2020). Formal mentoring is the individual willingness to take ownership of the mentor relationship and the efforts of the organization to provide training and development activities (Toland, 2006). The length of formal mentoring relationships typically lasts one year. For this study, the survey addressed both formal and informal mentoring.



### ***Informal Mentoring***

Informal mentoring relationships may evolve due to the mentee reaching out to the mentor in a relaxed setting to express interest in mentorship. Informal mentoring is considered an original variation of mentoring as it features the mentor-mentee relationship taking on a natural evolution without organizational assistance or influence (Ivey & Dupré, 2020). The length of informal mentoring relationships varies from 5 to 7 years. While formal mentoring relationships are considered more traditional, informal mentoring relationships can be just as impactful. Overall, informal relationships are favored as they lead to better outcomes, including psychosocial support (Ivey & Dupré, 2020). Within informal mentoring relationships, mentors and mentees may establish relationships outside of a professional setting.

### ***Knowledge Transfer***

Knowledge transfer in mentoring differs from traditional mentoring as it focuses more on the practical aspect of mentoring and less on networking and sponsorships. During the knowledge transfer process, mentors impart knowledge of skills, insight, and experience to the mentee, leading to the professional or personal development (Lefebvre et al., 2020). Knowledge transfer is a critical component of the mentor-mentee relationship. To ensure the knowledge transfer process is successful, it requires a willingness of the mentor to share and the mentee to be receptive to the knowledge being shared (Lefebvre et al., 2020).

## **Benefits and Challenges of Mentoring Relationships**

Ivey and Dupré (2020) explored research that weighed the positive and negative aspects of workplace mentoring. The mentoring relationship can benefit the mentor and mentee within the workplace. Ivey and Dupré (2020) summarized mentees could enhance their self-confidence, commitment, and welfare, yet some factors can create negative aspects if not adequately addressed by organizations. Mentors tend to acquire knowledge and a sense of accomplishment. The mentee can gain a greater understanding of self, job satisfaction, and confidence. Mentoring relationships have traditionally consisted of older mentors mentoring younger mentees in an in-person setting. Career advancement and mentoring, systemic barriers in higher education, leadership pipelines, and gender mentoring are discussed in the next section.

### ***Career Advancement and Mentoring***

Career advancement occurs because career advancement not only benefits women but positively impacts the institutional climate (Brower et al., 2019). Career advancement often occurs after a person has completed the education, training, and experience requirements indicated by higher education institutions (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). The glass ceiling is often used to describe African American women's challenges as they attempt to ascend into leadership roles within their higher education institutions. Davis et al. (2021) examined potential barriers to career advancement among faculty of color. They identified four themes: negative mentoring, difficulty finding mentors, insufficient institutional support, and lack of post-tenure mentoring.

### ***Systemic Barriers to Higher Education***

The glass ceiling is also perceived as a constant artificial systematic barrier Tarbutton (2019) imposed to prevent individuals from obtaining career advancement into senior-level positions (Johnson, 2017). Chisholm-Burns et al. (2017) elucidated the glass ceiling as suppression supporting the underrepresentation in leadership despite evolving practices, laws, and social advancements. The glass ceiling has significantly impacted career advancement in African American women's education sector (Tarbutton, 2019). At the same time, African Americans struggle to gain access to leadership opportunities, and the desire to know why becomes critical. The glass ceiling is often used to describe African American women's challenges as they attempt to ascend into leadership roles within their higher education institutions.

The influence of African American women among the general population benefits the United States in various sectors. Simmons (2016) studied mentoring among African women and people of color across multiple sectors not limited to education. African American women either hit a glass ceiling for advanced administrative positions or are not being encouraged within the field; mentorship could be critical to ensuring success (Wroblewski, 2019).

### ***Leadership Pipelines***

Leadership pipelines are often established to create a system of progression for individuals generally cultivated at the collegiate level (Johnson, 2017). Mentorship is an active method of navigating the pipeline (Oikelome, 2017). Researchers have identified several factors that may provide insight into the underrepresentation, one being the role

of leadership pipelines or the lack thereof. Some scholars believe the pipeline begins at various levels. In a community college setting, advancement starts at the faculty level, and increasing African American leadership representation and faculty diversity must increase (Webster & Brown, 2019). Researchers argued whether leadership pipelines were indeed the primary issue surrounding career advancement. Jackson 2020 suggested the pipeline may not be the primary issue for the lack of ascension. Yet, the lack of leadership involvement ensures women gain the experience needed to ascend into leadership positions. Kram's (1983) study concluded female senior-level leaders had to seek networking and career development opportunities.

### ***Gender and Mentorship***

Mentorship can be instrumental in providing strategies that assist mentees in coping with career development, such as the gender gap. Researchers have examined the role gender plays in obtaining effective mentorship (Diehn & Tomey-Welsh, 2018). Gender often plays a role in the lack of career advancement through a lack of mentorship, support, and sponsorship in the early career phases. While women pose a greater risk of not being mentored than men, mentorship is essential for career advancement among African American women (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021; Faniko et al., 2017). While gender can impact mentoring relationships, mentors are responsible for supporting their mentees regardless of gender (Ivey & Dupré, 2020). Environments that focus on race, gender, and ethnicity cultivate an autocratic climate for faculty, staff, students, and administrators (Harris & Lee, 2018). African American women are less likely to obtain higher education leadership positions (Sales et al., 2019). In 2021, Gallup conducted

research regarding the role gender plays in career advancement, and 28% of female faculty and staff felt they were not promoted because of gender compared to 11% of male faculty and staff (Marken, 2022).

### ***Female Versus Male Mentorship***

Another facet of mentorship is whether the gender of the mentor influences career advancement. Researchers have also argued the influence of knowledge transfer, social capital, and psychosocial differences between female and male mentors as rationales for supporting whether female or male mentors are best. According to Reis's (2020) research findings, having a male mentor increases career advancement, compensation, and learning opportunities. Also, male mentors could have a more significant network or increased social capital, thus creating more opportunities for women.

The literature has also suggested female mentors are more effective than male mentors. According to Brower et al. (2019), male and female mentors can be beneficial in providing insight into unclear interactions and situations. Female mentors serve as better mentors than males due to unanimity and the ability to provide strategies for coping with career advancement barriers (Bosch et al., 2019). Female mentors may have a more relational approach to mentoring than their male counterparts.

While researchers have argued the benefits of having a female versus a male mentor, the literature supports minimal difference between having a female mentor versus a male mentor. Mcilongo and Strydom (2021) conducted a quantitative research study to determine mentorship's impact on women's career advancement in the public sector. It was concluded the gender of the mentor does not lead to career advancement. In

response to having a female mentor to build successful careers and clear career goals, almost 80% responded as yes for questions 16 and 17.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this chapter presented the need to address the underrepresentation of African American women at the senior leadership level in higher education. This chapter discussed formal and informal mentoring, the benefits and challenges of mentorship, and African American women in higher education leadership positions. The role of the mentor and mentee were also explored in this chapter. Understanding each role is critical to understanding how mentorship may influence career advancement. Also, this literature review identified and analyzed the theoretical framework that helps to examine the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions. This chapter summarized literature that supports the necessity of this study to be conducted. It explored each aspect of this study that needed to be considered with supportive literature to solidify the contribution to current research.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the effects of mentorship on career advancement among African American women in higher education leadership positions across the United States. A binomial logistic regression analysis was conducted. This chapter presents information regarding the research design, methodology, setting, research sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and procedure analysis. This chapter will also include threats to validity and ethical procedures to ensure the protection of participants.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The nature of this quantitative study was a correlational research design. Quantitative research is used to examine the relationships between variables (Creswell, 2009). A correlational quantitative research design was an appropriate plan for this study, as a quantitative approach is used when researchers want to identify the relationship and strength of two variables (Ross & Shannon, 2008). This quantitative analysis comprised a sample of 74 African American women who applied for career advancement in higher education within the past 5 years. All African American women at higher education institutions in leadership positions who applied for advancement within the past 5 years are eligible for this study.

Logistic regression consists of dichotomous and nominal or scale variables. The Toland (2006) mentorship survey score was the independent variable. The dichotomous dependent variable was whether the participant obtained advancement in a higher education leadership position in the past 5 years. A Cohen analysis was executed to

determine the minimum required sample size when conducting a logistic regression analysis with one independent variable. A two-tailed Cohen analysis with a medium effect size of 0.5 is appropriate for this study. Assuming a medium effect size of 0.5 and a power of 0.8, this study would be appropriately powered with 67 participants. The sample for this study was 74, meeting the minimum requirement.

## **Methodology**

### **Population Selection**

The population for this study was all African American women in higher education leadership positions who applied for career advancement in the past 5 years in the United States. Participants were recruited from professional social media platforms such as LinkedIn and the Facebook Survey Exchange networking group. Participant pools such as the Walden University participant pool were used. LinkedIn has approximately 830 million members, and the Facebook Survey Exchange group has over 16,000 members.

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

A voluntary response sample was used for this study, addressing selection bias. Participant recruitment was through LinkedIn, networking groups on Facebook, the National Association of Colleges and Employers community, American Council on Education listservs, and the Walden University participant pool. The introduction to this study was posted in the social media networking groups listed above with a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey. The introduction highlighted the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A follow-up reminder was posted 2 weeks before the close of the survey. The



Toland (2006) survey closed after the sample size exceeded the calculated minimum sample size of 67. Data from 74 participants were collected and analyzed. The anonymous data was retrieved from SurveyMonkey and will be stored for 5 years on a password-protected thumb drive and then destroyed.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Walden University's Institutional Review Board granted permission before participant recruitment (approval no. 08-11-22-0271974). Once permission was granted, participants were recruited via social media using LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram through networking groups and pages. The initial social media post also included a link to the anonymous Toland mentoring survey. I exported the data from SurveyMonkey into SPSS for data analysis. The data exported from SurveyMonkey is stored on my hard drive as a secured file and remain accessible to committee members and myself for 5 years.

### **Instrumentation Operationalization of Constructs**

The Toland survey was used to measure the amount of mentorship obtained. Toland's (2006) online survey with 18 questions was designed on a Likert-type scale that was used to determine the degree of relationship between the variables. For each question, 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*. The Toland mentorship survey was distributed to all African American women at higher education institutions who applied for advancement and who have or have not obtained career advancement within the past 5 years. Completion of this survey required a minimum sample population of 67 African American women at higher education institutions in the United States who have

applied but have or have not obtained career advancement within the past 5 years, which was met with a final participant count of 74. Because SurveyMonkey is an anonymous online surveying instrument, the return rates can yield response rates of 15%, which was appropriate for this research study.

### ***Validity and Reliability of Toland Survey***

The Likert-type instrument was selected based on its ability to measure variation from favorable to unfavorable attitudes toward a variable. The survey consisted of three sections: the informed consent, the survey questions section, and a demographic section. The Likert instruments are more accurate based on the concept that they are non-judgmental in interpreting data; the Likert-type instruments provide reliable results.

The survey was also piloted to determine the reliability and validity of the questions. The research study used the internal consistency reliability method to pilot test the instrument. The pilot test ensured internal consistency to validate that the questions accurately measured what the study was designed to measure. The pilot consisted of 15 college-degreed female professionals in public and private companies who provided comments on the survey instrument, items, and delivery mode. Participants indicated that although several questions appeared to be duplications, the survey questions were not vague. All duplications were removed from the survey instrument. The pilot testing of the instrument ensured internal consistency and validated the survey questions as an accurate measure of mentoring experiences (Toland, 2006). A reliability coefficient of .87, which exceeds the .70 or greater coefficient, was used to deem instruments statically reliable for the sample and test-retest consistency (Field, 2009). Based on Toland's (2006) original

study, this current study demonstrated content, construct, and criterion validity utilizing the researcher's 18 questions Likert-type instrument to determine whether a relationship exists between mentoring and career advancement for women in higher education.

### ***Data Analysis Plan***

I retrieved data from SurveyMonkey and exported it into SPSS for data analysis. A binary logistic regression analysis was run to establish the effect of mentoring as measured by the Toland mentoring survey on the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership positions.

### **Threats to Validity**

There are a few external validity threats. To protect the external validity of this study, the participants volunteered to participate. The Hawthorne effect was an external threat to validity. Participants may be inclined to alter their behavior resulting in altered responses (LaFountain & Bartos, 2002).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Walden University's IRB approval process ensures that this study was aligned with human participants' legal and ethical procedures. Data collection was conducted anonymously with an online survey to ensure minimal compromise within this quantitative study. Once the surveys were completed and the data collection window had closed, data were collected and analyzed.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 discussed the research methods that were used in this study. This chapter reviewed the setting, research design and rationale, population selection,

procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, instrumentation, data analysis plan, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. In Chapter 4, I will explain the process of data collection. There will be a detailed explanation of the statistical analysis and procedures. The research findings will also be discussed in addition to a table and figures to illustrate the results.

## Chapter 4: Results

This quantitative study aimed to explore to what extent mentorship predicts the career advancement of African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. This chapter will consist of the data collection and analysis, including the testing of binomial logistic regression assumptions. I will also discuss the results that answered the research question: To what extent does mentorship, measured by the Toland mentorship score, predict African American women's advancement in higher education leadership positions in the last 5 years?

### **Data Collection**

The survey was posted on networking groups on Facebook and LinkedIn, Walden's participant pool, American Council on Education listservs, and the National Association of Colleges and Employers community. Participants were recruited after receiving Walden University's IRB approval. Participant recruitment and data collection lasted 22 days on Walden's participant pool, Facebook, and LinkedIn, August 15, 2022-September 6, 2022, to obtain the required number of participants. The following sections describe this study's data set description, binomial logistic regression assumptions, results, and discussion.

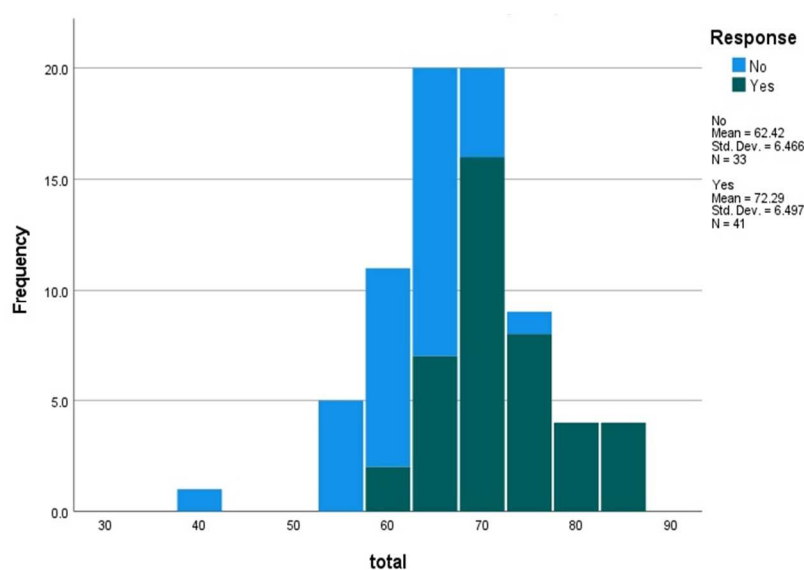
### **Data Set Description**

The population was 74 African American women in higher education leadership positions, exceeding the minimum sample size of 67. According to Cohen (1992), regression with an alpha of .05, power of .80, and medium effect size of .25 a sample size of 67 was needed. African American women who obtained career advancement had a

mean score on the Toland mentoring survey of 72.29 with a standard deviation of 6.49. African American women who did not obtain career advancement were 62.42, with a standard deviation of 6.46. Figure 1 is a histogram showing that as the score for Toland's mentoring score increased, the number of successful participants decreased.

**Figure 1**

*Toland Career Mentoring Score Total by Responses*



### Assumptions for Binomial Logistic Regression

In statistical analysis, all parametric tests assume certain characteristics about the data, also known as assumptions. Violation of these assumptions changes the conclusion of the research and interpretation of the results. The following are the assumptions for binary logistic regression.

Assumption 1 is that the dependent variable is dichotomous. The dependent variable is dichotomous and is defined as career advancement (yes or no). Assumption 2 is that there is at least one continuous or nominal independent variable. The independent

variable Toland mentorship score is continuous. Assumption 3 is that there is independence of observations. There is independence of observations due to the dichotomous dependent variable categories and the independent variable being mutually exclusive and exhaustive. The dichotomous dependent variable, whether career advancement was obtained, is yes or no. The independent variable is the Toland mentoring scores. Assumption 4 is that there is a minimum of 15 cases per independent variable. There are 74 cases for this study.

Assumption 5 is that there is a linear relationship between the continuous independent variable and the logit transformation of the dependent variable. When testing for validity, the continuous independent variable must be linearly related to the logit of the dependent variable (Laerd Statistics, 2017). Linearity of the continuous variable Toland mentorship score, with respect to the logit of the dependent variable, whether the participant obtained career advancement, was evaluated using the Box-Tidwell (1962) procedure. The linearity assumption is one of the most critical assumptions as it verifies the validity of the binomial logistic regression method (Laerd Statistics, 2017). The null hypothesis for the Box-Tidwell is that there is no linear relationship between the continuous independent variable and the logit transformation of the dependent variable. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted because  $p = .59$ , as shown in Table 1.

Assumption 6 is that the data does not show multicollinearity. Multicollinearity exists when at least 2 independent variables have a linear relationship. Because this study has only one continuous independent variable, multicollinearity does not exist (Laerd Statistics, 2017). Finally, Assumption 7 is that there must be no significant outliers.

Casewise Diagnostics using SPSS (Version 27) were used to determine the presence of outliers. Cases with a standardized residual greater than 2.5 indicate outliers may need to be eliminated from the analysis (Laerd Statistics, 2020). Because no cases had a standardized residual greater than 2.5, SPSS did not produce a Casewise plot. Thus, there were no significant outliers.

### **Results**

The results from 74 participants determined that mentorship is a predictor of career advancement among African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. Because a Likert scale was used, it is crucial to ensure variables are consistent, thus recoding responses so that high scores correlate with low scores on the scale (Józsa & Morgan, 2017). Before analysis, questions were reverse coded to correct negatively phrased questions. Five was recoded as *strongly agree* and 1 as *strongly disagree*. Questions 11, 12, 14, and 15 were reverse coded to show high scores correlating to low scores on the scale. The more the participant perceived mentoring as a positive factor in career advancement, the higher the Toland mentorship score.

Binomial logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of Toland's mentorship scores on career advancement. The binomial logistic regression was statistically significant,  $X^2(1) = 38.911, p < .001$ . Because the  $p$  value for the predictors was less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, mentorship, measured by Toland's scores, predicts higher education leadership advancement for African American women over the past 5 years, as shown in Table 1.



**Table 1***Variables in the Equation*

| Variable | <i>B</i> | <i>SE</i> | Wald   | <i>Df</i> | <i>P</i> | Exp( <i>B</i> ) | 95% CI for <i>OR</i> |       |
|----------|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|----------|-----------------|----------------------|-------|
|          |          |           |        |           |          |                 | Lower                | Upper |
| Total    | .320     | .077      | 17.099 | 1         | <.001    | 1.378           | 1.184                | 1.604 |
| Constant | -21.31   | 5.188     | 16.871 | 1         | <.001    | .000            |                      |       |

*Note.* CI= Confidence Interval.

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test was applied to determine the overall model fit (Mardisetosa et al., 2020). The Hosmer and Lemeshow test results, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test for logistic regression, were  $X^2(8) = 5.70, p = .68$ . The Hosmer and Lemeshow test is a good fit because the *p*-value was greater than .68; therefore, the result was accepted. The Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was used to determine the variability of the dependent variable (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .54$  indicates that 54% of the variation in getting advancement or not was based on mentoring. Nagelkerke  $R^2$  was used because the range of values was between 0 and 1. Mentorship is a predictor. In fact, for every point increase in the mentoring scale, the odd ratio is 1.378 times more likely to attain career advancement.

**Discussion**

The data analysis for this study revealed that mentorship, as measured by the Toland mentorship scores, does predict higher education leadership advancement for African American women over the past 5 years. It also suggested that the higher the Toland mentoring scores, the greater the probability of a participant obtaining career advancement. With no predictors, 55.4% of the participants would have gotten a

promotion. With predictors, the chances of someone getting a promotion are 77%. Apart from the data analysis conducted for this study, additional conclusions could be drawn from the results.

Though the gender of the mentors was not used as a predictor, Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 15 referenced the gender of the mentor. Responses for Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 15, which explored perceptions of female mentors versus male mentors, resulted in a mode of 3, which suggests African American women perceived no difference in having female versus male mentors. These responses also indicate the participants may have only had female mentors. Previous research has suggested that there was no difference in having female versus male mentors (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021), but in the current study, when asked questions about the impact of African American females having female mentors on college-degreed women, Questions 16 and 17 resulted in a mode of 4, which suggests female mentors are more likely to benefit from having a female mentor. The results also suggest participants may have had female and not male mentors. Though the overall results for whether female versus male mentorship made a difference were inconclusive, they showed that female mentors were more likely to lead them to career advancement. It is important to reiterate that mentorship is a predictor of career advancement.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the data analysis of this study. There were 74 participants who provided data that were collected and analyzed. After all assumptions were met, a binomial logistic regression was applied to predict the probability that an observation

ranges between one of two categories of a dichotomous variable based on one or more dependent variables that can be continuous or categorical (Laerd, 2018). The binomial logistic regression was statistically significant,  $X^2(1) = 38.911, p < .001$ . Because the  $p$  value for the predictors was less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The  $R^2$  of 0.54 shows the effect size. The  $p$  value indicates that it is a significant predictor, meaning that mentoring can explain 77% of the variation in the dependent variable. Thus, mentoring is a significant predictor of career advancement for African American females in higher education leadership.

The data analysis also suggested that the higher the Toland mentoring scores, the greater the probability of a participant obtaining career advancement. For every point increase in the mentoring scale, the odd ratio is 1.378 times more likely to attain career advancement. Chapter 5 will explore the limitations of this study and a summary of findings, implications, and recommendations.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the extent mentorship, measured by the Toland mentorship score, predicts African American women's advancement in higher education leadership positions in the last 5 years. In this study, I used a logistical regression quantitative design with the dichotomous dependent variable being whether the participant obtained advancement or not and the scale independent variable being the participant's score on the Toland mentoring survey. The key findings of this study indicated participants are 1.4 times more likely to obtain career advancement for every increase in the mentoring score total, which means mentorship is a predictor for career advancement. In addition, the effect size Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.54$ , indicating that 54% of the variance in the independent variable was addressed by mentoring. In other words, mentoring was very good at helping to correctly identify the grouping to which cases belonged on the dependent variable, successful job advancement.

In Chapter 5, I will present the interpretation of the research findings in the context of the theoretical framework. The limitations to the generalizability of the study that arose will also be highlighted. The recommendations for further research that are grounded in the strengths and limitations of this study and the potential impact for positive social change will also be discussed.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings showed statistical significance, showing that mentorship is a predictor of career advancement by 54%. Though empirical research has shown mentorship to be beneficial for career advancement, the findings from this study My

findings with the peer-reviewed literature summarized in Chapter 2 suggested that mentoring was a way to address the underrepresentation of African American women in higher education leadership positions. The gender of the mentor was discussed; however, there is limited research that has identified one gender as being better than the other for African American women. The following sections discuss interpretations of findings relative to the theoretical framework and the literature review.

### **Interpretations of Findings Related to Theoretical Framework**

Kram's mentoring theory was the theoretical framework guiding this study. This theory involves utilizing mentorship as a catalyst to develop professionally and personally through psychosocial support and career development (Kram & Isabella, 1985). According to Kram (1985), there are four phases of the mentoring relationship: initiation, the stage of intake and expectations between the mentor and mentee; cultivation, the stage of identity development for the mentor and mentee; separation, the stage where the mentee experiences more autonomy; and the redefinition stage, where the mentor-mentee relationship evolves. In each phase of the mentoring relationship, mentees can enhance their professional and personal development during various career stages.

The findings in this study indicated African American women's mentorship is a significant predictor of career advancement. Similarly, Kram suggested the mentoring relationship can impact career growth and job satisfaction (MciLongo & Strydom, 2021). Individuals in a mentoring relationship who share discussions and perspectives regarding diversity lend to both psychosocial aspects and career development (Randel et al., 2021).

### **Interpretation of Findings Related to the Literature Review**

Findings of this study aligned with peer-reviewed research in Chapter 2, which discussed mentorship being beneficial for career advancement. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, African women represented 9.7% of college enrollment yet comprised only 7% of higher education leadership functions (Conner et al., 2022). The literature suggested male mentors are better for career advancement. Higher education leadership is male dominated, allowing male mentors to have a more extensive network, which may create more significant career advancement opportunities (Johnson, 2021). As of 2019, African women made up the smallest percentage of total female leaders, which suggests why African American women are underrepresented in higher education leadership positions (Catalyst, 2020).

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study's research findings consisted of limitations. Because it was a survey, participants self-reported, which could not confirm whether they answered the questions truthfully. The participants may have also completed the survey with varying definitions or understandings of mentorship that could have impacted how they responded.

### **Recommendations**

This study's findings indicated mentorship as a significant predictor for career advancement among African American women in higher education leadership positions in the United States. My recommendations for further research are grounded in the strengths and limitations of this study. Research is necessary for determining institutional needs. I recommend this study be replicated as a qualitative research study to compare

female and male mentoring. This research study can also be used as a template in other sectors where African American women are underrepresented.

For further research, I recommend institutions consider benchmarking other institutions' programs to determine best practices. Benchmarking institutions may involve program evaluation, which can effectively identify best practices. Benchmarking can also assist with mentoring policy development, as formal mentoring policies for women increase career advancement (Mcilongo & Strydom, 2021). Implementing formal mentoring programming will boost relationship-building and increase networking opportunities (Jackson & Bouchard, 2019).

I also recommend further research that explores professional development programs geared toward African American women. Professional development programs to explore may include the Association of Black Women in Higher Education (ABWHE), an ethnically diverse organization designed to help African American women advance in higher education, The Harvard Business School has developed an in-person leadership program with a curriculum for women of color, which launches in Spring 2023 (Women of Color Leadership Program - Leadership - Programs - Executive Education - Harvard Business School, n.d.), The African American Women's Summit (AAWS) is an annual professional development pre-conference workshop for African American women in student affairs (West, 2017). The workshop occurs during the yearly Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) conference. African American professional program development in high education can be critical to developing skilled, culturally, and personally applicable curriculums (West, 2019).

### **Implications**

Based on this study's findings, mentorship is a significant predictor of career advancement for African American women in higher education leadership. Therefore, if there is a focus on mentoring, there could be an increase in African American women in higher education leadership positions. Positive social change can result from this study at the institutional, societal, and individual levels. This study has positive social change implications for diversity. Diversity benefits students, the institution, and the community by strengthening the campus climate through multicultural perspectives (Townsend, 2020). Diversity comprises different ethnicities and backgrounds with unique ideas and thoughts; therefore, it is essential to cultivate it via leadership. For example, a diverse leadership team can help establish trust within the institution, increase the breadth of knowledge, and bring varying perspectives. Research suggests diversity's impact from an institutional, societal, and individual perspective includes critical thinking and civic engagement (Nixon, 2017). Diversity requires self-awareness and reflection at the individual level, which can be developed and facilitated through positive mentoring relationships. This research study can encourage others to give back to the community and help others who may benefit from mentoring.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore to what extent mentorship is a predictor for career advancement among African American women in higher education leadership positions. Based on the study's results, mentorship was a predictor that assisted with understanding to what extent mentorship predicts career advancement



among African American women in higher education leadership positions. From a social change perspective, being intentional regarding supporting African American women's career advancement may cultivate an institutional climate reflecting the overall student population of higher education colleges and universities. Leadership and diversity are intertwined (Johnson, 2021). Thus, there is a need for adequate representation and engagement of African American women within higher education leadership positions for the cultural development of an institution, as mentoring serves as a career development tool (Nixon, 2017).

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## Appendix A: Letter of Permission to Use Toland Career Mentoring

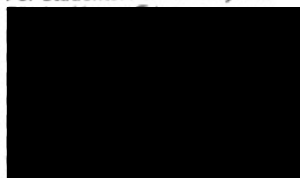
**From:** Claude Toland ctoland@futi.edu  
**Subject:** RE: Instrument Approval Request  
**Date:** June 15, 2022 at 2:36 PM  
**To:** Torialyn Crook [REDACTED]



Hi Torialyn – absolutely – I approve of you using the survey instrument from my dissertation.

Best to you and good luck as you finish up!

Claude Toland, D.M.  
Education Director  
Universal Technical Institute  
*For Students. For Industry. For Success.*



**From:** Torialyn Crook [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 15, 2022 1:32 PM  
**To:** Claude Toland [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Instrument Approval Request

**External Email**

Good afternoon Dr. Toland,  
My name is Torialyn Crook and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I reached out to you via LinkedIn in February, and I am gathering the documents needed for IRB approval. Per our conversation to submit my request via email, I am requesting permission to use your instrument to gather data on mentoring for my research. My research will explore the effects of mentorship on career advancement among African American women in higher education leadership positions. Through the use of your survey, I intend to lend an additional perspective to mentorship within higher education institutions.

Sincerely,

Torialyn Crook

Confidential This e-mail and any files transmitted with it are the property of the Universal Technical Institute, Inc. and/or its affiliates, are confidential, and are intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom this e-mail is addressed. If you are not one of the named recipients or otherwise have reason to believe that you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender and delete this message immediately from your computer. Any other use, retention, dissemination, forwarding, printing or copying of this e-mail is strictly prohibited.

## Appendix B: Toland Mentoring Survey

Using the response option below, indicate the answer that best describes your response.

0= Not applicable

1 = Strongly disagree

2= Disagree

3= Slightly disagree

4 = Slightly agree

5= Agree

6= Strongly agree

1. I would not have advanced to the level I am without a mentor.
2. It is beneficial for a college-degreed woman to have a mentor for career advancement.
3. A mentor will help college-degreed women develop higher levels of job satisfaction.
4. A mentor is recommended for women to develop professional career networks.
5. I have gained a higher level of compensation due to being mentored.
6. A mentor in the first four years of a college-degreed woman's career will allow faster promotions.
7. Having a female mentor in the first four years of college-degreed woman's career will allow for faster career growth than having a male mentor.
8. Having a female mentor, instead of a male mentor, will allow for higher levels of job satisfaction.

9. Having a female mentor instead of a male mentor will allow for faster compensation growth in the first four years of a woman's career.
10. A woman having a female mentor will obtain higher levels of compensation during her career.
11. Having a mentor is not helpful for women to have career success.
12. Having a mentor is not beneficial for women to build professional career networks.
13. Having a male mentor for a woman will be as good as a female mentor in helping with a college-degreed woman's career growth.
14. There is no difference in the rate of growth of a college-degreed woman's career with a mentor or without a mentor.
15. There is no difference in the rate of growth of a college degreed woman's compensation level with a female mentor or a male mentor.
16. Having a female mentor helps college-degreed women build successful careers.
17. Having a female mentor helps college degreed women develop clear career goals.
18. Having a mentor helps college-degreed women increase job satisfaction.