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Career Pathways of African-American Women Senior Executives at Predominantly White Institutions

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Abstract

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by

Etheldria A. Bonnie Moulds-Greene

MS, National Louis University`

BS, Florida A & M University

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Leadership, Policy and Change

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Abstract

Research studies have revealed that African-American women are disproportionately underrepresented in senior and executive leadership positions compared to European-American female and male counterparts at public and private predominantly White institutions, despite their increased representation in university senior leadership positions. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to discover the meaning and understanding of African-American women's career pathway experiences ascending to executive positions at these institutions. Critical race theory and Black feminist thought lenses were used as frameworks to understand participants' career pathways, barriers, and facilitating factors advancing toward leadership. LinkedIn recruitment and snowball sampling led to 9 participants who self-identified as African American/Black multi-ethnic women currently or previously worked in senior and executive-level roles. Each participant's interview was analyzed for codes and themes. Seven themes that emerged suggested that although participants experienced barriers and challenges as impediments, facilitating factors of a strong support system of mentors, role models, and faith enabled them to persevere. The participants reported having inherited a legacy of self-determination, self-reliance, resilience, with family, community, and church preparing them for their career pathways. This empowered them to navigate barriers and challenges while taking advantage of facilitating factors into leadership. The positive social change implications of this study provide recommendations to both prospective African-American women aspiring career pathways in senior and executive leaders and the institutions themselves that may increase such leadership at higher education institutions.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the Trinity God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit who has blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; and who has strengthened and kept me by his Spirit on this journey of life success. All praises, glory, and honor are to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for walking with me and carrying me when I became weary in well doing through this doctoral journey of success. The Holy Spirit lighted my path way when the pathway appeared dim. It was God's mercy, grace, wisdom, and love that kept and continues to keep me.

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> And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9, The New King James Version).

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The prevalence of women in powerful executive leadership roles has increased gradually since the 1990s, a reflection of the global changing society (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Women have increased in professional roles and executive level roles, yet, still falling short in numbers behind men at corporations, businesses and academia (Center for American Progress, 2017). Additionally, the constant and noticeable disparity was the wider gap for women of color, and African-American women, specifically, (Warner and Corley, 2017) who are underrepresented in higher education institutions and other organizations (Beckwith, Carter & Peters, 2016; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, and White, 2015; Schwanke, 2013, Warner, 2014; Warner, 2015). African-American women encounter racial discrimination and are unable to acquire parity in senior and executive-level positions at colleges and universities globally (McConner, 2014).

Education has constantly been a dominant premise in African-Americans' journey toward upward mobility (Collier-Thomas, 1982; Wallace, Moore & Curtis, 2014). They saw hope, achievement , and the possibility of having access to participate in free schools made possible by African-American legislators. The schools and social legislation helped increase African-American participation and became platforms for African-American scholars advocating for social change at all points of education (Wallace, Hinton-Hudson, Moore, Hart & Wilson, 2010; Wallace et al., 2014). Historically, African-Americans were exposed to and participated in learning on their own, often in secret or with the help of some European Americans. Davis and Maldonado (2015) noted that African-American

women pursued opportunities when they had admission according to their interests, abilities and their willingness to work. African-American women determined they had the right to equal opportunity and worked relentlessly to achieve an education. Nonetheless, advancements for African-American women in executive-level leadership positions have not occurred in public and private higher education on par with their European American female counterparts (Warner 2014; 2015) and male counterparts. Warner (2015) reported that disparity remains within African-American women in senior and executive administrator roles in predominantly White institutions (PWI).

There were several consequences of this underrepresentation for African-American women in the higher education workplace. The first was that African-American women's performance has had to exceed that of their European American female counterparts in similar executive administrative positions (Beckwith et al., 2016). Second, Beckwith et al. (2016) noted that African-American women were often isolated as minorities in executive positions with no critical mass of their race and gender for support. The appearance and sensation of isolation encountered by African-American women were depicted by Catalyst (2004) as *other or otherness*. African-American women, specifically, absorb this sensation and feeling of isolation. Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) suggested that this negative experience of the outsider from within and underrepresentation of African-American women executives at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) was inclined to outnumber and increase more attention than positive results of how African-American women overpowered, conquered and achieved great exploits (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak & White, 2015). There is a paucity of

research literature of African-American women's experiences and how they relate to underrepresentation, barriers, and successes ascending to executive-leadership positions at PWIs (Dawkins, 2012). My goal for this study was to add to the research literature on this topic.

Chapter 1 commences with the background, problem statement, and purpose statement from which the research questions and conceptual framework were developed. I used the research question to address African America women's lived career pathway experiences, the navigation of their career pathways, barriers, challenges, and facilitating factors to senior and executive administrative positions at PWIs. The chapter also includes operational definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. A brief summary of the study concludes Chapter 1.

Background

African-American women have been leaders for racial and gender parity throughout history (Glover, 2012). Despite persecution and the many barriers of racism, sexism, classism and discrimination, African-American women maintain vision, fortitude, and determination to create a better life for themselves, family, community generations in the future (Glover, 2012). According to Glover, the tradition of African-American women was to provide leadership and service within their homes and communities, help uplift and inspire other African-American girls and women to pursue educational opportunities. Allen and Lewis (2016) noted that leadership for African-American women was made, and pathways chartered well before the legislation of civil rights and equal opportunities-initiated cracks for leadership positions. African-American

women with determination and strength took the risks and led as abolitionists on personal and national levels to end slavery; and to ensure all African-Americans broadly would have educational opportunities and African-American women specifically (Allen & Lewis, 2016).

According to Patitu and Hinton (2003), African-American women's leadership presence at PWIs has contributed to the increase in enrollment of African-American students at PWIs. Male and female African-American students have been taught the significance of education, self-determination, self-efficacy and persistence. This resulted more in the students pursuing and completing undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees (Glover, 2012). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Digest of Education Statistics 2013 reported the percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred by race and sex for 2012-2013 (2015). Larger shares of undergraduate degrees were conferred to female students than to male students across racial and ethnic groups: African-American girls and women shares of bachelor's degrees earned were 65%; 60% for American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic students; 59% for women of two or more races; 56% for Pacific Islander and European women; and 54% for Asian women. Although, enrollment and graduation completion have been increasing among African-American women, the increase among the hiring of African-American women in faculty and administrative positions has been underrepresented when compared to African-American men, European women, and European American men in similar careers (Holmes, 2003).

Research on the topic of African-American women's pathway experiences has shown notable increase, although the growth has been a slow process to executive

leadership at PWIs (Alexander, 2010; Glover, 2012; Holmes, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). African-American women embraced the struggle to acquire leadership positions, traversed the nation as eminent African-American educators and scholars and used fervency and determination to uplift African-Americans, specifically African-American women, and all women; and to help transform a nation (Alexander, 2010; Glover, 2012). For example, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the first African-American woman president in higher education, espoused transformation of a nation because of her beliefs in education and leadership in the African-American woman (Gaines, 2016).

By the 21st century, a few more African-American women had assumed executive leadership: Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute since 1999; Dr. Ruth Simmons the first African-American woman president at Brown University and Ivy League Institution from 2001 to 2012; and Dr. Carmen T. Ambar is the first African-American president and leader at Oberlin College, 2017, in the institution's 184-year history (Jackson & Harris, 2007). In the workplace in general, women comprise 52% of professional labor market, yet, they remain substantially behind men in leadership representation. The gap is much wider for women of color: the statistics show that they occupy 11.9% of managerial and professional leadership roles. African-American women occupy 5.3%, Asian American women occupy 2.7%, and Latina women are 3.9% of the total (Warner, 2014).

Alexander (2010), Glover (2012), Holmes (2003), and Thomas and Jackson (2007) showed that the history of African-American women's pathway experiences in higher education should begin with how they were educated and whether they were

provided with a strong and productive heritage in the United States. African-American women obtained wisdom, knowledge, strength, and experience from their historical background and experiences known as Afrocentric epistemology (Johnson, 2015). This was predicated on the historical connection to Africa, which they were prohibited from connecting or relating. Initially, the institution of slavery, such as racism, genderism, and oppression enacted by dominant groups (Collins, 2000, Collins, 2001), denied African-Americans the hope of increasing and developing their knowledge and intellectual capacities (Collins, 2001). The rich education legacy of African-American women can be charted back to African-American women having family nearby and family members as role models who shaped and influenced their personal perspectives on life (Hite, 1996). African-American women were denied access to education for many years. According to Hite (1996), they labored for freedom from the diaspora of Africa to America, laboring for themselves, their families and future generations to uplift Black women and other women of color.

African-American women have a long-standing history of continuing to be leaders on long journeys in the struggle for racial and gender justice and equity (Glover, 2012). They continue to be leaders of change in society and educational system. Historically, African-American women forged continuous paths encountering de facto and de jure segregation restricting educational opportunities, challenges, and successes in every organizational sector: higher education, business, legal, medical, and theological fields (Arao, 2016). Despite the many glass and concrete ceilings as barriers, African-American women continued to study new disciplines with vision and purpose (Glover,

2012). They pioneered and charted pathways in courage, determination, resilience, and faith to continue their journey, while establishing a greater life for themselves, up-lifting their children, others, and inspiring future generations (Brazzell, 2012).

The pathway experiences of African-American women who have ascended to executive-level administrative roles at PWIs have seldom been studied (Alexander, 2010; Beckwith et al., 2016; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). According to Beckwith et al. (2016), there is a paucity of research information available on African-American women in senior or executive level administrative roles corporately and in higher education institutions. This has mainly been because of the lack of African-American presence in leadership roles in 4-year public and private institutions of higher education.

Databases I searched revealed a paucity of literature of African-American women's pathway experiences in areas of academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrators of senior and executive-level administration at institutions of higher education (Carter-Black, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The research found focused on the disproportionate underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in higher education, specifically the absence of African-American women and a scant number of other women of color (Alexander, 2010; Beckwith et al., 2016). There was limited research on the lived experiences of African-American women in executive-level administrative positions, and African-American women career pathway experiences in executive-level positions. The research that I conducted for this study addressed this gap in understanding African-American women's navigation of their career pathways ascending to executive positions at PWIs.

Problem Statement

There is a gender and racial gap in professional advancement and prestigious executive administrative positions in higher education institutions (Morshed, 2016; Warner, 2014; Warner, 2015). Although women have made progress in leadership roles, it is not at the same rate and level as their male peers in executive level roles (Cook & Glass, 2014). This gap in professional and executive-level growth rate between men and women widens with African-American women in higher education institutions or PWIs (Warner & Corley, 2017). Women possess almost 52% of all professional level jobs but are underrepresented relative to executive-level leadership positions (Warner, 2014; 2015). African-American women at PWIs have only 5.3% of these positions in comparison to European women at 40.1% and men at 48% (Warner, 2014). Davis (2016) suggests that the progress women have made in the workplace continues to be inadequate for African-American women in senior and executive-level positions.

For more than a century, African-American women have made significant progress by contributing to education at all levels and, specifically, to higher education institutions, but the underrepresentation of African-American women in senior and executive-level roles is pervasive due to racism and sexism (Alexander, 2010; Beckwith et al., 2016; Branson, 2012; Collins, 2000; Collins 2001; Davis, 2016). In this regard, African-American women lack comparable representation with European women and men in senior and executive-level administrative positions even with academic improvement, high educational attainment, mentorship, and established networking relationships (Beckwith et al., 2016). Furthermore, the paucity of literature concerning

African-American women career pathway experiences to executive administrative positions may be a marginalizing factor for other African-American women who have aspired to be executives (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Therefore, the problem is that researchers and educators have not presented the views and the career pathway lived experiences of African-American women: the impact of race and gender on these pathways, how these women have navigated barriers and challenges to advancement, and how they have applied facilitating factors and realized success by ascending to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs (Dawkins, 2012; Hoyt, 2013; Oikelome, 2017). I designed this study to explore the career pathway lived experiences of African-American women in senior and executive-level leadership roles while employed at PWIs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women and obtain meaning and understanding of how they navigated barriers and facilitating factors to advance to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. My intention was to provide insight into how African-American women overcame barriers and provided strong facilitating factors that motivated and inspired them to ascend to executive positions in PWIs. The study also illustrated how African-American women gave voice to their lived experiences as a senior and executive-level leader working at PWIs within the United States.

Research Question

How do African-American women describe their career pathway experiences, including barriers and facilitating factors toward attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs?

Conceptual Framework

Delgado and Stefancic's (2012) critical race theory (CRT) commitment to giving meaning, comprehension, and exposure to race and racism barriers and Collins (2000) Black feminist thought (BFT) theory of African-American women executive administrators in higher education institutions were two sociological and psychological lenses that were connected together as the conceptual framework applied in this qualitative study. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) suggested CRT was based on the social constructed term race and intersected with other forms of oppression gender and social class impacting African-American women at PWIs (Rocco, Bernier, & Bowman, 2014). Collins (2000) used the BFT theory to inspire the Black women's experiences of oppression to be voiced by the Black women. In my study, I used the CRT and BFT lenses to examine the participants' lived experiences to helped provide an explication for meaning and understanding of the interconnecting intersectionality of racism, sexism, and social class at PWIs (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; hooks, 1989; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Santamaria, 2014). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), intersectionality means the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation" (2001, p. 51).

The participants were African-American women in senior and executive-level positions. I used CRT and BFT theories, most commonly and appropriately applied, that

enabled me to contextualize the experiences of African-American women who may have encountered discrimination, racism and marginalization in higher education institutions. According to Crenshaw (1989; 1991; 1995), CRT was used to address race-gendered epistemology of African-American women and concentrated on the social aspects of inequity and injustice. According to Collins (2000), BFT was used as interpretive and descriptive lens to explore the many different statuses and administrative positions African-American women encountered and experienced in their paths to executive positions at PWIs from the complex and combined effects of race, gender and multiple others, such as social class, sexual orientation, ageism and religion (Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Shavers & Moore, III, 2014).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative interpretive interview design based on the methods that Moustakas (1994), Thorne (2016) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) used to explore African-American women and their career pathway experiences ascending to senior and executive-level administration at PWIs. I used the basic interpretive interview design to interview nine African-American women in senior and executive-level leadership positions to capture their pathway experiences, barriers and challenges, and facilitating factors that influenced their success. A qualitative research was the best position for this problem because it helped with interpreting meaning and understanding of the participants' senior and executive-level experiences. After conducting the interviews, I coded and analyzed the data using two theories, CRT and BFT, that formed the conceptual framework and interpreted the findings on participants'

experiences. Through conducting an analysis and interpretation of the participants' findings, I explored and gained meaning through a rich and in-depth comprehension of what senior and executive-level leaders had experienced and how they experienced the common meaning through their career paths. Additionally, I explored how African-American women created and charted pathways, encountered barriers, challenges, and facilitated factors to success ascending to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs.

Operational Definitions

African-American. These terms are interrelated and maybe used throughout this study interchangeably to identify residents and citizens of North America. The terms are, also referred to a large group of Blacks in the United States (Shaw-Taylor & Tuch, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the participants self-identify as African-American multi-ethnic women.

Predominantly White institutions (PWIs). PWIs has references to colleges and universities described as institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 1966).

Senior level and executive level administration. Senior to executive level administrative positions for this study will include presidents, chancellors, provosts, vice provosts, vice presidents, deans, executive directors (Seraphin, 2017).

Assumptions

I made several assumptions during this study. My first assumption was that diversity is of a persuasive interest in higher education institutions for leaders to foster

partnerships with stakeholders to meet community needs. As such, it was considered a value added to student experience. My second assumption was that African-American women encountered different challenges than their European male and female counterparts. My third assumption was that women who held executive positions at PWIs, such as dean, vice president, assistant vice president, provost, vice provost, and president would participate in the study and will be reflective of their career pathways. My final assumption was that all potential participants could be located through professional associations and organizations, and would completely cooperate, be open and sincere in sharing factors that were used to self-define, develop and make meaning of their experiences while ascending to executive-leadership roles in higher education.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was established by one research question and covered only the lived experiences related to the career pathways of African-American women operating in various capacities of executive-level administrative positions at PWIs. Some of the experiences of this population may have been strategic and exclusive to this population. Thus, results may have been limited in generalizability to other African-American women administrators in other positions at other institutions in the United States and outside of the United States. I did not address women of other racial groups or males of higher education institutions. My study was delimited to African-American women in executive level administrative positions at PWIs. A delimitation may have existed because of the prospect difficulty of communicating with individuals in a wide geographical area.

Limitations

This study was limited to nine African-American women who were senior and executive-level leaders at PWIs. Hence, a small number of limitations occurred. The first limitation of the study is as indicated by Merriam & Tisdell (2016) that, qualitative researchers, unlike quantitative researchers, such as qualitative investigators do not use statistical procedures to calculate a proper sample size to ensure the generalizability of a study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), a limitation of a qualitative study is that it cannot be generalized to a larger population because qualitative researchers usually purposively select the sample size.

Another limitation of my study was that qualitative researchers tend to place judgments on the data. In other words, qualitative researchers are not value-free, impartial observers of the research process. Qualitative researchers interpret the data based on prior knowledge, which, according to Merriam (2009), is an ontological interpretation of the information. The idea is that information from the participants cannot be real until the researcher explores the information. Therefore, I interpreted the themes of this basic qualitative design as reality after merging the information with my previous knowledge about the subject. All participants were provided appropriate probing questions so as not to be misleading questions. Additionally, each participant was provided the opportunity to member check transcribed interview to verify validity, question, or revise interview responses if necessary.

Significance of the Study

The most respected and consistent profession at the nucleus of the African-American community was education (Lederman, 2013; Wallace, Moore, & Curtis, 2014;). Education has always been the greatest profession accessible to African-American women who served in significant and prominent roles in the academy. African-American women have upheld a tradition of excellence, determination, and strength as leaders and scholars for positive social change made noteworthy advancements and drawn strength from their experiences and historical background in uplifting their communities as social change agents (O'Bryant, 2015; Wallace et al., 2014). Nevertheless, they have remained underrepresented when compared to their White female counterparts and men in executive-level administration at PWIs.

The significance of this basic qualitative study was to obtain meaning and understanding of nine African-American women's career pathway experiences ascending to senior and executive-level leadership at PWIs, public and private. Barriers still exist for African-American women, and stereotypes impact their performance ascending to executive-level positions despite their educational advancements (Beckwith et al., 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The significance of the study was that further research reinforced the necessity for understanding how African-American women navigated challenges and barriers and applied facilitating factors ascending to executive administration. The results from this study may have made visible and audible the appropriate pathways of African-American women that led them to executive administrative positions. Lastly, my intent was to inform other researchers, educators,

inspire women to leadership advancement and institutions of higher education to re-examine or restructure their diversity plan placing special emphasis on women of color, and African-American women, specifically.

Summary and Transition

I discovered that African-American women were disproportionately underrepresented in senior and executive-level positions at PWIs. Yet, African-American women remained committed, determined and dedicated to empowering themselves, uplifting girls and women, women of color and all women to inspire and improve the lives of future generations. In this study, the lived experiences of African-American women in executive-level positions were explored. CRT and BFT were the conceptual frameworks for the study. This exploration was expected to provide deeper meaning and understanding of African-American women's career pathway experiences in reaching their executive positions at PWIs.

This chapter included the background of the study, the problem, and purpose for the study. The conceptual framework and research questions followed to show the method used to conduct the study. The assumptions, scope, limitations, and significance of the study were outlined in order to share the issues considered throughout the process of the study. Chapter 2 contains the literature of the review that supported the need for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter includes a review of literature related to the research problem and purpose for the study that comprises the underrepresentation of African-American women experiences in senior and executive-level leader positions at PWIs. The chapter begins with restating the specific problem and purpose and a preview of Chapter 2. I provided a concise synopsis of current literature researched establishing pertinence of the problem, along with a preview of the major sections of the remainder of the chapter.

Problem and Purpose

African-American women were severely underrepresented and lag-behind in senior and executive-level administrative roles at PWIs (Alexander, 2010; Beckwith et al., 2016; Branson, 2012; Schwanke, 2013, Warner, 2014; Warner, 2015). Gasman, Abiola, and Travers (2015) found that senior and executive-level leadership positions were significantly lacking diversity of African-American women and women of color at the various prestigious and elite PWIs, despite the noticeable climate change in student demographics and minority faculty scholars. PWIs continued to strive to increase the academic pipeline for hiring African-American women at PWIs as the culture begins to transfer to a more inclusive environment (Gasman et al., 2015). Gardner, Barrett, and Pearson(2014) also found that African-American Administrators are severely underrepresented in senior administrative roles at PWIs.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women, and how they navigated barriers around historical and current policies and practices that exclude or disprove of progression or

facilitate their goals to advance more African American women and women of color to senior and executive leadership positions at PWIs. This study provided insight into how African-American women can overcome barriers and challenges and facilitate factors that advance them to the pipeline to ascending to senior and executive positions in PWIs.

Preview of the Chapter

I began Chapter 2 by restating the researched problem and the purpose of this study including the self-defined pathways of African-American women lived experiences ascending to senior- and executive-level administrative roles in academia. The next section of Chapter 2 includes a literature search strategy of library databases, search engines and search terms used for this topic. This is followed by a comprehensive exploration of two conceptual frameworks suggested for this study, CRT and BFT theories.

Next, a succinct synopsis of the current researched literature is presented on African-American women's pathways, factors that impacted and shaped those pathways, how they defined and navigated those pathways, and re-articulated their voices of long silence. In this study, I addressed the gap of the career pathways of African-American women's experiences that focused on how they planned, mapped, and navigated their pathways ascending to executive administrative roles at PWIs. The knowledge I obtained based on the lived experiences of the African-American women may contribute to increasing the prospects for African-American women to be considered for advancement to executive administrative roles.

Literature Search Strategies

The articles that I used in this literature search were peer-reviewed and found utilizing several research databases and resources at Walden University Library. This literature review process encompassed an exhaustive literature review comprised of printed material from the past 5 years. Walden University's Library served as the primary portal to research and retrieve articles from the following databases: EBSCO Host Business and Management (Business Source Complete, JSTOR, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, SAGE Premiere and Science Direct), Communication databases (Academic Search Complete and ProQuest Central), Education (Education Research Complete, Education Source and ERIC), the Multidisciplinary Database, and the Dissertation and Theses Database. In addition to these databases, the most current articles were researched, cross-referenced and obtained in Google Scholar and Google.

I used key phrases and words for this literature review to populate the search fields using Walden University Library databases. I used the primary phrases and key words from phrases such as *African-American or Black females*, *senior leadership roles in higher education*, *African-American women leaders* and *higher education*, *senior-level administrators* or *leaders, African-American* or *Black* and *women* and *higher education*, *dean* or *vice-president* or *assistant vice-president* or *provost* or *assistant provost* or *president*, and *African-American* or *Black women* and *higher education*, populated the first field with *African-American* or *Black females*, second field *women,* third field *pathways in higher education*, and fourth field *women leaders and higher education*, *Black women, senior leadership, and academia*, *African-American women, leaders* and

higher education, *African-American or Black women mentors*, and *higher education*, *African-American women*, *leaders* and *higher education*, and *African-American women, pathways, senior administration* and *higher education*, and *underrepresentation of African-American women at higher education institutions*.

Conceptual Framework

Two scholarly works CRT (Delgado & Stefanci, 2001, 2012, 2017) and BFT (Patricia Collins, 2000) guided this study and were used to form the conceptual framework for this study. I selected CRT and BFT theories considering the distinguishing features that they are interconnected with the intersectionality of race, gender, and social class (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Jean-Marie, Williams & Sherman, 2009; Rocco, Bernier & Bowman, 2014; Santamaria, 2014). I used CRT and BFT to address the African-American women lived experiences of discrimination, underrepresentation, isolation, and marginalization that surrounded and shaped their pathways daily while achieving success at the academy (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Intersectionality provided a structure for interpreting, analyzing and comprehending the complexities of race, gender, and social class (Hosford & Tillman, 2012; Parker, 2005) of African-American women senior and executive-level administrative positions in higher education. I described the conceptual framework in this section of Chapter 2, associating each theory's relationship to the research problem and questions.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT emerged around the civil rights era between the late 1960s to the 1970s as a movement that originated from the cooperative efforts of a group of legal scholars and

activists, across the United States (Bell, 1980; Capper, 2015, Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). This group of legal scholars challenged the issues and the constructs of race, racism, and power, and were interested in studying, examining, and changing the relationship that existed to a new approach, CRT, of examining race, racism, and power. The groups' early writers understood that Civil Rights advances had come to a halt and determined that new strategies and systems were necessary to contest the more indirect forms of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The CRT activists and scholars took an interest in civil rights redressing the historical undesirable wrongs advocating for social change and reform for people of color and specifically injustice towards African-Americans (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT activists and scholars endeavored not only to discover meaning and understanding of organizations' structural racist and racial lines that were normalized and legitimized in the United States, but to be actively involved in positive and effective change agents for African-Americans and all people of color for the greater good of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

I selected CRT as a conceptual framework that presented numerous viewpoints on the meaning and comprehension of race, racism, explanations of inequities of African-American women and other people of color in education. CRT exposes race, racism, and power as a normative standard of the dominant group and establishes the framework to distinguish the experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Taylor, 1998). The CRT movement has been utilized in education research as a theoretical, methodological, and analytical framework in excess of 15 years (Santamaria, 2014), and

contributed to the education field (Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglas, 2013). Today, educational theorists use CRT to comprehend the issues of school discipline and hierarchy, curriculum, affirmative action, high stakes testing, sociologists and even specialists in health care (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), there were five major tenets of CRT. The first principle is the permanency of racism ingrained into society. Racism is not an anomaly or peculiarity, rather, racism is considered "normal science" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 7), and common daily experiences for most people of color in the United States. Racism often does not get acknowledged and consequently, becomes difficult to address. The second principle, interest convergence, is one of Bell's theoretical propositions that analyzes the role of dominant culture's institutional self-interest and concern for the elite White working-class and the relationship to racial reform with no incentive to eliminate racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Gooden, 2012). According to Gooden (2012), racism is associated with being ordinary and is a principle of interest convergence. The dominate culture only received civil rights advances when the interests converged and were connected to that of White culture and society financial conditions. According to Bell (1980), the dominant White culture will seek racial justice only if it is beneficial to them. The third principle holds that race and races are classifications that were socially constructed; they were conceived, developed, and manipulated by society and could be discharged when it was expedient (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001, 2017). This meant that the races are the creations of social thoughts and construction of the dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001,

2017). This means that race does not exist: the phenotypic variations, microscope scrutiny, or genes sequencing reveal that there are no perceived racial dissimilarities (Ladson-Billings, 2013). The fourth principle is intersectionality and anti-essentialism.

Intersectionality and anti-essentialism, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2000, 2001, 2017), indicate that individuals do not have a unitary identity. Rather, they have multiple identities, such as race, sex, class, age, sexual orientation, and religion, thus, they cannot be reduced to one identity or uniqueness. In addition to race and gender, a few other identity markers exist, such as, class, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity (Rocco et al., 2014). For example, an African-American could be Jewish and a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community and the law would reduce the person's complex identity to one simple identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Rocco et al., 2014). The CRT fifth principle states that a person of color, more specifically an African-American, has a voice of color that is unique and must be heard to contradict historical and current oppression experienced. African-Americans can share experiences about oppression that whites have not known or experienced in the way that African-Americans have (2014). Thus, recognition and acknowledgment of persons of color, their voices, knowledge and experiences will counter the dominant White (2000, 2014) group's version of history where African-Americans were largely ignored and objectified.

In my study, I used the CRT lens to capture the African-American women experiences and guide the analysis in exploring in context the pathway experiences of African-American women ascending to executive administrative positions in higher

education. The purposes of the shared stories by African-American women and other persons of color were to challenge the status quo, dismantle, and shatter stereotypical and ideological myths. The myths have passed on for generations and have served to repress and suppress this group of people.

Throughout this study, I have used CRT and BFT as lenses to examine participants' experiences with intersectionality of race, gender, and power at PWIs, and how they navigated barriers, challenges, and facilitated factors to ascend to senior and executive positions.

Black Feminist Thought (BFT)

Black feminist thought is a social and standpoint theory developed by Collins (2000). According to Collins (1986), Black feminist thought was created and supplied by Black women to oppose oppression and clarify a viewpoint for Black women. BFT emerged to give voice to the challenges identified and experienced by women of color whose voices were only heard if their language was framed and well-known to that of a dominant group (Collins, 2000). African-American women occupied marginal positions in academia for prolonged periods of time and came to be viewed as marginalization analogous to "outsider from within," in which African-American women were employed in the dominant group's environment, yet continued to be perceived as an outsider, invisible, with no voice during discussions in meetings or conferences (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

According to Allen and Baber (1992), postmodern feminists rejected and challenged the idea and belief of a unitary privileged standpoint established on gender

only. Rather, Allen and Baber (1992) posited that women's experiences and identities are inclusive of other components of intersectionality other than gender, such as class, race, age, sexual, religion, and family status. African-American woman encountered at every level numerous intersectional challenges related to race, gender, social class, and several other oppressive stereotypes in higher education (Collins, 2000; Wilder, Jones, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). African-American women worked collectively and indefatigably in the progression of defining and refining the politics of the BFT group in alignment with other organizations (Collins, 2000). Collins indicated that they portrayed an active standpoint and committed themselves to the assignment of struggling against racism, sexism, heterosexualism, and classism oppressions. African-American women also considered BFT to be the plausible movement to contest the various and concurrent oppressions for all women of color.

Historically, African-American women have always been accustomed to and pursued education because it was considered a respectable occupation, despite that it was made inaccessible and unplanned for African-American women, specifically, and who were considered less than human whether they were slaves or not (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). According to Davis and Maldonado (2015), when African-American women achieved college degrees there were a limited number of African-American women hired as school teachers in Black elementary and secondary school systems. When European American and African American men along with European American women, the dominant system, compelled and assumed subservient roles as the life for African-American women, racism and sexism were created and later termed double oppression

(Howard-Hamilton, 2003a). Upon entering college, African-American women encountered numerous challenges; and over the past two centuries very slight changes have occurred for African-American women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003b).

Collins (2000) concentrated on three themes that combined interlocking terms race, gender, and social class. The first, using BFT lens, I examined African-American women participant's experiences that influenced and created the framework for their career pathways. I used BFT lens to examined the participants' complex and difficult roles of thoughts and dreams that made them powerful in everyday life's journey; and to examine the collective knowledge and consciousness of thought that motivated the participants to pursue the career pathways to success.

Second, African-American women in the study shared their experiences with viewpoints of their dreams, while connecting consciousness and commonality between their viewpoints and dreams. According to Collins (2000), the articulation of collective and self-defined experiences became a challenge because of the inclination of the dominant group to suppress these thoughts. Third, through this research the experiences of African-American women executives in higher education may be discovered and understood through the numerous contexts of their diverse families, social class, religion, age, and sexual orientation. Collins (2001) proposed that until intersectionality oppression of race, gender, and social class is abolished, African-American women cannot be wholly encouraged and empowered.

Byrd and Stanley's (2009) study stated that participants' voices come together from issues of the sociocultural intersectionality of race, gender and social class of

African-American women who encountered actual experiences in administrative leadership at predominantly European American organizations. A common experience encountered among African-American women in Byrd's and Stanley's study at PWIs was that of disempowerment. The expectation was that as African-American women administrative leaders would allow discourse to address their need to have conversations that would bring about social change (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The participants' actual encounters of voicing their need to have discussions stimulated new ways of thinking and at new levels about a matter. These experiences of the African-American women cannot be disconnected or discarded. Collins (2000) indicated that African-American women's work and struggle should not be muted or continued in seclusion and anonymity. Rather their experiences and intellectual labor should be collected and become a vigorous foundation for distinguishable standpoints of self, self-reliance, self-determination and independence (Collins, 2000). Similar to Byrd & Stanley's (2009) study, African-American women shared the voices of their lived experiences of the various ways intersectionality of race, gender and social class impacted their leadership development at PWIs (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

The literature research acknowledged that the hiring of African-American women at private and public PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU), has extended to include African-American women in positions of academic and administration – deans, vice presidents, provosts, vice-provosts and presidents (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). There has been, according to Jean-Marie et al., an underrepresentation of African-American women in executive level positions in higher

education and even more scarce at the president's level. The lived experiences have been tense, and oppressive, making it challenging and limiting African-American women power and authority in executive leadership roles (Bonner, 2001; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). I used CRT and BFT as the combined framework with intersectionality of race, gender, and social class for this study because the combined theories provided interpretation, analysis, and understanding of African-American women experiences encountered in senior and executive-level leadership at PWIs (Horsford & Tillman, 2012; Parker, 2005)

Relevant Research

Critical race theory and Black feminist thought were used in this research to view and explore the lived experiences of African-American women in executive leadership roles at PWIs. According to Capper (2015), CRT can be used to address and provide propositions for racial inequities in educational institutions and assist leaders and decision makers to take action that will increase equity, diversity, and eliminate racism. Davis and Maldonado (2015) employed BFT to support the research on African-American women leadership in higher education, explored their lived experiences of the intersectionality of race, gender, and development as leaders, and used purposeful sampling for the selection of their participants. Davis and Maldonado (2015) used five African-American women in senior and executive-level positions selected from five United States colleges. Telephones and in-person interviews were used to collect data from participants. In this study, Davis and Maldonado (2015)used in-depth and semistructured interviews to collect data from deans, associate deans, executive directors,

vice provosts, provosts, vice presidents, and presidents. Davis and Maldonado (2015) interview questions were designed to frame the responses to the principal research question of their study. The goal of this process was to develop themes that would define as precise as feasible the phenomenon. They were meticulous in examining the themes to ensure they formed a comprehensive picture of the collective experiences.

The results from the Maldonado (2015) study indicated that the participants confirmed that race and gender affected their development as administrators in higher education. Despite the barriers and challenges the participants encountered, they were resilient, competent, and skillful to perform their responsibilities and frequently in surroundings where they were continuously having to prove themselves. The African-American women continued to persevere and rise above in executive administrative roles they had ascended. In my study, I investigated the lived experiences of African-American women's career pathways, and how they planned and negotiated personally and professionally innumerable barriers and facilitating factors ascending to executive positions at PWIs.

CRT was used in a recent study by Stewart (2016), to understand nine midlevel management participants' aspects of intercultural experiences, career advancements, and management of careers at PWIs environments. The CRT lens was used to communicate the participants' feelings regarding how intersectionality of race and gender influenced their upward mobility, in some cases negatively, to new positions and opportunities. The results of Stewart's (2016) study reflected the African-American women's perception of their career advancements at PWIs as it related to the intersectionality of race and gender.

Stewart's (2016) also showed how the participants had to contend and overpower barriers and challenges in order to advance their leadership careers at PWIs. My study's results reflected the career pathways of African-American women lived experiences, personally and professionally. The results showed how the participants navigated their career pathways despite the disparities, barriers, and facilitating factors that supported their ascension to executive administrative roles at PWIs.

Relevance to the Research Question

Two theories, CRT) and BFT, were used to inform the analytical approach to exploring the research question in this study. I selected CRT and BFT lenses as the framework to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women, obtain meaning and understanding of how they navigated barriers, and applied facilitating factors to attain executive level positions at PWIs. I used these theories to uncover, expose, and transform barriers of race and racism. Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) study and Davis and Maldonado's (2015) study used CRT and BFT, respectively, to examine the impact of intersectionality of race, gender, and social class for African-American women leadership development at PWIs. The focus was on intersectionality of multiple identities, such as race, gender, social class, ethnicity, ageism, religion, and other identities and the consequences of these identities impacting African-American women's experiences (Pratt-Clarke, 2010). Under the lens of BFT, African-American women voiced their lived experiences in the struggle against multiple barriers, such as race, gender, social class, ethnicity, ageism, religion and other identities, and facilitated factors

to depict successes encountered by African-American women in executive positions at PWIs (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) used CRT to determine continuous barrier patterns of marginalization against African-American women at PWIs. Davis and Maldonado (2015), also, used BFT to determine the influence of facilitating factors, such as family support, mentoring, and sponsorship on African-American women in leadership development programs. According to Gasman, Abiola, and Travers (2015), CRT is a "powerful framework" appropriate to be used for questioning, analyzing, and interpreting race and gender and this research data.

Literature Review of Key Concepts

In this section, I discussed relevant key aspects from recent studies concerning career pathway experiences of African-American women in senior and executive-level administrative positions at PWIs included: (a) intersectionality of race and gender for African-American women, (b) underrepresentation of African-American women at PWIs, (c) African-American women's lived experiences as senior and executive-level leaders at PWIs; and (d) African-American women's pathways experiences of barriers against advancements and facilitating factors supporting advancements at PWIs. In this literature review, I provided and discussed for each factor the rationale and methodologies used that were consistent with the capacity of the study, an overview of the strengths and weaknesses that encompass each background and issues, and a description delineating how the aspects will be of further value from research. Finally, the research I reviewed was synthesized and provided as a guide to the study.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender for African-American Women

The primary conceptual frameworks in these studies focused on CRT, BFT or both theories to contextualize the experiences of racism, discrimination, and marginalization. Emphasis was placed on the intersectionality of the sociocultural realties of race, gender, and social class affecting African-American women daily lived experiences at PWIs in other disciplines (Stanley, 2009). Studies in this section demonstrated how the components of race, gender, and sex when combined interacted in various discipline.

The first aspect in this literature review was concentrated on the intersectionality of race and gender at PWIs. Intersectionality is a socio-cultural reality that focuses on the convergence and interconnecting of race, gender and social class (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Davis, 2012). According to Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality focuses on the interaction of race, gender, and social class shaping the lived experiences of African-American women. While Crenshaw created the term, the origin can be traced back to Maria Stewart of 1832 (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Collins (2000) expounded on the interaction of intersectionality on race, gender, and social class adding additional identities as a method and as a technique. This technique was for comprehending the social location crisscross systems of oppression. This technique was also used for comprehending "an analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shaped Black women's experiences and, in turn, were shaped by Black women" (Collins, p. 299). Horsford and Tillman's (2012) work on intersectionality provided a framework for understanding and

analyzing the numerous complicated identities, racism, sexism, social class, and experiences of African-American women and women of color encountered in senior and executive-level administrative roles at PWIs.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) agreed with Collins (2000) that intersectionality analysis of multiple identities of "race, sex, class, national origin, and sexuality orientation" attempts to address how each component when combined play out in various work environments (p. 51). According to Collins (2001) and Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality was born out of studying the African-American woman. Brooks (2012) posited that the study of BFT gave birth chiefly to the concept of intersectionality that resulted from "slavery and residual effects left of that significant facet of American history on Black Americans" (p. 39).

Sociocultural perspective considers race, gender, and social class when analyzing the power dynamic process of bureaucratic systems of society where repression and domination could occur (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Stanley's (2009) introduced human resource development (HRD), a very functional field that was applied to the daily pragmatic work environments. Further, research was limited relative to the notion of HRD addressing the impact of the intersectionality of more sociocultural realties of race, gender, and social class and the impact on the lived experiences encountered by African-American women in leadership positions. The interconnecting system of oppression contained a multiplier effect multiplying race by sexism and multiplying sexism by social classism giving recognition to the voice of African-American women leaders.

Stanley's (2009) work drew from CRT lens that the intersectionality of race, gender, and social class was not positioned within separate domains of the African-American women experiences of African-American women. Rather, these socio-cultural realties of race, gender, and social class interconnect to shape and influence multiple facets of the African-American women's daily lived experiences (2009). Stanley concluded that using the framework of CRT and Afrocentric epistemological could be a significant lens to investigate, analyze, and interpret African-American women career pathways experiences as leaders in public and private sectors and higher education institutions.

Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman (2009) examined the voices of African-American women lived experiences in leadership development at PWIs, how they transcended racism and genderism creating and structuring leadership positions, and how they earned degrees in positions that had traditionally been occupied by male professionals. A narrative inquiry was used to study the African-American women's lives. African-American women's experiences have largely been scarce in literature, omitted, marginalized, and misinterpreted (Jean-Marie, et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the women remained connected to Afrocentric epistemology that assisted them in traversing through racism, sexism, and discrimination.

Byrd's (2009) investigated how African-American women senior and executive-level leaders experienced leadership and the interconnecting of intersectionality on race, gender, and social class at PWIs. The framework for this study was BFT (Collins, 2000), and CRT (Bell, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Byrd planned to bring together the

interlocking procedure of race, gender, and social class to leadership conversations by adding the viewpoint of 10 African-American women participants' autobiography. The African-American women shared their perspectives of leadership experiences into the discourse of intersectionality of race, gender, and social class that could be used as an instrument for developing sociocultural theories. A narrative process of autobiography was utilized in the data analysis in that each woman voiced her own story of experiencing disempowerment as an outsider from within, stereotypical images, and other recurring similar situations that generated perceptions of the intersectionality of race, gender, and social class. In my research study the African-American women, were interviewed, and shared their perspectives of their career pathway lived experiences, barriers and facilitating factors, ascending to senior and executive -level positions at PWIs.

Lloyd-Jones (2009) investigated a single case study of one Africa American woman in senior-level administration at a predominantly White research institution to determine by what manner intersectionality of race, gender, and social class contradict achievement ideology and lived experiences of African-American women. Achievement ideology principle has maintained that anyone can achieve success and greater opportunities through excellent education and hard work apart from the oppression of race, gender, social class, age, or sexual orientation (MacLeod, 2009). The African-American woman's experiences included dichotomous experiences of achievement and challenges. Challenges emerged and manifested themselves in the form of race, gender, and social class inequities that contradicted the participant's belief concerning achievement ideology, despite excellent education and hard work. Lloyd-Jones (2009)

explored the social inequities of the African-American woman to recommend ways to eliminate practices and policies that enabled social inequities. Recommendations from the study were made to eliminate practices of social inequities, plan and implement learning strategies for organizational awareness of the tension between the intersectionality of race, gender, social class and belief in achievement ideology, and to address the tension on an individual level.

Bass (2009) explored a multiple case study examining five African-American women administrators and teachers' lived experiences with intersectionality of race, gender, and social class advising an ethic of care to counter social injustices in an educational system. The African-American women participants in this study recognized the legacy of leadership they had inherited, the increase in their assessment and comprehension of the systems of oppression in the United States, and a clear understanding of how to respond. One such conspicuous system of oppression was PWIs. African-American women participants' personal and professional experiences contributed to the realization of their status in the PWIs as outsiders from within. Additionally, the legacy of understanding oppression rendered them extremely cognizant of the commission that must be completed to liberate other oppressed people within their capacity of influence. Thus, the African-American women in Bass' (2009) study took on the personality of previous pioneer women's resilience, integrity, and was capable of surviving, navigating and functioning in a system that was identified as unjust to achieve their goal of assisting others, often behind the scenes. The African-American women participants were able to manage obstacles that may have emerged from intersectionality

of race, gender, social class established by the knowledge and understanding the systems that control and create policies and rules (Bass, 2009)

Davis (2016) considered the intersectionality effects of race and gender to leadership development elements of African-American women executive leaders' lived experience at two dissimilar enterprises – higher education institutions and businesses. While research has been conducted on African-American women leaders from a sociological perspective, limited studies have been performed on the effect of the intersectionality of race and gender informing African-American women's leadership development (Byrd, 2009; Collins, 2000, Stanley, 2009). According to Davis (2016), conversations of how the interaction of intersectionality on race and gender informs leadership development was seldom considered. The results of the study involved African-American women in executive leadership sharing their voices of their lived experiences of leadership at two distinct predominantly White organizations enterprises – higher education and businesses.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) described in their study the intersectionality of race and gender and how African-American women developed as leaders and how African-American women participants in the study substantiated that the intersectionality of race and gender informed their leadership development at PWIs. Davis and Maldonado (2015) explored intersectionality of race and gender for African-American women and found that research conducted on women was performed on women in lower level positions and in smaller organizations, and only a few studies have explored leadership experiences of African-American women and women of color. Most studies conducted on African-

American women executive leaders concentrated on barriers and challenges to opportunities and advancement in the literature (Collins, 2000; Parker, 2005) rather than facilitating factors that contributed to their successes.

There have been studies that have explored the barriers, challenges, and obstacles of African-American women ascending to executive leadership roles (Collins, 2000; Parker, 2005). These studies have been subsumed in women feminist literature overlooking any information concerning African-American women's leadership and development experience as executive leaders in higher education (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). A consistent lack of understanding African-American women's lived experiences encountered, leadership development ascending to executive leadership roles, and the interaction of intersectionality on race, gender, and social class have the proclivity to constrain the process for African-American women attaining executive leadership roles (Davis, 2016).

According to Agosto and Karanxha (2011), the African-American women's leadership lived experiences revealed through CRT tenets and lens illumined what and how of the experiences dealing with resistance that seemed to stimulate and increase racism and genderism. The CRT lens, also, revealed that African-American women, as suggested by hooks (1989), learned survival and liberation through associating and combining resistance to racism, genderism, and ethnicity. Through networking relationships with other African-American women professionals, African-American women learned how to talk back and give voice to regain and recapture their resilience (Collins, 1998).

Gardner, Barrett and Pearson (2014) explored the lived experiences of four African-American women and 10 men student affairs administrators at PWIs identifying barriers, such as race, gender, and social class, to their success and facilitating factors for their achievement. The bicultural existence and emergence of the back and forth movement between the dominant culture and their own cultural created separateness and isolation employed at PWIs. Some of the African-American women participants reported feelings of separateness and isolation created distress produced from a bicultural existence. An example of bicultural stress, often superficially, happens at levels such as appearance, hairstyles, schools attended, acquired cultural tastes; and more profound emotional levels as where one lives, and one's political and social values (Gardner et al., 2014).

African-American women have been frequently employed in positions and positions of leadership where they felt isolated and separated (West, 2015). In West's (2015) study, the African-American women student affairs administrator participants described their professional experiences of seclusion in several surroundings on campus. Some participants described being relocated to different floors physically separated from their co-workers of the Department making it inaccessible and incapable to communicate with non-African-American colleagues as a means of supporting collegial relationships. According to Collins's (1986) seminal work African-American women described the feeling of separateness and isolation lived experiences in their careers at PWIs and as two of the most common negative byproducts of underrepresentation groups.

Finally, there is the issue of double jeopardy of race and gender. Davis and Maldonado (2015) explored the impact of the intersectionality of race and gender for African-American women through their lived experiences in leadership at PWIs. All African-American women participants corroborated that they were impacted by race and gender discrimination of how they developed as leaders. The African-American women participants reported that they experienced the impact of double jeopardy of race and gender, rather than experiencing race and gender as separate identities at PWIs (2015).

The purpose of each study in this first aspect of the literature review was to describe the impact, influence, and significance of studying the intersectionality of race and gender on African-American women leadership development experiences at PWIs. Each study discovered that intersectionality of race and gender and other multiple identities can impact and affect the African-American women personal and professional career lives. Intersectionality as a socio-cultural reality emphasized the various and inherent approaches interaction of race and gender and other multiple identities are demonstrated in other disciplines in the lived experiences of African-American women at PWIs.

Stanley (2009) introduced the notion of the need for more sociocultural realities in the field HRD that assisted in addressing the concept of race, gender, and social class among African-American women lived experiences at PWIs. Furthermore, the studies in this section focused on African-American women voicing their lived experiences on how intersectionality of race, gender, and social class impacted and shaped their lives (Byrd, 2009; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Bass (2009) considered five African-

American women's lived experiences of oppression that afforded them tremendous cognizance. African-American women's understanding of intersectionality of race, gender, and social class increased their awareness and commitment to liberate other oppressed women and people within the sphere of influence

Davis and Maldonado (2015) focused on exploring the intersectionality of race and gender and its impact on African-American women's leadership development, and how the racial and gender identities influenced the development of the African-American women leaders. In this research of inquiry, I explored the charting and navigations of African-American women's career pathways lived experiences, barriers and facilitating factors toward executive leadership at PWIs.

Underrepresentation of African-American Women at PWIs

The research on the underrepresentation of African-American women at PWIs, the second aspect in this literature review, suggested that groups of individuals were inadequately represented to a population at large (Balci, 2016). In institutions of higher education, African-American women remain underrepresented in securing tenure track faculty or administrative positions at PWIs (Grant, 2012) despite the increase in hiring African-American women. African-American women continue to get excluded from faculty and administrative roles that preclude them from entering the pipeline for prominent academic and executive administrative positions (Collins, 2000; Grant, 2012). Underrepresentation has a glass ceiling affect at PWIs.

Gamble and Turner (2015) found that mentoring and networking are useful for breaking through the glass ceiling. For example, African-American women considered

their organizations to be the least likely to be an inclusive location to work. African-American women report their dissatisfaction and frustration for the underrepresentation of other women in senior and executive-level leadership who are mentors and sponsors with a similar background (Beckwith et al., 2016).

Underrepresented groups can be excluded from access to opportunities, or experiences due to a variety of characteristics that appear to make them seem other, or different, from an otherwise dominant group population (Balci, 2016). West's (2015) study used the lens of BFT to validate indicators of underrepresentation, marginalization, and isolation that are continually experienced by African-American women at PWIs. In addition, BFT confirmed that intersectionality of African-American women's "collective common experience [and the] distinctness of the African-American women's unique experiences" (p. 110) was pivotal to their standpoint of success.

African-American women remain severely underrepresented in senior and executive leadership positions in higher education institutions (Dowdy & Hamilton, 2012; Gamble & Turner, 2014; Gardner, Barrett & Pearson, 2014). The women in the workplace study for 2015 and 2016 (Yee, Krivkovich, Kutcher, Epstein, Thomas, Finch, Cooper & Konar, 2015; 2016) reported that women remain underrepresented in business sectors at all levels in the pipeline – corporate and higher education institutions. As reported in 2016 study, men were promoted at 30% higher rates than women in the early years of their careers – for every 100 women promoted, 130 men were promoted. Despite small improvements, the studies reported that women were underrepresented at all levels of corporate and education pipelines with the greatest disproportion in senior-level

positions. The challenge was more severe for women of color encountered more barriers and lagged behind European American men, men of color, and European American women (2015; 2016).

Patton (2013) discovered a lack of diversity in senior leadership that was significantly European American and male at the eight Ivy League institutions. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey (U. S. Department of Education, 2011) broadly classified senior administrative leadership as executive leaders, administrators, and managerial staff. The survey illustrated that the majority of such positions were held by women at five of the eight Ivy League institutions. However, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and American Indians were disproportionately represented with the exception of Unity Renaissance University (pseudonym for one of the eight Ivies) that reported much higher numbers representing persons of color in administrative roles than reported at other Ivies.

According to Patton's (2013), in higher management positions, there was a lack of diversity at peer institutions; hiring practices of diversity at peer institutions were very selective and a limited number of minority candidates were displayed in the pipeline. Data showed that African-American women and members of other minority groups lagged behind that of women in professional staff and administrative leadership at the Ivy League institutions (Patton, 2013). Women have broken through the glass and concrete ceilings over the past decade at Ivy Institutions, according to Patton, with half having female presidents. The demographic of the presidents at four of the Ivy League institutions included a first and only African-American woman, one Asian-American

male, and two European-American women. Traditionally, institutions seldom replace another person of color with another once she or he leaves the position of president (Patton, 2013).

The NCES survey (U. S. Department of Education, 2011) reported that at the majority of Ivy League institutions, women in administrative professional roles outnumbered their male counterparts. At Unit Renaissance University, administrators held 69% in administrative positions, which was more than half at other Ivy League institutions (Patton, 2013). Women of color were significantly lower, and at top executive level positions "it got whiter" (Patton, 2013, p. 5). Patton's (2013) interviews with administrators included several factors that would be effective in improving diversity leadership in higher education: (a) develop different diversity employee search approaches; (b) increase the number of faculty in the pipeline who could be advanced to senior administrative positions; and (c) consider critical mass at which underrepresented students would not feel isolated or the spokesperson.

African-American Women's Lived Experiences as Administrators at PWIs

The third aspect of this literature review focuses on African-American women's experiences as administrators at higher education institutions. Historically, women and African-American women did not enter higher education until after the Civil War period (U. S. Department of Education, 1991). Early in the 1800s women experienced a significant noteworthy change in education: the growth of 25 more colleges were begun with the rapid growth in access to secondary education and the development of collegiate education (Solomon, 1985). According to Solomon (1985), Maria Stewart, a free

African-American woman, was the first American–born female to give a public speech advocating for the abolishment of slavery and for African-Americans to educate themselves. African-Americans participated in the change by being admitted to co-educational Oberlin college from the beginning.

Research is sparse concerning African-American women's experiences in higher education in general and as administrators, specifically at senior and executive-levels at PWIs (Cook, 2012; Howard-Vital, 1989; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). According to Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) qualitative meta-synthesis study, research has comparatively focused on the retention of African-American students or faculty, while studies of administration have concentrated on student affairs or diversity pursuits. Thus, there is a scarcity of information in the 21st century to address African-American women administrators, career experiences, leadership development, and their disproportionate representation. Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) qualitative meta-synthesis study used a comparative analysis that facilitated the researchers to select specific research questions for comparison, analysis, and interpretation. CRT was used to question, assess, interpret, and challenge potential racist ideologies. CRT was, also, used to arguably explain the underrepresentation of African-Americans, and that race has remained a significant power in arbitrations within institutions of higher learning. Notwithstanding, African-American women persisted, remained motivated, embraced and kept in view the pursuit of education to obtain a college degree for self-improvement, and to inspire optimism in other African-American women aspiring administrative leadership at higher education in

the future. Thus, Wolfe and Dilworth reviewed culture, diversity, and leadership as these components are often transformational in higher education.

Gamble and Turner (2015), in their qualitative study, suggested that colleges and universities would see an increase in the presence of African-American women executive administrative leaders by putting into operation professional development, mentoring, and leadership training programs for diversity efforts. The data was captured through semistructured face-to-face interviews from 10 African-American women in executive-level administrative positions at a PWIS. Despite numerous colleges and universities have increased their course schedules for faculty, staff, and managerial positions, they found that a limited number of African-American women applied for executive administrative positions. They indicated that it was incumbent upon the college and university leaders to foster partnerships with community stakeholders through the discourse of labor force issues that will meet the needs of the community.

Women advancing to executive administrative positions were often impeded by various barriers, which come in innumerable forms (Gamble & Turner, 2015). The glass ceiling was one form of barrier that obstructed women's progression in the workplace. Women remained underrepresented in top-level echelon positions of organizations, despite continuing to advance in leadership and equality (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Gamble and Turner found two methods that would be beneficial in assisting African-American women to break the barriers that were glass ceilings: cultivating effective networking relationships and acquiring mentors.

According to Brown's (2005) study, professional development and mentoring would assist African-American women with recruitment and preparation for advancement. Brown found that 72.5 % of African-American women attended professional development training programs to augment their administrative skills. Women discovered that they were being excluded by the so-called good old boy network in conventional circles of business environments in the world (Brown, 2005). Women responded by establishing their own networks while others acknowledged that networks were inadequate and lacked value.

Gamble and Turner (2015) found that African-American women were nonetheless, underrepresented. Although, mentoring programs were present within institutions of higher education, administrative mentors were missing for African-American women, which produced additional barriers. African-American women aspiring to executive-level administration sought and needed mentorship and rapport with members of similar groups (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Gamble and Turner (2015) suggested that institutions of higher education be flexible to revisit, implement and make modifications to mentoring programs inclusive of minority and culturally capable people will profit internally and externally.

More evidence continues to provide updates as historians and scholars write the stories of African-Americans in general and African-American women, specifically (Glover, 2012). Early mentors were African-American women who mentored and nurtured other African-American women and encouraged girls and women to pursue

education. This form of mentoring was effective and resulted in African-American female firsts in education, teaching, and administration (Glover, 2012).

Despite African-American women's qualifications, leadership skills and capabilities, networks, mentorship, accomplishments and success, the one common variable that remains principally unchanged was that African-American women were underrepresented in senior and executive-level leadership roles (Alexander, 2010; Beckwith, et al., 2016; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Branson, 2012; Hannum et al., 2015). African-American women occupying administrative positions in higher education, must be confident in their preparedness, abilities, and decisions they will make (Davis, 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). They repeatedly have had to resist and struggle against stereotypes, isolation, and invisibility barriers and challenges in efforts to construct and safeguard their confidence and abilities to be successful in the workplace posited (Beckwith et al.,2016).

Howard-Hamilton (2003a) discussed research at an African-American women's summit concerning barriers and challenges that African-American women continue to encounter. Howard-Hamilton discussed meeting African-American women needs of students, faculty, and administrators in higher education observing cursory approaches and affinities to overlooking African-American women in comparison to African-American men and women. One perception that emerged was that African-American women should be actively engaged in participating, connecting, and supporting each other through different venues: spiritually, psychologically, and mentoring environments. Howard-Hamilton (2003a) noted that the African-American women encountered greater

risk, than the past, because they were seated in positions previously held by dominant groups yet underrepresented.

African-American women who are seated in executive-level administrative roles today perceive the great challenge today to follow in the steps of renowned executive-level administrators, such as presidents Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune (Bethune-Cookman University), Dr. Johnnetta Cole, Benjamin E. Mays (Morehouse College), and Mordecai Johnson (Howard University) (Glover, 2012). These executive administrators sat in positions such as deans, vice-presidents, provosts and presidents of colleges and universities and paved the way for significant social changes in education and leadership in the United States (Hatton, 2012). African-American women continued to construct pathways ascending to senior and executive-level leadership positions in corporate and institutions of higher education.

Johnson (2015) studied African-American women's leadership styles and behaviors across multiple sectors utilizing a mixed methods approach. The participants were African-American women employed in executive administrative positions. Johnson's (2015) purpose was to present results that would assist future leaders of culturally diverse organizations in recognizing the leadership styles and behaviors of accomplished African-American women.

Historically, women and African-American women, specifically, have been overlooked by existing inequity features of laws signed and implemented (Johnson, 2015). The signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was to advance women and African-American women across multiple sectors – corporate, government, and education. The

Civil rights Act of 1964, the Voting Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 required society to examine the inequities that were occurring in the United States (Johnson, 2015). Women's presence on corporate boards have been challenged and encumbered and made worse for women of color and African-American women (Johnson, 2015; Warner 2014, 2015). Women, women of color, and African-American women entering corporate and higher education institutions demanded equality and proportionate representation (Warner, 2014, 2015). The results of this research study of African-American women's career pathway experiences provided information recommending to PWIs, private and public, how to revisit, re-conceptualize and implement diversity plans and programs through the lenses of a multicultural and multiethnic standpoint.

The outcome of literature review for this study appeared to have been that despite the many barriers, discrimination and challenges of intersectionality of race, racism, genderism and classism, African-American women have risen and still rise above the many stereotypes and stigmas society has wanted them to embrace (Alexander, 2010; Beckwith et al., 2016; Davis, 2016; Robinson & Nelson, 2010). African-American women have dismantled and deconstructed the outsider from within marginalization perspective environment of dominant groups in which African-American women were employed at institutions of higher education and predominantly White institutions of higher education (Collins 2000, Parker, 2005).

African-American Women Career Pathway Experiences at PWIs

The final aspect in this research study centered on how African-American women navigated pathways to senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. Research on both barriers and facilitating factors was considered. Despite racial and ethical disparities, barriers and facilitating factors related to African-American women pathways, how did African-American women learned to manage and survive these experiences (Stanley, 2009)? Brazzell (2012) found that they navigated pathways in courage, determination, resilience, and faith to continue their journey, while establishing a greater life for themselves, up-lifting their children, other families, and inspiring future generation. Jean-Marie (2006) studied three African-American women executive level administrators experiences at (HBCU) in a southeastern state. The study was significant to African-American women's career pathways for African-Americans' educational foundations were formed in segregated schools (Gasman, 2013; Jean-Marie, 2006). The express purpose for HBCUs formation was to educate and make accessible to the underrepresented and all citizens a superior education that is still in existence today (Gasman, 2013; Jean-Marie, 2006). African-Americans in general and African-American women, specifically, saw HBCUs as a "repository of hope for universal education for all" (Jean-Marie, 2006, p. 87). The three African-American women participants' progenitors laid educational foundation for African-American women. The African-American women participants shared their pathway perspectives from family, church and community with commitment, resilience and determination through struggles for social justice.

Moreover, as Jean-Marie (2006) determined, the African-American women participants were able to attain educational gains and progress pursuing education professionally and occupationally in areas formerly dominated by Euro-American women. In preparation for leadership, the African-American women participants used their knowledge gained through education and professional experience to impart wisdom and knowledge to young African-Americans to be agents of social change (Jean-Marie et al., 2006). The African-American women's cornerstones were established to racially uplift African-American women, contribute to education and communities that had once contributed to their journeys (Jean-Marie, 2006; Jean-Marie et al., 2006).

African-American women executives' career pathway experiences ascending to their executive-level administrative roles have seldom been studied (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Glover, 2012). This was primarily because of the lack of African-American presence in leadership roles in 4-year public and private institutions of higher education. Re-positioning, re-creating, and writing their paths would give voice to successes and challenges of the African-American woman ascending to executive-level leadership roles. According to Miles (2012), to pen words in writing gives voice that becomes imperative for effective and positive social change.

Research revealed a paucity of literature of African-American women's career pathway experiences in areas of academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrators of senior and executive-level administration at institutions of higher education (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Johnson, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The research focused on the disproportionate

number of women in leadership positions in higher education, specifically the absence of African-American women and a scant number of other women of color (Alexander, 2010). The career path for African-American women presidents did not begin until 1903 when Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune became president of Bethune-Cookman College (Alexander, 2010; Jackson & Harris, 2007). Further research focused on the intersectionality of race and gender implications (Cook, 2012; Davis, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Lloyd-Jones, 2009); and the unheard voices of African-American women concerning their experiences and views. Hinton (2012) suggested that African-American women's pathways to executive-level administrative positions had been an evolutionary process that commenced before higher education institutions and professional leadership development programs. Hinton (2012) posited that family background, early childhood education, and career experiences had impacted African-American women's pathway experiences.

Robinson and Nelson (2010) explored the impact of oppression and adversity of African-American women encountered faculty and administrative roles to leadership. Despite the oppression of stigmatization, discrimination, and stereotypes placed on African-American women by society, they rise, they developed, and used strategies to pursue upward mobility (Robinson & Nelson, 2010). Robinson and Nelson used a narrative research to study this subgroup of discriminated women who had not had the opportunity to bring voice to their experiences. The results did not show that the African-American women experienced oppression as a result of interaction between race, gender, and class. Rather, gender emerged as the common obstacle among the six African-

American women.

The six African-American women participants in the Robinson and Nelson (2010) study believed that they would have been treated differently had they been men. The barriers they encountered were produced by other women in their work environment. Despite these challenges, African-American women reported that they experienced success, possessed giftedness and knowledge, and expressed being comforted through their spiritual connection to move forward in life. This gave the African-American women cause to develop strategies and unconventional means to navigate and direct negative commentaries into positive commentaries allowing them to self-advocate. According to Robinson and Nelson (2010), the principal documented strategies, "migration, networking, and education," (p. 1171) were used by African-American women to garner support and network, earn and obtain an education that enabled them to conquer diversity, barriers, and achieve upward mobility on their journeys.

Barriers of African-American women at PWIs. Barriers play a role in the experiences of African-American women at PWIs. As African-American women, other women of color, and other non-European American students begin to matriculate at PWIs, they often encounter adjustment experiences that their European American counterparts do not experience (Gardner et al., 2014). "The leadership gap is a global phenomenon whereby women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-level and lower authority leadership positions" (Northouse, 2013, p. 354). Generally, these barriers are recognized as opponents to women and significantly against African-American women (Beckwith et al., 2016; hooks, 1989). For women and African-American women

aspiring to executive leadership positions, the barriers permanency becomes more complex and more of a challenge (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The Black and multiracial feminist thought argues that the intersectionality of race and gender are socially constructed and inseparably connected (Collins, 2000).

An historic overview revealed many barriers or challenges women, in general, and African-American women specifically, have experienced ascending to executive positions (Beckwith et al., 2016). African-American women have a unique and different experience disadvantaged because of the binary identity, race and, gender. In general, women have confronted genderism, discrimination, marginalization, and a scarcity of career advancement opportunities (Beckwith et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Scales, 2010). African-American women have the double challenge that includes race and gender as barriers or impediments (Beckwith et al., 2016).

Women in two distinct enterprises – corporate and academia, encountered barriers at all levels in society (Diehl, 2014; West, 2016). Diehl's (2014) study found that these barriers conflict with balancing work and home life, different communication styles, the lack of informal networking, the lack of mentoring opportunities and sponsorship, salary inequities and gender disparity. Studies on women's leadership at institutions of higher education have increased ,yet, there remains a paucity of studies specifically on the development of African-American women leadership in institutions of higher education and corporate businesses (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Diehl, 2014).

Beckwith, Carter and Peters's (2016) study showed that barriers have been created, policies written, and practices established by men in the workplace environment

and exacerbated by societal norms to prevent African-American women from the highest executive-level leaders in organizations. These invisible barriers are defined as glass ceilings that negatively affect and prevent women from opportunities and advancements within all business sectors. Beckwith et al., (2016) intent was not to point culpability to men, rather acknowledge the origin of systemically contributing factors to barriers and inequities in an effort to develop and implement solutions.

Attention to the term glass ceiling phenomenon originated and was coined 1986 (Jackson, O'Callaghan & Leon, 2014). Morrison and Glinow (1990) described the concept as a barrier that is "so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up in the management hierarchy" (p. 200). The Federal Government became involved and committed funding to address the phenomenon by collecting data at the management level of underrepresented groups including women, African-American/Blacks, American Indians, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics. This exploration of the workforce established the foundation for the formation of The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission of 1991. The focus of the commission of 1991 was on the barriers and inequities of women in the workplace environments of organizations and investigate women and minorities as a whole (Beckwith et al., 2016). According to Beckwith et al., the commission was charged with concentrating an investigation on discrimination in organizations against women and women of color completely. Honorable Robert Reich, chairperson of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission asserted in a message to the Commission, "Discrimination – the glass ceiling, in particular – remains another deep line of demarcation between those who

prosper and those left behind. I repeat. It is not only a matter of fair play, but an economically imperative that the glass ceiling be shattered." (Beckwith et al., 2016, p. 117).

In addition to the glass ceiling, the concrete ceiling, according to Beckwith et al., 2016, is another contributing factor that African-American women and women of color leaders have encountered. Concrete ceilings were recognized as unique identifiers, barriers that are not of glass that can be shattered, rather, barriers that are impenetrable and add complication to the upward mobility of African-American women to leadership and executive positions in higher education (Beckwith et al., 2016; Giscombe & Jones, 2004). Giscombe and Mattis (2002) reported four primary barriers that have the capacity to affect African-American women upward mobility and representation: the lack of performing high visibility assignments, lack of networking relationships with significant colleagues, lack of influential sponsors or mentoring relationships, and lack of company role models.

Beckwith, Carter & Peters (2016) found that creating strategic choices for employment were significant for African-American women's professional career paths. A failure to create strategic choices was a personal responsibility and accountability that impacts African-American women's ascension to executive leadership positions. Thomas (2006) also found that the absence of African-American women purposefully career planning in terms of aligning short and long-term goals with positions restricts them from preparedness and ultimately ascending the corporate ladder to executive administration. African-American women who have been successful in transitioning from mid-level to

senior-level and to executive-level leadership have done so as a result of demonstrating job commitment, possessing a purposeful career development, developing effective mentoring relationships, and possessing influential sponsorships and an expansive diverse network.

Simmons (2009) provided another perspective including specific recommendations for African-American women in administration and management of their careers. The first recommendation was to know what is desired for their careers, begin to prepare and chart out plans and cost evaluations in terms of this acquired knowledge. A second recommendation was to monitor progress and achievements and adjust as needed to determine usefulness and efficiency. A third recommendation was to be willing to learn other skills, such as technology, processes, policies and procedures to better comprehend interdependencies – relationships with other departments, internally and externally. A fourth recommendation was to abdicate passive behavior and take responsibility and charge for careers. Finally, African-American women should be willing to take the initiative and lead on specific projects demonstrating ability and skill to effectively lead.

Davis (2016) and Davis and Maldonado (2015) studies acknowledged that more undertaking and exertion were required of African-American women executives once they were in administrative positions. African-American women's confidence and ability were constantly on display through decision-making, communication, business implementation, and execution. Cain (2015) argued that genuine and effective social change should be inclusive of improvement in equitable opportunities for African-

American women in executive administrative positions. The accomplishment of affecting social change depends on employers of organizations and diversity programs to be acceptable and willing to provide mentors to the women population, specifically African-American women.

Further, results for African-American women from research (Beckwith et al., 2016; Davis, 2012; Davis & Maldonado, 2015, Simmons, 2009; Thomas, 2006) agree that African-American women must chart, plan, navigate and monitor their career pathway experiences. If they can do this, from an outsider point of view, there are advantages and insight that are frequently omitted from those who are operating only from an inside perspective (Beckwith et al., 2016). Davis and Maldonado (2015) utilized the BFT to explore the intersectionality of race and gender of African-American women administrative experiences in institutions of higher education. A common barrier that emerged from the result of exploring interaction of the intersectionality among racism, sexism and classism was sexism. Sexism was the number one obstacle to African-American women's pursuit of upward mobility (Robinson & Nelson, 2010).

Facilitating factors for African-American women executives at PWIs. Facilitating factors are factors that provided motivation and incentives for African-American women reaching senior and executive-level positions at PWIs and are significant to connecting their career pathways (Jones & Dawkins, 2012). The absence of diversity and equal opportunities has excluded women from chief executive offices and executive-level roles, corporate and institutions of higher education (Cook & Glass, 2014). While advancements with more prospects have been produced in the United States

for African-American women and European American, African-American women, yet, remain substantially under-represented with clear economic marginalization and inequality of African-American women (Hill, 2013; Warner, 2014). Whereas, research has concentrated on underrepresentation of women in leadership and barriers to their success, only a limited amount of research has been conducted on facilitating factors to the success of women attaining senior to executive level-administrative positions in institutions of higher education (Airini, Conner, McPherson, Midson & Wilson, 2011; Chen & Hune, 2011). Gardner, Barrett and Pearson's (2014) explored the lived experiences of African-American administrators through an investigation of the significance of African-American administrators' presence on college and university campuses, and factors that served to support them.

Beyond the Gardner et al., (2014) study, Nguyen (2012) found that literature focused on three of the most commonly cited facilitating factors were personal factors, family support structure, and mentor support (Cook & Glass, 2014). The first attribute, personal factors, for women of color and African-American women demonstrated strength in personality and courage, such as being self-sufficient, self-determined, self-motivated and a hard worker. African-American women's self-determination and self-reliance helped them rise to the top from an early age, despite diversity. Howard-Baptiste and Harris's (2014) study explored the lived experiences of African-American scholars who overcame their struggles and numerous forms of resistance at PWIs. The African-American women participants, professors and administrators, shared their struggles of endurance and perseverance that motivated and influenced them to overcome. Each

participant experienced multiple incidents of discrimination, most intentional but some otherwise, as well. Despite the fact that African-American women had received honorable distinctions and terminal degrees from prestigious PWIs, their presence was avoided, and they received disparaging treatment by others at the schools. The actuality of perseverance and success was a testament to their courage, resilience, and determination to overcome the barriers and challenges at PWIs (Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014). Walker's (2009) study of African-American women described this as centering their lived experiences on faith and spirituality to endure and survive struggles and adversities of intersectionality of race, gender, and social class. Significant and the most pervasive statements to BFT are self-definition, self-valuation, and self-determination of the African-American woman by the African-American woman (Collins, 2001).

The second attribute of facilitation was a strong support structure. African-American women executive-level administrators appear to have a support structure that was comprised of a strong family, church, and community, which began in the early lives of these women (Davis, 2016). The richness came from family members who supported and planted words of wisdom, knowledge, and tenacity that they knew had to be successful against all opposition (Davis, 2016). The legacies for the African-American family were survival and confidence. According to Davis (2016), African-American women's early experiences growing up exposed them to an environment of self-confidence, self-pride, and self-reliance elements that were inculcated in the lives of the African-American women from observing their parents as role models, and were pivotal

in leaving a foundation to achieve, believe, go beyond previous generations, and become successful.

Mentoring was the third attribute of facilitation for African-American women in executive-level positions at PWIs. In an educational leadership program, mentoring is when one experienced person helps another less experienced person (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Two studies reported the dearth of literature documenting African-American women experiences as doctoral students in educational leadership, the connection between mentoring and African-American women at PWIs (Grant, 2012; Grant & Ghee, 2015). According to Grant and Ghee, not only is there a paucity of studies of African-American women doctoral students, but similarly a few studies attending to specific experiences that lead them to leadership careers at PWIs. Further, Grant and Ghee posited that mentorship support was a critical component for African-American women at the doctoral level advancement to professoriate and leadership, and crucial to facilitate successful experiences (2015).

Some mentoring relationships provide guidance that influence life decisions, career changes, and some are short-lived (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2014). Mentoring was a shared relationship and African-American women have shared the positive and effective experiences during their doctoral program and carried some of the issues into the career job assignment (Grant, 2012). Mentoring has been acknowledged as an approach to enable student recruitment, retain minority students, advocate, and encourage professional growth and development (Gardner, Barrett & Pearson, 2014; Patton, 2009).

Stewart (2016) conducted a qualitative study examining intercultural relationships at PWIs and the significance of mentorship is career advancement for midlevel African-American women administrators at PWIs. Stewart's (2016) study of nine African-American women found that serving as mentors was valuable and beneficial to mentees. Stewart reported that mentors were critical for guiding and assisting mentees with navigation of education and the workplace.

According to Gamble and Turner (2015), networking and mentoring were significant in assisting African-American women through breaking down glass and concrete ceilings in their preparation. Gamble and Turner (2015) also reported that mentoring and networking were significant to the education process for African-American students and administration. Fifty percent of the African-American women participants in Gamble and Turner's study agreed that mentoring was effective while the other 50% of participants regretted not having selected mentoring early in their career.

Grant (2012) conducted a study that specifically centered on five African-American women formal doctoral students' mentoring experiences in educational leadership at PWIs. Grant (2012) found that participants acknowledged that the conventional definition of mentoring - providing academic guidance and career advisement - scantly described or compared to the African-American women's experiences. Rather, African-American women participants acknowledged other factors that detailed their experiences such as positions that could be played best by African-American women, nurturing, mothering, cultural relevancy (same sex/race mentoring), and sister-friend (peer mentoring).

Zambrana, Ray, Espino Castro, Dohen, and Eliason (2015) examined the mentoring experiences of 58 underrepresented minority (URM) faculty participants at 22 PWIs utilizing semistructured in-depth interviews. The participants described the significance of mentoring throughout their career pathway experiences commencing in early childhood through graduate and postgraduate education. The participants further communicated that witnessing senior-level URM educational leaders provided motivation and hope during their challenges and struggles. Garvey, Stokes, and Megginson, (2014) reported mentoring relationships provided guidance that influenced life changes and career changes for URM doctoral educational leaders.

In higher education institutions, Gamble and Turner (2015) found that African-American administrators were underrepresented as mentors. This scarcity of African-American women as mentors makes building a rapport between an African-American female and other administrators or staff difficult because of ethnic differences. The presence of African-American administrators in higher education can lead to a direct correlation to African-American student's enrollment, increase dedication and commitment to obtaining a degree, and have the prospect of increasing mentors (Gamble & Turner, 2015). When there were African-American women administrators present at PWIs, African-American female students received a profound knowledge exchange from communications with the African-American women administrators. This relationship between African-American women and African-American female students was found in their study to be pivotal to student recruitment, student enrollment, and student degree expectation. The result was that African-American female students examine the campus

environment looking and expecting to locate an African-American woman to identify as a mentor prospect.

Dominigue (2015) agreed with Gamble and Turner (2015) that networking, another aspect of the mentoring relationship, was another factor that sustained and encouraged African-American women as students (undergraduates, graduates, and postgraduates), faculty and administrators. The results in Dominigue's (2015) study were that different experiences were found among the various networking and mentoring relationships. The differences evolved around the unique circumstances between mentor and the mentee (social identities and the interaction of the venue). Despite racial and gender concerns the African-American women may have been able to share common experiences with the mentor, social, education, and career.

The graduate mentor relationship in the Domingue (2015) study was a contrast to the undergraduate mentor and mentee relationship. The African-American women graduates, and some employed in higher education were primarily concerned about the value of the mentor relationship and having mentors who comprised faculty and administrative roles share the impact of the intersectionality of race and gender identities. The graduate African-American women reported that the African-American women mentors put forth great effort to initiate and engage in the relationship. The mentors were prominent and effective in the relationships assisting African-American women to feel less invisible and isolated at PWIs.

Grant and Ghee (2015) found that their exploration of mentoring literature evidenced establishing mentoring educational leadership programs in PWIs where the

programs were offered either as the traditional approach or the dyadic relationship approach. A first choice was the traditional mentor relationship when a more senior experienced mentor person will help a less experienced person in a junior mentee-mentor relationship (Murray, 1991). A second choice, mentor relationship was recommended a dyadic relationship where the mentor takes on a protégé and develops her or him professionally and personally (Torres-Guzman & Goodwin, 1995). The results from the mentoring programs were that Grant and Ghee's (2015) goal was to establish a better mentor/mentee relationship comprehension and construct. The mentor/mentee relationship program provided an explanation and strategies of how the program was influential in the African-American women's advancement leadership experiences at PWIs (2015).

The final facilitation attribute was faith and spirituality. Walker's (2009) qualitative study was centered on one African-American woman participant's lived experiences at a PWIS. The African-American woman gave her personal narrative voice to reflect on how faith and spirituality in God were sustaining, encouraging, and inspiring in overcoming adversities and struggles to become successful as a leader in predominant white organizations. The participants shared a viewpoint of leadership that gave voice to the belief that when God placed the participant in leadership, resources were provided for success. Walker (2009) emphasized that the participant's faith and spirituality had been the guiding power and influence in her lived experiences. African-American women upon entering employment in a PWIS often found themselves the only person of color turning to their faith in God. Consequently, faith and spirituality played a significant and crucial

role in the lived experiences of the one African-American woman participant.

Summary and Conclusion

The first section of this chapter included the problem and the purpose of this qualitative study on career pathway experiences of African-American women in higher education executive-level positions at PWIs. The search terms were discussed extensively as well as the library resource databases used to explore the literature related to the study. The two theories used for the conceptual framework were CRT and BFT. The literature review emphasized the significance of African-American women's career pathway experiences and contributions through racism, genderism, and sexism in ascending to executive leadership roles at PWIs. The research covered four key relevant aspects intersectionality of race and gender for African-American women at PWIs, underrepresentation of African-American women at PWIs, African-American women's lived experiences as administrators at PWIs, and African-American women career pathway experiences at PWIs. The focus in research was undertaken to obtain a better understanding and meaning of the phenomenon to the career pathway lived experiences of African-American women, the barriers, and facilitating factors to career success at PWIs.

Relevant in this study was that education historically has been at the forefront of African-American women's experiences and continues to be significant to liberate and empower African-Americans (Collins, 2001). Early mentors, family members, community, and the church were fundamental in providing guidance and nurturance to African-American women on their personal and professional career pathways (Glover,

2012). African-American women's leadership and mentoring have resulted in and increased educational opportunities for African-American women to become firsts in education, medicine, science, and administration (Glover, 2012; Jones & Dufor, 2012).

Each of the aspects of the literature reviewed was expected to enhance the understanding of how African-American women attain executive-leadership positions at PWIs. The first aspect focused on the socio-cultural reality of intersectionality of race, gender, and social class shaping the lived experiences of African-American women in executive-lived experiences at PWIs (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989). Throughout the history of education in America, African America women experiences, the fights, struggles, and oppressions have largely been scarce in literature; African-American women have been omitted, marginalized, and misinterpreted, yet determined to attain the right to equal education (Glover, 2012; Jean-Marie, et al., 2009). The African-American women worked diligently to achieve educational goals charting and navigating pathways to higher education (Glover, 2012). African-American women viewed this as an opportunity to increase their learning capacity (Jones & Dufor, 2012). Yet, African-American women advancements to executive leadership have not been on par with their European American female counterparts and male counterparts (Warner, 2014; 2015) at PWIs. African-American women shared their lived experience and professionally feelings of isolation and separateness in their surroundings at PWIs (West, 2015).

The second aspect of the literature review emphasized the underrepresentation of African-American women leaders at PWIs. African-American women remain underrepresented at PWIs (Beckwith et al., 2016; Patton, 2013). Grant (2012) study

reported that despite the hiring of African-American women has increased, African-American women continue to remain underrepresented in securing positions of tenured track faculty, administrative and executive leadership positions at PWIs. Underrepresentation is a barrier to success for women in general and African-American women, specifically; it has a glass ceiling affect. African-American women frequently encounter what Grant called the concrete ceilings that are considered impenetrable, limit ascendency to executive levels of leadership and the capability to co-exist in the positions at PWIs.

Walker's (2009) study contributed to the African-American women's lived experiences of faith and spirituality in God that helped them to survive adverse experiences with race, gender, social class, isolation, and separateness ascending to leadership positions at PWIs. Walker posited that African-American women frequently experience intersectionality of race, gender, and social class at PWIs without the privilege of having a support system with whom to share circumstances. African-American women found that having support systems to safely share experiences is a step toward making social change.

African-American women as administrators at PWIs, the third aspect of literature review, focused on African-American women's experience. Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) study reported the paucity of research in the 21st century concerning African-American women's career lived experiences as administrators and ascendancy to executive leadership in PWIs. Notwithstanding, African-American women remained steadfast, determined to obtain their educational goals, uplift and inspire future females at higher

education institutions (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Gamble and Turner (2015) reported that higher education institutions would see an increase in the presence of African-American women in administration by placing into operations professional leadership development and mentoring programs.

Finally, the fourth aspect of literature review, African-American women's career pathway experiences at PWIs, also documents support to African-American women administrative experiences that there is limited research literature regarding African-American women's pathways to administrative leadership or executive positions at PWIs (Gamble & Turner, 2015). Research literature focused on the disproportionate number of women in leadership positions, and particularly, the African-American women's absence and meager number of other women of color (Alexander, 2010). Further, African-American women described the barriers and facilitating factors encountered toward their pathway experiences ascending toward executive-level leadership positions at PWIs.

From the researched literature, some studies were found regarding the lived experiences of the intersectionality of race, gender, and social class (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Davis, 2016), underrepresentation of women in general and African-American women, specifically, and other women of color in executive-level leadership positions at PWIs (Grant, 2012; Gamble & Turner, 2015). A paucity of studies has addressed African-American women's career pathway experiences toward executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. In this present study, African-American women in senior and executive level-leadership positions were examined through interviews. The purpose of the examination was to obtain a deeper comprehension and meaning of African-

American women's career pathway lived experiences, and how they were successful ascending to executive-level leadership positions at PWIs.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this research study was to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women, and how they navigated barriers and facilitating factors to achieve senior and executive level positions at PWIs. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology for this study by presenting the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodological approach (including participant selection, the interview approach, and data analysis plan) issues of trustworthiness, and ethics.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question that guided this basic qualitative study was: How do African-American women describe their career pathway experiences, including barriers and facilitating factors, toward attaining executive positions at PWIs?

This was a basic qualitative interpretative study that involved conducting in-depth telephone interviews of African-American women in senior and executive-level administrative positions at PWIs. I selected a qualitative research design because I was interested in how the participants interpreted and made sense of their experiences, and how I could comprehend information from the participants' experiences. The interviews were open-ended questions of the participants' reconstructed lived experiences of barriers and challenges and facilitating factors encountered in their careers at PWIs.

Phenomenology focuses were on "lived experiences" (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 p. 26; Van Manen, 2014, p. 26). A phenomenological research is similar to a basic qualitative study that uses interviews; a phenomenology research approach requires the researcher to focus on and investigate what all participants have in common

as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). There are two approaches to phenomenology: Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach and Moustakas's (1994) empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology. Moustakas's (1994) empirical phenomenology approach includes revisiting experiences in order to obtain meaning and understanding of the explanations and accounts of the experiences. Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenology emphasis is on the way participants can distinguish and describe their lived experiences. Prior to relating to the study, I examined and set aside biases and suppositions about the phenomenon of interest to the participants to obtain a different standpoint toward the phenomenon. Patton (2002) asserted that all the assorted phenomenological approaches shared a common concentration exploring how the individuals made sense of their lived experience and transformed that experience into a realization that has a common meaning.

I did not select the grounded theory research approach for my study because in grounded theory the researcher focuses on "process, action, or an interaction with distinct steps or phases" (Creswell, 2013, p.85). The researcher has developed the theory based on her or his examination of participants who would have all experienced the process or action over a specific period of time. I also did not select an ethnography research approach because ethnography attentions have focused on studying an all-inclusive cultural sharing group. The groups were typically large and interacted over longer periods of time under observation of the researcher (Creswell, 2013, p. 90)

Narrative research was not an appropriate fit because it has many forms and could be a phenomenon being studied, such as lived experiences of analyzing stories focused on

studying one or two individuals. Stories in the narrative research can be about the individuals' lived experiences, co-constructed between the researcher and participant, heard, shaped, and placed in a chronology by the researcher (Creswell, 2013, p. 7-71). I also did not choose a case study design for this study. Case study research is not considered to be a methodology, according to Yin (2009), but a selection of what is to be studied within a real-life setting. In case studies, the researcher explores an event, a process, activity, or an individual and collects detailed data from various data collection sources (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, I selected a basic qualitative interpretive study using interviews of selected African-American women in senior and executive-level positions at PWIs, which was the appropriate choice for the purpose and scope of my study. In this qualitative study, I focused on information-rich data collected from participants regarding their lived experiences.

I selected participants using a snowballing or chain sampling, a recruitment flyer posted on my LinkedIn, professional educational journals of higher education, professional and personal contacts utilizing email invitations to potential participants' profiles that included biographical sketches listed in higher educational journals and JBHE. Interviewing, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Seidman (2006; 2013), was the best source of data for this study because interviews for qualitative investigations are more open-ended and less structured. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) suggested utilizing a combination of three interview structure continuum – highly structured/standardized, semistructured, and unstructured/informal as a means to obtain some standardized responses. I selected the semistructured interview because the

majority of the interview was guided by the interview protocol questions I used in the interview. The optimum purpose of the interviews was to obtain an in-depth meaning and comprehension of the participants' career pathway lived experiences and their perspective of the experiences.

Role of the Researcher

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the "researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis" (p. 16). My role was the interviewer, transcriber, and data analyst. I identified nine African-American women who currently or previously worked in senior and executive-level administrative positions at PWIs, and collected and analyzed their data from interviews. As an African-American multi-identity, multi-ethnic woman, I was able to connect to some of the challenges and intersectionality of multiple identities the women encountered. Information that participants shared was significant to the meaning and understanding of their lived experiences of underrepresentation as an African-American woman ascending to senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. This information can provide inspiration to other African-American women and other women of color aspiring to become senior or executive–level administrators. I took precautionary measures to ensure that there were no personal or professional ties to any of the participants who participated in the research study.

Methodology

This section includes the methodology that I used for this research, including an explanation for the participant selection process, the data collection instrument or

interview protocol, and the process for recruitment, participation and data collection. Finally, I outlined the data analysis process.

Participant Selection Logic

The participant selection criteria for this phenomenological study were women who self-identified as African-American/Black multi-ethnic women who currently or previously worked in senior and executive-level administrative roles at public or private PWIs. The participants were senior executive directors, deans, assistant and associate deans, vice presidents, assistant and associate vice presidents, chief financial officers, chief operating officers, chancellors, assistant chancellors, provosts, assistant and associate provosts, and presidents at PWIs within the United States. All participants self-identified as African-American women who (a) indicated a willingness to participate in the study (b) held or previously held senior and executive-level administrative positions at PWIs, private or public, within the United States and (c) have been in their positions for at least 1 year.

The scope of the study was African-American women who worked at PWIs. I recruited nine African-American women for this study who met the criteria. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Patton (2002, 2015), there are no specific rules for sample size. Sample size is always contingent upon the questions being asked about the information the researcher requires, the purpose of the inquiries, the usefulness of information received from the inquiries, the usefulness of time availability, and the usefulness of available resources (Patton 2002, 2015).

Nine African-American women completed one interview with one follow-up contact to review their individual transcripts and, upon reflection, provided additional information as necessary. I selected nine participants for this study for several reasons. The first reason for selecting nine participants was for the expectation that an interview would take 60 to 90 minutes, the number of participants may be more likely able to participate given the constraints on participants' and my time. The second reason for selecting nine participants was to seek in-depth responses about problems of central significance from participants that would create validity and meaningfulness. Finally, a third reason for selecting nine participants was to reach saturation of information collected, a criterion for support of qualitative research answering the inquiry of how many participants are essential in the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Seidman (2006, p. 55) suggested that saturation or redundancy occurs when the interviewer begins to hear the same responses to interview inquiries. In the qualitative research studies found, I reviewed similar studies using an interview approach, the smallest sample size found was one (Davis, Reynolds, & Jones, 2011) or four (Munden, 2015) and the largest sample size was 25. A smaller sample size interviewed in the allocated time can yield information rich responses (Patton, 2015).

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was an in-depth information-rich interview. I designed open-ended interview questions focused on the research question disaggregated into three components—African-American women career pathway experiences, African-American women challenges and barrier experiences, and African-American women

facilitating factors experiences. I designed the interview questions to elicit perspectives on facilitating factors and barriers relative to the conceptual framework combining two lenses CRT and BFT and the research question (Appendix). Each of the five primary topics has several questions as probes. The interview protocol questions were intended to collect participants' experiences as African-American ethnic women who shared the meaning and understanding of navigating a career pathway to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. The protocol consisted of one separate interview that combined Seidman's (2006) three-part suggested content for inquiries. I reviewed other research studies relative to interview instrumentation and construction: Cain (2015); Davis (2012); Henry (2010); Morillo (2017); and Stewart (2016). Davis (2012) and Morrillo (2017) explored African-American women's lived experiences of leadership development, the impact of the intersectionality of race and gender, and barriers to leadership ascension at PWIs.

Based on Seidman's (2006) three-part interview process combined into one interview, I asked participants to reconstruct and place their lived experiences in context of their career development providing an historical synopsis to their aspirations as related to the study of inquiry. Adapting Seidman's approach, I organized the interview protocol questions into five categorical sections in consideration of participants' busy time schedules. The five categorical sections were: (a) life history, (b) career pathways, (c) experiences as senior-level executive leader,(d) facilitating factors and barriers, and (e) career learnings and lessons.

Procedure for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited participants from professional contacts in the field of education leadership at PWIs who subscribed to LinkedIn or read the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (JBHE). I posted a recruitment poster on my LinkedIn social media page to recruit for potential participants and highlighted the study's inclusion requirements, details of the study, and my contact information. My LinkedIn network included education and other professional and corporate colleagues who have attended and graduated from various colleges and universities, around the country and the universe. Then, as a subscriber to the journal, I had access to directly email potential participants with profiles that included biographical sketches, staff positions, email addresses, and telephone numbers. Using this information included in the journal and distributed in a weekly bulletin, I emailed invitations to those who appeared to meet the criteria. Further, I utilized a snowball strategy, as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to reach out to other women colleagues, professional contacts and those in their network who might be interested in participating in the study. The participants who responded to the invitations self-identified as African-American women in senior and executive-level roles at a private or public PWIS in the United States. This form of snowballing and connecting with professional contacts allowed me to obtain, identify and increase my potential participants' list to the desired pool of 10 participants large enough to obtain information-rich new informants providing in-depth rich information.

Upon Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I began the recruitment process by gathering profile information of 38 women from LinkedIn, the

higher educational journals, professional and personal contacts and snowballing. I began the recruitment process by gathering profile information for 38 women from the initial potential participants' list. I emailed recruitment invitation letters to the initial 38 participants and continued communication with professional contacts, review of educational journals, flyer on Linkedin and snowballing strategy. Over the process of eight weeks, my potential participants' list increased to 75 participants. I emailed two additional groups of 18 and 19 recruitment invitation letters, totaling 75 participants. After the third round of recruitment invitation letter follow-ups, I had reached nine participants. Once participants responded to the poster or email invitation, I emailed an informed consent form and requested a convenient time to introduce myself and schedule a date and time for the interview that would be emailed to each participant. My gratitude for agreeing to participate in the study was extended to each woman for her time and consideration. In addition, I would provide compensation to each participant for participation in this study. Each participant received a $20 gift card from Amazon as a thank you. I outlined this data in the inform consent form indicating IRB approval and ethical compliance.

Data Collection

I began the data collection period upon IRB approval and continue until the expected number of participants was reached. The interviews were conducted for 60 to 90 minutes by telephone and digitally recorded using a Zoom H1n Handy Professional Stereo recording system and a Sony Digital voice recorder. Because of the anticipated busy work schedules of participants, telephone interviews will be the most convenient

method for the participant interviewees and for respecting the participant's time. Each interview was scheduled for 60 to 90 minutes; if participants responded succinctly, the expected length of interview time was reduced. Immediately after the interview, the interview data was uploaded to a computer and transcribed. I used an Ultra Plus Scandisk micro SDHC UHS-I Card with adapter to upload and transcribe the interview session. A Sony Digital Voice Recorder was used to ensure transcription accuracy. A copy of each participant's interview transcription was e-mailed to each participant for review and assessment after the interview. I requested that each participant return transcriptions within 5 days with any corrections or additional comments.

When participants completed the entire telephone interview process or if they had to leave the study early, they received a $20 Amazon gift card as an appreciation for their participation, as indicated in the informed consent. Each participant, also, received information, upon completion of the dissertation process, of how to retrieve the published dissertation.

Data Analysis Plan

I began the data analysis for this basic qualitative interview study by utilizing the Merriam and Tisdell (2016) step-by-step process of analysis for each of the interviewee's recorded data. I proceeded this process with organizing the data collected to be transcribed (uploading recorded data to a computer) for each interview. Next, I began the step-by-step process by reading all of the transcripts thoroughly and making notations of ideas that came to mind. In step two, I read through all data notations to acquire an over-all sense and reflect on making meaning and comprehension of the data. This included

observing the general ideas the participant was conveying and the impression of the depth of data and credibility. I began the open coding process in step three creating codes in the margin of the data. I organized data into portions or sections of text and labeled the sections into categories with a term. The topics were collected into similar themes by creating a list in Excel documented in column phrases or words by major themes, unique themes, and other similar themes. For step four, I took the list created in step three, revisited the transcript data scanning for repetitive words, phrases, and statements. If further words, phrases, or statements were located, I added them to the list abbreviated in the margins using the in vivo term as codes and typed alongside the appropriate section or segment (Creswell, 2013). Next, in step five, I advanced how the description of the wording was represented by the themes and converted the themes into categories of significance to their career pathway experiences. The categories were reduced by reviewing the transcript of themes and codes to determine how related codes could be combined.

Lastly, I synthesized the information and the participants' concluded meaning of their experiences, using the conceptual framework of CRT's five major principles (racism, interest convergence, race and race classifications, intersectionality and anti-essentialism). I also synthesized BFT's information and the participants' concluded meaning of unveiling the multiple oppressions and challenges experienced and the opportunities to share their voices about the experiences. This data analysis process assisted me with the alignment of repetition and frequency of emerging themes that were

viewed through the CRT and BFT conceptual lenses. Further, the conceptual framework permitted me to address the research question relative to the barriers, facilitating factors, and career pathway experiences of African-American women in executive administrative positions at PWIs.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The issues of trustworthiness were implemented by addressing the strategies of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These strategies established the authenticity of the research with the understanding being the primary rationale for exploring the study in the inquiry. The overall purpose of investigating this basic interpretive interview research study was meaning and how to understand how the participants make sense of their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I ensured the credibility of this study by triangulation using multiple sources of data (Patton, 2002; 2015). In this study, I used transcription text of one interview with each participant and research journal notes from telephone interviews with different women functioning in executive-level administrative positions in the United States to assist with this credibility. A second way to ensure trustworthiness was through allowing participants to review their own transcriptions clarifying their meaning and intent in the initial and follow-up interviews.

To confirm transferability, I selected a representative sample from the population, and applied rich, thick, and descriptive data for the procedures of the study and for the findings' results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The person reading the results makes the

determination to apply what has been learned, which will strengthen and make transferability possible (2016).

I achieved dependability of the study of inquiry by inviting the participants to review their interview transcriptions and determine if they concur that the assessment of their lived experience was accurately reproduced. Additionally, the assistance of my committee was invited to review the interview transcripts as another form of checks and balances to circumvent the possibility of my interpretations influencing the study evaluation.

Finally, I addressed confirmability by exhibiting data that represented the participants' responses and not the researcher's perspectives (Cope, 2014). I achieved confirmability by ascertaining the formation of the conclusions, interpretations, and exemplifying that the findings were evidenced by rich data. According to Cope (2014), confirmability of qualitative research reporting demonstrated "rich quotes" that emerged from the participant's interview transcripts (p.89).

Ethical Procedures

Upon Walden's University IRB's approval of the study of inquiry, including the informed consent form, research design, and participants, I began the data collection process. This approval process acknowledged and safeguarded the protection of participants' rights prior to the telephone interviews. I reviewed ethical implications prior to collecting data and included ethical issues in the data collection consideration. These ethical issues were included in the informed consent: (a) researcher's identification, (b) sponsoring institution's identification, (c) purpose of the research identification, (d)

confidentiality guarantee of participant, (e) and American Psychological Association code of ethics assurance.

I ensured that participants understood at the beginning of the interview process as conveyed in the informed consent agreement, previously e-mailed to them, that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Further, I ensured ethical issues in data analysis and interpretation were considered: that the participants took the opportunity to ask questions prior to assenting to begin the telephone interview, the informed consent form was clearly penned and in concise language that was comprehensible and interpretive. I ensured the protection of anonymity of participants' roles, information confidential through the use of pseudonyms for participants, and places to protect their identity inclusive of published data.

Finally, all data remained have been secured in my home office filing cabinets in a secured locked storage room. Digitalized audio recorders have been locked in filing cabinets: transcripts and analyses report were saved to a password-protected computer along with external drive in my home office. Committee members are the only other individuals who have access to the data. Once the data were analyzed, I filed the data to be maintained for a period of five years. At the end of that period, the data will be discarded (Creswell, 2009).

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the research method for this basic qualitative interview study as an approach to an inquiry on the underrepresentation of African-American women executive administrators at predominantly White institutions of higher education. An

adapted model, two-part series interview protocol, was established from Seidman's (2006) three-part series process. Upon receipt of Walden University IRB approval, I sought nine study participants who self-identified as African-American/Black multi-ethnic women in senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs through the collaborative efforts of African-American women seated in executive-level positions across the United States. Finally, a plan was devised for data collection, analysis, and storage that included the trustworthiness and validity of data collected. The results from data collected will be presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women and obtain meaning and understanding of how they navigated barriers and facilitated factors that assisted their advancement to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. I focused particularly on African-American women's lived experiences of the barriers they encountered and how facilitating factors empowered and assisted them in attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs. I focused African-American women lived experiences at the center of data analysis for the purpose of providing a richer and deeper meaning and understanding. In the next section, I described the research question that guided this study, the participant demographics, the procedures for data collection, analysis, and the processes for confirming trustworthiness. Finally, I present the findings of the research from my data analysis.

Research Question

The research question was: How do African-American women describe their career pathway experiences, barriers and facilitating factors toward attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs?

Setting

I interviewed nine African-American women academics who have held a senior-level leadership position. The source of my recruitment of the nine participants was from professional contacts in the field of education who subscribed to LinkedIn, or the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (JBHE). I also posted a recruitment flyer on my LinkedIn

media page to recruit participants. Further, I used a snowball strategy and asked colleagues and participants in the field who identified other women who might be interested in participating in the study.

I conducted nine participant interviews via telephone in a setting of their own environment and based on each participant's availability. Three participants were interviewed while driving their cars, one participant was interviewed in her office, and five participants were interviewed in their homes. Although, there were no negative circumstances or perceptions I observed in their voice inflections of the nine participants, obstruction noises and high winds produced technical difficulties during Priscilla and Charity's interviews, respectively. During the interview, Priscilla and I were interrupted three times, and the interruptions caused the sound to be lost on Priscilla's side of the phone interview. The loss of sound occurred over three intervals of 5 to 10 minutes. After the third interruption, the interview proceeded without further noise distractions. The problem corrected itself after the third occurrence and the interview was completed. However, Charity and I were unable to continue our interview and had to reschedule a second interview due to very high winds and poor reception.

The interviews were scheduled for one round to be conducted for 60 to 90 minutes with the anticipation that a second round of interviews would be scheduled if participants were unable to complete their interviews in one round. Five of the nine participants were interviewed in one round and the remaining four participant interviews were scheduled for round two, due to conflicts in their schedules. I was able to reschedule the four participants' second round of interviews without conflict or complications. At

the time of recruitment and data collection, two participants were encountering job relocations due to advanced senior and executive-level leadership promotions. Despite the relocation, participants were enthusiastic and motivated to participate in the study.

Demographics

Because my participant recruitment search of African-American women higher education executives at PWIs extended nationally, the recruitment search represented five regions of the United States. Three participants held positions in the southeastern region of the United States, three participants held positions in the western region of the United States, one participant held a position in the northeastern region, one held a position in the southwestern region, and one participant held a position in the midwestern region of the United States. All nine participants held senior and executive-level positions. Michelle and Frances held dean and professor dean emeritus positions, respectively. Monique held the position of executive director to dean of student services. Grace began her higher education career at two HBCUs and took positions at PWIs in senior and executive-level leadership roles, where she currently holds the position of associate dean; Priscilla held the position of associate vice president, Rene Terry, Charity, and Veronica held positions of vice presidents, and Deborah held the position of president. Participants' education attainment was also presented in Table 1. Eight of the nine participants have earned doctoral degrees. While one was enrolled in a doctoral program pursuing a doctoral degree. The participants averaged 3 years employed in senior and executive-level leadership roles, and the age arranged from 35 to 68 years old. Two of the nine participants took higher level positions when moving from PWIs to HBCUs. Their

participation was included to enhance meaning of their career experiences at PWIs in comparison and contrast with diverse universities HBCU, Hispanic Serving Institutes (HSI), and Minority Serving Institutes (MSI). These self-identified African-American women participants explicated and established rich experiences from the perspectives of previously employment in senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs to HBCUs to PWIs, and PWIs to HBCUs or HIS/MSI institutions. Table 1 lists the participants' demographics and PWIs by pseudonyms for the participants by name, position title, years in positions, university region, university names (pseudonyms used), and education attainment.

Table 1

Participant Pseudonyms and Demographics

Participants (pseudonyms)	Position Title	Years in Position	University Region	University Name (pseudonyms)	Education Attainment
Michele Participant 1	Dean of Students	2	Southwestern	Genesis State University	PhD
Frances Participant 2	Professor Dean Emeritus	2	Northeastern	Exodus University	PhD
Rene Terry Participant 3	Vice President	8	Southeastern	Number University	Enrolled in Doctoral Program
Priscilla Participant 4	Associate Vice President	>1	Western	Deuteronomy University	EdD
Grace Participant 5	Associate Dean	5	Southeastern	University of Leviticus	EdD
Monique Participant 6	Executive Director to Dean	3	Midwestern	Joshua University	PhD
Deborah Participant 7	President	1	Western	University of Judges	PhD
Charity Participant 8	Vice President and Vice Provost	>1	Western	Joel State University	EdD
Veronica Participant 9	Vice Provost	2	Southeastern	Amos University	PhD

Data Collection

Upon obtaining Walden University IRB approval (04-30-18-0256795), I began recruiting the nine participants that led to data saturation for my study. The number selected was based on Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Patton (2002, 2015). Nine participants responded to my solicitation, identified themselves as African-American or

Black women in academia, and accepted the invitation to participate in this study. The data collection instrument for this study was the semistructured interview (Appendix) of open-ended interview questions based on research questions, the conceptual framework and the literature review. Each participant was scheduled for one 60 to 90 minutes telephone interview with the option to re-schedule a second interview in the event time did not permit completion.

The initial round of recruitment invitations was emailed and posted in mid-May 2018 and data collection took place between late July and late September 2018. Because targeted prospective participants were employees of higher education, schools were conducting graduation exercises and summer schools. Feedback from prospective participants demonstrating interests in participating in my study indicated that they would be travelling for the summer months and would not return until late July or early August. Thus, second and third rounds of emails did not commence until July. After transcribing the interviews, I emailed each participant as indicated in the informed consent form a copy of the participant's transcribed interview for member checking. Three of the nine participants had minor changes to their transcripts that were responses to inquiries I had asked of them. These corrections were revised and re-submitted to participants for review. All changes were accepted. There were no discrepancies to my data collection plan and the data collection process was conducted as proposed.

Data Analysis

I analyzed interview data using Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) six-step approach that referenced Creswell's (2012) six-step process. I began the process by uploading

recording interview data collected to my computer to be transcribed. Next, I listened to the recorded interview transcripts comprehensively and wrote notes, comments, and inquiries in the margins alongside the data to reflect on making meaning and comprehension of the data. As citied previously in Chapter 3, the six-step process comprised open coding beginning with the first transcribed interview. I began the open coding process reading through all participants' transcriptions. I then highlighted words, similar statements, similar experiences to make sense out of the text data; labeled segments of the text with codes, examined codes for intersecting and redundancy, and collapsed the codes into more comprehensive codes and categories significant to their career pathway experiences. Upon revisiting my codes and categories, I reviewed my interview questions and research questions to further reduce my categories. After this axial process, I combined categories into seven themes. Lastly, I synthesized the information and the participants' concluded meaning of their experiences, using the conceptual framework of CRT's five major principles (race and gender, interest convergence, race and race classifications, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, and a person of color who has a voice that must be heard) and the BFT perspective of African-American women in senior and executive-level leaders in administrative positions at PWIs.

Themes and Codes Related to Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore and discover understanding and meaning into African-American women career pathway experiences and how they navigated barriers and facilitating factors to attain senior and executive-level leadership roles. The

research question was disaggregated into three components for the purpose of analysis, which coincided with the emerging themes: African-American women career pathway experiences, African-American women barrier experiences, and African-American women facilitating factors to attain senior and executive leadership success. Seven themes emerged from the transcribed text of nine African-American women identified as Black women: three for career pathways, two for barriers, and two for facilitating factors. Throughout the transcribed interview text, all participants presented statements explicating and making meaning out of their career experiences, barriers, and facilitating factors as they advanced to senior and executive-level leadership (see Table 2).

Table 2. Research question, components, codes, and themes

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
African-American women describe career pathway experiences.	African-American women describe challenges and barrier experiences.	African-American women describe facilitating factors' experiences.
Codes: early childhood experiences, goals, ways family and friends influenced, roles family and friends played, family participation and involvement, personal leadership philosophy about senior and executive-level leaders, personal motivating factors experienced, academic experiences, career preparation, prepared for success, ability to impact lives, higher education inspiration	Codes: Age, bigotry, discrimination, and racism, continued goalpost movement, challenges applying for executive positions, implicit bias vs natural bias, issues of power and privilege, adapting to White spaces, difficulty working with men and White female counterpart, information and resources available to all men, leadership movement difficult from top down, not having a networking relationship, faculty uses others' suggestions as their own, resistance to African-American women leadership, taxed as Black women to be the voice, WOC underrepresented	Codes: strategies advancing African-American women, greatest facilitating factors, greatest factors advancing, incentivizing and inspiring African-American women in senior and executive-level leader positions, leadership experience advancing other and future African-American women, ways PWIs can prepare African-American women to achieve senior and executive-level leadership, impact and influence of mentoring, recommended career advice African-American women, leaving a legacy
Themes: 1.Family influences on educational preparation 2. Beginning influences to a higher educational career 3. African-American women career experiences leading to leadership	Themes: 4. Greatest challenges and barriers experienced 5. Navigating challenges and barriers to success	Themes: 6. Facilitating factors to success 7. Career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women

The first component was how African-American women described career pathway experienced. The focus was on the significance of all African-American women participants making meaning of their educational career pathway experiences imbued in early childhood to young adulthood. The following themes emerged for career pathways: Theme 1—family influences on educational preparation, Theme 2—beginning influences to a higher educational career, and Theme 3—African-American women career experiences leading to leadership.

The following words and phrases were codes used to develop the themes in Component 1: early childhood experiences, goals, ways family and friends influenced, roles family and friends played, family participation and involvement, personal leadership philosophy about senior and executive-level leadership, personal motivating factors experienced, academic experiences, career preparation for success, ability to impact lives, and higher education inspiration.

Component 2 focused on how African-American women described challenges and barriers experienced. The following themes emerged for this component: Theme 4—greatest challenges and barriers experienced, and Theme 5—navigating challenges and barriers to success. The coded words and phrases used to develop these themes were: age, bigotry, discrimination, and racism, backstabbing and gossiping, goalposts continue moving, challenges applying for executive positions, implicit bias vs natural bias, issues of power and privilege, adapting to white spaces, difficulty working with men and European American female counterparts, more information and resources available to all men, leadership movement difficult from top down, not having a networking relationship,

faculty uses others' suggestions as their own, resistance to African-American women leadership, taxed as Black women to be the voice, WOC underrepresented high level administrators.

Component 3 focused on how African-American women described facilitating factors experienced toward attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs. The following themes emerged for this component: Theme 6—facilitating factors to success, and Theme 7—career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women. The words and phrases that described the themes were developed from the highlighted codes: strategies advancing African-American women, greatest facilitating factors, greatest factors advancing, incentivizing and inspiring African-American women in senior and executive-level leader positions, leadership experience advancing other and future African-American women, ways PWIs can prepare African-American women to achieve senior and executive-level leadership, impact and influence of mentoring, recommended career advice African-American women, and leaving a legacy.

Discrepant Cases

To further understand patterns and trends that were identified, I performed a systematic search to identify themes and discrepant (negative) patterns that may not support or that contradict the explanation of emerging patterns and themes (Patton, 2002, 2015). As recommended by Patton (2015), I exercised a meticulous search; no discrepant cases found.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In this basic qualitative research study with interviews, I followed multiple steps to ensure that issues of trustworthiness were implemented by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I made a deliberate effort to adhere to austere processes conducting data collection and data analysis to ensure evidence of trustworthiness.

Credibility

To ensure the credibility for the study, I addressed and maintained a journal research notebook of my recorded thoughts during and after the interviews for each participant. Additional notes were written during and after interview transcription and the review of transcribed interview. I scheduled the participants' interviews in order to permit enough time to collect comprehensive data from all nine participants. All participants, currently holding or previously held senior or executive or senior and executive-level positions at PWIs, were excellent participants reflecting on their experiences of the phenomenon and reflected on their personal experiences compared to the interview protocol questions. Rigorous strategies were used in data collection (interview protocol questions and document gathering) and data analysis (employed a systematic search method for different emergent themes). I triangulated the data analysis using constant recent literature comparison to evidence credibility. Lastly, I emailed each participant a copy of their interview transcription to clarifying their meaning, cross-check for accuracy of their responses to the interview questions, submit revisions if required.

Transferability

To increase transferability of this study, I utilized preplanned probing questions, during the interview process, to gather and provide enough rich and thick descriptions of the themes and detail of the study's content permitting readers to make determination and inferences in order to comprehend meaning. Another strategy for increasing transferability included the variety of participants selected and sites that would increase readers to apply findings to their position (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Dependability

To safeguard the dependability of the study results, I required the participants to review their interview transcripts and determine if intent and content were accurately reproduced. I reviewed frequently with my doctoral committee my study process as another form of audit trail of checks and balances. Additionally, to ensure that I followed my study procedures and processes, I maintained detail recorded notes during and after the interview process, the coding process, continuously during the data analysis, sorting and combining continuously to focus on patterns, developing, naming, and re-naming categories to combine into fewer and comprehensive categories.

Confirmability

To establish confirmability of the study, I used research questions and the conceptual framework, consistently, comparing, and relating data back to these structural documents. I recorded my personal reflective notes utilizing a reflexive journal to record the recruiting process, setting, scheduling interviews, interviewing participants, transcribing transcripts, and importing each participants' transcript into Qualitative Data

Miner (QDAS) to complete the coding process for each document. To avoid bias in the study, I bracketed out biases in order to be exposed to the participants' phenomenon from several perspectives. Confirmability was, also, achieved by exhibiting data that represented the participants' responses and not the researcher's responses. Further, I established confirmability by ascertaining the formation of the conclusions, interpretations, and demonstrating that the results were evidenced by rich data.

Results

The results were gathered and organized from the data analysis of my interviews with nine self-identified African-American/Black women in senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. The results are presented to conform with the three components in the research question: (a) how African-American women describe and make meaning of their career pathway experiences, (b) how African-American women describe and make meaning of their barrier experiences toward attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs, and (c) how African-American women describe and make meaning of facilitating factors toward attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs. The three components of the research question aligned with the five sections of the interview protocol questions (Appendix). During the coding and recoding process, comparing, contrasting, and developing patterns, categories, and themes, the five categories served as a proposal for emerging themes.

Component 1: Career Pathway Experiences

The following themes emerged concerning the participants' career pathway themes: Theme 1—family influences on educational career, Theme 2—beginning

influences to a higher educational career, and Theme 3—African-American career experiences leading to leadership. All of the women communicated that they received positive and great support from immediate family members parents, sisters, brothers, and grandparents. The women shared that the immediate family members were intentional, specific, and confident in encouraging and supporting their career pathways to a good education and understanding the significance of hard work. The women overall recollected common aspects that it was their parents' educational experiences in education, higher education, work ethics, moral standards and values that guided their pathways. The principal concept of the theme focused on the extent to which family influenced and shaped the lived experiences of the African-American women participants personally and professionally. The women perceived that they experienced positive support and encouragement from family towards shaping their educational career pathways.

All women participants expressed that family values, standards, education, and hard work influenced and shaped their personal and professional career pathways. The data indicated that the participants were engaged, respectful, listened, and embraced parents' words of wisdom and directions as it related to decision making opportunities for their career pathways.

Family influences on educational preparation. The first theme related to the first component career pathway experiences was family influences on educational career preparation. The phenomenon was explored focusing on the family of African-American women, participants, their early childhood experiences, and career pathway experiences

through college and career lived experiences. Interview questions associated with the participants' responses were "Describe ways your family participated in shaping and influencing your personal educational preparation;" and Describe the roles family, friends and other family members played in shaping your career pathways. Overall, all women participants in this study shared details of how their families participated in shaping and influencing their personal and professional educational preparation. In the interviews, each African-American woman shared common threads of support through words, events and actions from different perspectives. The various common threads among the participants were observed in the participants' administrative leadership experiences, campus culture experiences, and the understanding of the operation of higher education institutions.

Michelle described her personal and professional educational preparation experiences acknowledging she had a village. She stated:

> I had a village when I was raised; that included me vested within my community, including my church, as well as my family and my extended family whether that was some of my parents, friends and in terms of my specific upbringing. I would say that my parents shaped my values as well as my morals, personally and professionally.

When Michelle was asked, what roles her family played in shaping her work and career she expressed her father's position. "My father was intentional." It was her father and mother who provided the foundation in words and action. According to Michelle, her father was a secondary educator and insured that she understood the significance of hard

work. She declared, “my father stated that nothing would be handed to me; I had to earn it.”

Throughout Michelle’s professional career, her immediate family (father, mother, and grandparents) provided the majority support. It was her father’s words of wisdom that were embraced and followed to ensure precisely that her life was conducted to the best of her ability. In other words, as she recalled, I “intently” listened to my father’s words. He made it very clear that if I were to do something, I should do it so well that I would want to put my name on it.” Michelle’s mother, on the other hand, advocated “accountability”, and instill the words “never say anything that you could not repeat,” which was a proverb that Michelle adopted from her mother. “I needed to be comfortable enough in my experiences to be able to repeat myself and hope that a conflict would not occur.” Michelle received additional and significant support that were influences from professional mentors with PhD degrees. Michelle stated, “They poured into me and helped me to understand the importance of acquiring a terminal degree to ensure that I can advance to a senior level position.” These facilitating factors from her village, undergraduate experiences, the underrepresentation of women of color, and the “felt need to be the change I wanted to see” motivated and inspired her to higher education.

Frances communicated that her primary financial support was her grandmother. She shared that while her parents were very supportive, “they were unable to be a great deal of financial assistance to help our grandmother.” She received support mainly from her immediate family not from other parts of her family,

Frances expressed:

> My grandmother was a very, very big influence and most significantly, she provided a very, very, deep spiritual conditions and taught us a foundation of spirituality and that we were not alone for with God all things are possible. Prayer and having a spiritual life were very important and very much connected to positive life outcomes.

One of the greatest factors that influenced and motivated Frances occurred early during her junior and senior high school years. She professed, "The oppression of Blacks all over the world was incomprehensible." She recollected:

> I questioned why Black people were oppressed! I didn't have the word oppressed, I knew slavery, and the history of slavery, my grandmother told me lots of stories, and I learned other things on my own. I, also, knew because around that time there were lots of independent movement on the continent of Africa. Black people were oppressed all over the world and I really did not understand. So, the broader political landscape, history, my personal circumstances, and family not having much money motivated me to want to do things that helped other people feel a sense of empowerment and feel . . .the ability to change their circumstances.

These events inspired Frances to social work where she began to work as a psychiatric social worker that led to teaching in higher education and then to leadership, assisting other people.

Rene Terry explained that going to college was an option for her family. She further shared, "My parents always said that college is not for everyone. But whatever you choose to do make sure that you are the best." She further explained that her college

experience employment as residence hall director influenced her career in higher education. She described that she "sort of fell into the job, got used to it, and made a decision to move up professionally." She did not really know that student affairs was what she wanted to do as a career, but acknowledged that, "it was one of those things that you know that the job was necessary because of my experience as a (resident) hall director." The greatest motivating factor for Rene Terry was her interaction with students, talking, sharing, and counselling with students.

Priscilla shared similar experiences that her parents were very supportive. Although her parents did not have professional degrees, Priscilla's dad insisted upon the idea that, "his children would be literate and good citizens." She maintained that her dad read to them all the time, they read to each other, played games, and spent a lot of time watching Public Broadcasting System, and ensured that the family had opportunities placed in their pathways and the life that he could not have. Priscilla described her extended family, "a bit interesting because there were a number of extended families who were teachers, educators at various levels, elementary through college." It was Priscilla's aunt who advocated and always said, "that we were going to college! College was never an option for Priscilla. Priscilla's career in higher education was facilitated by accepting employment at a military station where she got an opportunity to see how she could "help people change their lives and expand what they wanted."

Grace described in her interview responses that her parents were both role models for her, and that she, "valued the models my parents were for me because I watched and learned a lot from both. They both had similar personalities. They both were

educators; my dad was a principal and my mother a secondary faculty member in high school." Parents were primary supporters of Grace. The other family member involved in shaping and influencing Grace's educational career pathway was her brother who was, also, a secondary biology teacher. Grace's parents were very inspirational and provided encouraging words to her in pursuit of her master's and doctoral degrees. She recalled the words her dad quoted to her when she prepared for her master's defense, he was not alive when she received her doctorate degree. Grace's dad provided her these words of truths:

> You did that research and you wrote the paper. No one knows more about it than you. So, you don't have to worry, you know what you read, and you know what you wrote, and you know what you did. So, with this you're the expert because you know it.

Grace's father knew that she would be anxious and when Grace heard these words, she uttered, "I believed."

Monique shared that, "going to college was not only not an option, but we were born understanding that we would finish high school, go to college, and complete three degrees, a bachelors, master, and doctorate." Monique recalled that this language was in her household from the beginning of her life, the importance of learning and doing her very best, and keeping commitment sincerely assisted her in developing some "grit and some resilience." She recollected a true principle in their household that is still the culture in her household today. Monique communicated:

> If you got less than a perfect grade you would know how to handle that, struggling in the class you would know how to handle that, how to talk to

> instructors, and how to ask for help of any of these things, you would know how to handle that.

Monique's parents were very intentional and sincere about ensuring that she was not distracted by unnecessary challenges and barriers, but that she was able to remain focused. Thus, the parents were very helpful in providing information for "real dialogue pertaining, specifically, to higher education, barriers, pitfalls, and decision making." According to Monique, she and her mother have conversations, currently, and the mother often verbalizes, "that we just want you to have more than we had, and better for you more sustainability and continuity." She was inspired by her mother as an educator and watched her climb the ladder of success completing her master's degree and accepting a role at a university in the family's home town. She was equally inspired when her father enrolled in college upon retiring from the military and received his bachelor's degree

Deborah, in her interview, described her mother and grandparents as primary supporters and role models. They were her real influence. She explained her interview responses to family shaping and influencing her educational preparation:

> I wouldn't say that it wasn't an option; and it wasn't said that you are going to do this. Two things here, I loved learning and because I had a very difficult childhood, education was a way of escaping. So, I am the child who was in the library as a way of escaping, and I happen to be very good at it. So, this was a way for me to escape, especially with a lot of trauma that was going on and a lot of negative influences, as well.

Deborah described how her parents and family shaped and influenced her personal and professional education career. Her response, “The influence concerning me was all about my mother and my grandparents. They really supported my education.” Other family members and friends did not have influences in shaping and influencing Deborah’s educational preparation. She was a trailblazer and the first of five children in her family to complete college degrees the traditional way, entering college after high school. Everyone went to college after Deborah and several received graduate degrees. She expressed her love for learning and education and how “education was a way of escaping, because I had a very difficult childhood. My parents did not understand my pathway. They were just happy that I got the degrees, because what I did was different.”

Charity had her aspirations on becoming a clothing designer. She observed from early childhood that she had a fervidness and passion caring for other people who did not have the same access to opportunities that she had. She had not considered or known that caring was deemed social justice. Consequently, she encountered social justice growing up, and this was something that her mother instilled in her. Education was very important for Charity’s family. She described education as “the most important thing that my parents could ever instill in us. So, going to college was just something that was ingrained in me and I did not know any other options to make other than going to college.” So, going to college, graduating from college, and becoming a first-generation college student are what Charity accomplished, and she knew this from a very young age. The conversations of college and where she and siblings wanted to attend were discussed very frequently.

Charity recollected that her parents were very supportive and influential. Her dad worked very hard to achieve goals and being goal oriented was another goal that was important to the family and allowed Charity to adopt. She explains, “Dad’s work ethic and goal- oriented principles allowed me to be driven to pursue all three degrees and even the executive leadership role that I currently hold.”

Similarly, Veronica described her career educational preparation beginning, “as a child.” She explained her education from early conversations with her parents regularly.

> I knew that I would have a career and be a professional. Both of my parents were educators. I knew that I was going to go to college. As a child, I think I was less focused on a career and more focused on where I was going to attend college.

Veronica observed and learn professional work ethics and professionalism from her mother and father. She recollected, “My mother worked my entire life. My parents were always shaping and influencing my educational journey.” Veronica’s father and mother, the father specifically, assisted Veronica with discovering and maintaining all skills in language, math, critical thinking skills, getting the main idea, and getting fact skills.

Overall ,all African-American women participants shared that family influences were essential and foundational to the educational career pathways for African-American women. All parents had some form of educational experience from high school to graduating from college. Education is intergenerational and was observed in all African-American women participants’ career educational journey. The African-American women participants perceived and experienced “it takes a village, family, friends, and

community" as recalled by Michelle. The participants explained that a common thread that guided them and kept them on their educational career pathways was their "faith and hope in God." All participants recollected early childhood experiences as integral in scattering seeds for developing and encouraging leadership within them. It was apparent that all participants acknowledged that family, friends, and communities valued and had some influence in their personal and professional lives. All participants' families shared daily the foundation that African-American/Black women have laid as leaders in education, corporate, businesses, entertainment, politics, medicine, legal, and much more. The African-American women began their career pathways with a leadership focus and shared their views.

Beginning influences to a higher educational career. The second theme related to the career pathway experiences component was beginning influences to a higher educational career. The purpose was to identify aspects that influenced African-American women to a career in higher education. All participants were asked to describe how their career in higher education began in order to explore the influential factors underlining their pathway into higher educational careers. The women participants recollected different viewpoints of motivation for pursuing higher education as a career. The viewpoints were associated with the campus life of higher education – impact on student affairs, diversity, and more women of color at the table. Other persuading factors the women articulated included family morals and principles, mentors, and the passion for uplifting and taking care of others.

Michelle described her career pathway introduction to higher education experiences began in undergraduate school through the relationships she had built. Much of her career in higher education was influenced by the underrepresentation of women of color. As a result, Michelle felt the need and opportunity "to be the change I wanted to see." She recalled her father's words embraced from childhood, "if I were to do something, I should do it so well that I would want to put my name on it."

Most of Michelle's career work experiences have been at all PWIs, academia, corporations, and businesses. She recalled being motivated and inspired to pursue administration to make a change in her home town. She shared this statement, "there were a lot of negative connotations associated with my hometown and there were a number of people who did not know anything outside of my hometown. This was an opportunity to further my education, to be an encouragement, and give others hope." Mentors were influential in assisting Michelle with comprehension and significance of acquiring a terminal degree to ensure that she would advance to a higher level, senior and executive roles to help others.

Frances recollected going to college was the next step of her career after graduating from high school. Frances higher education career pathway experiences began with the birth of her son, "shortly after graduating with my undergraduate degree." Frances applied to graduate school after being home with her new baby for one year and was accepted. Upon graduation with her master's degree, Frances worked as a secretary temp job for nine months while she applied for professional positions. The first

professional job for Frances was a psychiatric social worker at a community center. She further explained how she was inspired to become employed at higher education institute.

> I held the psychiatric social worker's position for two years when my professor said that there was a job opening at her undergraduate alma mater, an HBCU. The Dean called to offer me the position; after I hung up the phone, I said to myself, they think I can do it, so I guess I can. So, this is how my career in higher education begin.

It was the faculty who inspired Frances to consider higher education as a career. "The faculty influenced, because I had thoughts when I was in undergraduate school that one day I would like to teach! And talking with the faculty, it seemed that one day might be right now!"

Rene Terry explained her motivation for pursuing a career as an administrative leader. She shared that, "The motivating factor that incentivized me was having an impact on students, even when you have to do the conduct parts to have to take people out, and sometimes you have to suspend them." Rene Terry's and Michelle's career after receiving undergraduate degrees began similarly. Both participants began their careers in student affairs where their first job was hall director. Rene Terry remained in the position of resident hall director until she completed her master's degree. She explained that, "Student Affairs is one of those roles that you kind of fall into. You fall into it because either you weren't leadership in undergraduate school, or you started off in housing as a resident assistant and you begin to see how you impact students."

Rene Terry is currently enrolled in a doctoral program and remained in housing as an inspiration and a vehicle to further her career in leadership in higher education. She was not certain where the position was going to take her. She recollected her inspiration for deciding on a career in higher education.

> It took me a little bit, and I didn't know whether I was going to stay in the position, until I really started looking at other types of positions and conduct. I was really big on conduct. I became interested in conduct when I desired to become a police officer at one point. So, I liked enforcing policy and gave me the inspiration to do policy enforcement. I was good at policy and I knew how to talk to students who were in trouble and try to get them to turn around.

Rene has currently been promoted to a senior and executive-level leadership role as vice president.

Priscilla recalled her career in higher education was motivated by "taking care of others." She shared, "when you have a gift or when people are willing to listen to your voice, you have a responsibility to use your voice in a way to benefit those people around who may not have much agency." Similarly, to all participants, Priscilla had a good education. However, she believed that the "very, very, very rural parts of her growing up was different from a lot of Black people." She explained that her community was comprised of "a lot of white people and a lot of Latino people and agriculture featured prominently in the economy." There were migrant workers and "a lot going on in Priscila's community" that made and prepared her for "a really good fit for the university in the western region" where she was employed. She explained an experience with

isolation, “isolation knowing that nobody at her university looked like her, and nobody had her experience she had growing up in that area.” Priscilla described further that the earliest part of her life “knowing that I had essentially become a really good translator, being able to walk in two different worlds at a time, definitely set me up for success.” She had a well-diverse lived experience. She believed that her jobs held among her academic degrees (bachelor’s to a doctorate degree) and working in educational offices in a branch of military, Borders’ bookstore, and a teacher’s aide at a private school were the catalyst to career in higher education.

Grace described her career beginning higher education experiences in some ways unusual because leadership was introduced early in her career where she participated in some very significant aspects of life at Southeastern University. She was invited to participate in the whole accreditation process and was appointed co-chair of the administrative process that encompassed the president’s office and other executive tasks under this committee. This experience was a motivating factor and inspired her to pursue leadership in her higher education career. Grace communicated her perception of leadership to be “bi-directional!”

> To achieve whatever the job is and whatever the task is as far as being a leader, it HAS to be bi-directional. It cannot be I’m the one in charge and you do this. It has to be something that is very obvious that we are a team, and we move through this together. Know that you have to treat people like you want to be treated, and it starts with just being positive and hands on.

Grace's inspiration to her career pathway to higher education was a combination of her parents (both educators), brother, and friends of the family. She explained, "I realized that whatever I do I can see it would be a helping profession because that was what I saw, and I can see that was something that I valued, they valued, and I felt that's who I was." Grace's desire was always to work at a university for she had grown up in a public school. She accomplished her desire for she has always been employed in higher education.

Monique described personal factors that heavily influenced and motivated her pursuit of career administration," the need for people and women of color in this field and the 100% I am solely motivated by the students." She further explained that if African-American women are "not at the table" real change cannot be "affective for students of color, international students, students with disability, and students perceived as a marginalized population. Monique further explicated that she "moved around quite a bit and sometimes in order to move up, you have to move." Upon completing undergraduate school, Monique's career took her from a faculty teaching in high school, to a community college, and to a coordinator's position in a TRIO upward bound program at a university. These positions spanned several states. Monique was not looking for a TRIO position at all. She was just "looking for a single real opportunity to help students and it just came about, and it worked out. I became a senior leader in TRIO and serve on multiple programs and numerous committees and advisory council." Monique has greater aspirations beyond higher education for "higher education is not where I want to stay." TRIO is not an acronym but a Federal TRIO outreach program, initially three programs

and now eight programs targeted to serve individuals from disadvantage backgrounds (U. S. Department of Education, 2019)

Deborah described beginning experiences that inspired her to a career in higher education as always being very involved on campus. She was publisher of student media, worked in undergraduate admission office, and was always very interested in higher education. The real inspiration was landing her first real job and her favorite job as an assistant director of a master business administration program at an Ivy League school. Subsequently, Deborah has "kept her toe in higher education because it has always been an interest."

Deborah, during her interview, described factors that motivated her to pursue a career as an administrative leader were the students. She was motivated by the extreme "diversity of students." She used her "feet, ears, and eyes to go out and run into students, have a conversation with students, hear their stories, and realize that we are changing lives." She, also, stated specifics of some of the students' stories.

> We don't use minority anymore; people of color are the majority. This means that as emphasis and students at institutions mix differently. Thus, we have a lot of first-generation students to go to college, trying to hold down two jobs, pick up their brother and sister after school, students who say I have a test tomorrow, and I really appreciate the opportunity to get an education.

These students' stories are what motivated and inspired Deborah "at least in higher education, and that we were changing lives."

Charity explained passionately and enthusiastically that her career began with her mother! Charity detailed the warmness and affection her mother displayed in encouraging and guiding her to college and a career in higher education. As she thought about what she enjoyed doing, "it was a struggle." She further stated:

> What brings me or helps me to fulfill my passion, if they can be fulfilled? I contemplated. My mother was one who said that you were so happy when you were in college; you had the best experience ever. So why don't you go back and work for a college; and so, I started applying for college positions, but no one, I was not getting any offers. I barely got interviews. And so, I realized that I needed a master's degree to really try to get some phone calls from some colleges. And so that's what made me go back and get my masters in college student personnel work. As soon as I did that, I ended up getting more phone calls for jobs.

From the perspective of Charity, the main inspiration and motivation to a career in higher education was "to be able to show my community the home town from where I came and to be able to make a way for the people to come behind me." Charity identified specifics of her community that she desired to up lift: to show the community and young kids the possibilities of going to college and not only just going to college, but "achieving a high-level position."

Veronica attributed being motivated and inspired to pursue a career in administrative leadership to the following personal factors: leadership roles held by her mother and father in the education system, personal and professional encouragement, and intergenerational education acquired from previous grandparents and great grandparents

passed down. Veronica was desirous of "academics" and a career in higher education from early childhood. The many family members who had gone to college and the fact that her father was an administrator at a higher education institution. Veronica loved conducting research and she loved conducting research in undergraduate school. While, Veronica was working at IBM, she took classes and discovered the field of organizational behavior with the intersection of psychology and sociology and economics. "It was in the field of organizational behavior that I discovered that I could get a Ph.D. in organizational behavior and that I could research on people; and that was really interesting to me."

African-American women career experiences leading to leadership.

The third theme related to African-American women career pathway experiences leading to senior and executive-level leadership. The interview data showed that each woman participant had views that were similar and some views that were different in their experiences as it related to the institutions. Collectively, the participants' career experiences leading to leadership roles were impacted by their perceptions of the systemic challenges inherent in being an African-American women. Those challenges included, and were not limited to in general, the few people of color seated at the executive council table and, specifically, the fewer women of color represented there; and the subtle and overt changes in treatment from colleagues as they advanced in leadership positions. The women participants' career experiences leading to leadership was evidenced through their leadership roles demonstrated when interacting with administration, faculty, students, and staff in day-to-day activities. The data indicated that

all African-American women in senior and executive-level leadership roles drew upon ways and methods developed from family and friends essential morals and values, a rich and clear spiritual belief and faith, and rudiments of education that prepared them for their career pathways, personally and professionally. The women provided detailed accounts of each of their experience interacting with administration, faculty colleague, staff or students and the results of the experience.

Michelle discussed her career experiences as an African-American woman senior executive-level leader, dean at a smaller institution. She said her philosophy of an administrative leader was contingent upon the type of institution and every institution was different. In Michelle's role as dean, she has served in a dual capacity, dean, and vice president, fulfilling the responsibilities of both positions. As an African-American woman in this role, Michele indicated that, "it has been comforting for her as well as for students when students of color were able to connect with me because there were not many staff members of color at the PWIs. I connected with students of color and built relationships with students who did not identify as being some one of color." Michelle indicated that to be in the field of higher education, there has to be a level of passion in the leader and demonstrated. Additionally, she explained success is "measured by the number of lives she is able to impact, develop holistically, and to ensure they are not the same person that they were when they arrived."

Frances, at an early age, did not have a clue or vision about leadership and depended on administrative leaders who guided and directed her career path to the college doors. She held on to the guidance directions from the administrative leaders.

Now, as an African-American woman in a senior executive level leadership position, she believed that leaders should have a clear and grounded sense of purpose. She described her career experiences from positions in higher education:

> My positions in higher education have been primarily at two PWIs. I am only speaking from my experiences because institutions can be very difficult in their culture and in their values. So, at my first institution I was the only tenured African-American and the only African-American who had received tenure in this social worker department. I went from there pretty quickly to being the head of the school. Colleagues, in general were supportive, but there were a few European American men who were not so happy about my position . . . and did not have confidence in my leadership or my leadership approach. … they were resistant to my leadership. I am confident that age was a part of it because these were very senior male faculties who had been in the institution, the school for a very long time . . .and I am sure that gender was a factor as well. I had a good relationship with these men until I became the leader and I think a lot of that was about gender. That's where the difficulty existed.

Frances also recollected:

> I was pretty seasoned. … being a person of color there was a certain amount of pressure to make sure that when there are issues that arise that are related to racism and those kinds of things that you know, we really have to step up …So, I just leave that there. I had many times that I had to deal with my own feelings of

> doubt and insecurity, and I felt like I had to work hard to present myself in a way that I would be seen as competent and confident."

Rene Terry believed that as senior leaders one should have a global perspective; and senior leaders should understand what other senior leaders are doing, other vice-presidents are doing, faculty, and students. During the interview, Rene Terry was asked how she navigated the roles played as she ascended to senior and executive-level leadership roles. She described her experiences as having very good mentors; crafting her career and planning her steps.

She further described her experience in this role as "very interesting." She expressed a few incidents she encountered at different universities and in different roles of leadership. Specifically, she stated,

> It has been interesting because I was a hall director at a university in the southern region of the country, we encountered a major incident. I want to call it a race riot. . .on campus. It was difficult because there were things done to my African-American students, there were things done to me, and it was a huge investigation. It was awful!

At another big 10 school, described Rene Terry, was in the judicial affairs' administrative leadership position, she recollected this incident:

> I know that a lot of white males there had never ever really encountered an African-American woman in an authority position. The only thing I can say with them was um, their eyes getting big at first. I'm meeting with this Black woman, but very respectful, always taking their hats off. I didn't have an issue there.

Rene Terry further explicated that she did not have an issue because the "White males' issues were with other persons of color at the western universities than with Black people. They sort of left Black people alone."

Priscilla described her career experiences to senior and executive leadership as "getting a job at the college to which I attribute a huge amount of my transition into the administrative realm. After five years of starting at the school, I went from being the lowest rank people, processing applications at the college to the assistant dean of students." Priscilla perceived her leadership experiences with these tasks: "they have to be able to walk between worlds and explains things, make decisions about other people, be able to tell them sometimes no, have to have some strength, and show up. She considers herself an authentic leader and qualified to be in her leadership space.

As an African-American/ Black woman in a senior leadership role, Priscilla explained her experiences, "it has been interesting." She further explained.

> Interesting! Interesting because of who stood in my way, interesting in who supported me, interesting, so, interesting in who stood in my way! There were a lot of people who didn't know me well! They knew what they thought they knew of me! But they did not know who I was, specifically. They thought that I was just somebody who was given this opportunity but did not actually possessed the skill set to support it.

Priscilla, also, recollected a specific experience at a women's conference how "motivator jealousy could be" in her new dean's position, where she had challenges with Black people, Black women, specifically people of color, women of color." The Black

women would expect Priscilla to know things and hold her accountable for the fact that she did not know, which was "very hurtful and unkind." The conference speaker, a seasoned older African-American woman conference speaker shared, these words:

> There are going to be some people that will come after you, and it has nothing to do with you, but it has everything to do with who they are. You may have to create your own circle, find mentors or new mentors, find people who believe in you and will not tear you down, and that's where you thrive.

Priscilla left the conference emboldened to do what she needed to do for herself. In Priscilla's illustration, it began as jealousy, but it was converted to trust.

Grace recalled her career pathway experiences to leadership begin with achievement accomplished at "whatever the job is and whatever the task is as a leader." "It has to be bi-directional. It cannot be said; I am in charge and you do this. It has to be very obvious that we are a team and we move through this together. During the interview, Grace expressed that as an African-American woman in her senior leadership role, "it has been a beautiful journey and I have to say that I did learn some things from my parents that have just lasted. Integrity and principle are very important to me, and I have experienced some settings where people would do anything to move up! And that is just not right and is not who I am." Grace believed that integrity and principle applied in her multiple supervisory roles, department chair, senior executive roles, and chairperson of the compliance committee for the entire university. These have all provided phenomenal training and experience assisting successful ascent to her senior and executive roles at

HBCUs and PWIs. Grace recollected that PWIs value of African-American women career pathway experiences "is probably a great variance depending on institutions."

Monique expressed that her career pathway experiences to leadership begin as a young person when she understood administrative leaders to be "real persons" the "rule enforcers, business handlers, and disciplinarians." As a young adult and college student, Monique saw leaders in the same likeness exhibiting various emotions, "they could make or break students' educational experience; they get happy and sad." As an African-American woman in a senior role, Monique recollected that, "it is interesting that she observes folk kind of in their roles within their different leadership styles. And you say, hey they are not untouchable; they are not infallible; they are real people. With whom I enjoy working. However, in the role of senior and executive leadership, Monique has had some "challenges in some ways and less challenging in others." According to Monique, she does not speak on behalf of all Black people but explained that people of color "get kind of pushed into some of the things because we are people of color, and there are so few of us." Monique further described:

> The flipside of that is nice because you come with a separate set of knowledge, your life experiences, can contribute when we are at the table, and when folk are not considering cultural differences. In this way, I am able to be available and share, and this is the sole purpose for why I am in higher education.

Deborah recalled that, "as a Black woman in senior and executive leadership roles, I lead with my eyes, ears, and my feet. This means that you need to be very perceptive and look; you need to listen, and you need to use your feet, and walk around to

be visible." Specifically, Deborah has established 20 to 30 minutes one-to-one meetings at the office place of her staff. Then she is able to learn a lot about people when she is in their space, especially as a leader. As an African-American/Black woman in this role, Deborah described that she, "lives the life of someone no one expects to be in charged. So, when I walk into a room, I don't look like the person who people think should be president or dean of financial planning, manager, or director of operation."

Charity recalled how she considered that as an African-American woman in senior and executive leadership, she believes that the motivation for this role was to really be able to impact change, a change agent. Charity expressed in the interview the experience of being Black woman in this role.

> As a Black woman, it has not been easy. I do not know how other Black women deal with this, but I guess they do. I deal with the Imposter syndrome (false identity) a lot. I question. . . do I really know what I need to know, to hold my own and my faith. I continue to struggle even as a young woman. Yet, I enjoy being an executive leader, sitting at the senior leadership table and being able to advise the president and other vice presidents.

Veronica recollected not having thoughts about her own personal philosophy on administrative leadership but "I hoped to embody and represent a leader empowering other people and people do good work. And to simplify and give voice to those people who don't have a seat at the table."

In Veronica's senior and executive leadership roles, she described her experience as one that was isolating! A role that results in African-American women being a scarcity

of their race and gender, and disproportionately underrepresented in comparison to their white female counterparts. Veronica explained that there were similarities and some differences when she was just a faculty member and administrator. As a faculty member, she did not have a seat or a voice at the table, but when she became an administrator, Veronica stated, “I did inherently have a seat and voice at the table.”

Component 2: African-American Women Barrier Experiences

The second component of the research question was to explore the barriers to opportunities. The two themes that emerged from data were African-American women participants’ assessment of barriers that they have experienced and the revelation of how they navigated the challenges and barriers to success. Theme 4—the greatest challenges and barriers’ experienced, and Theme 5–navigating challenges and barriers to success. Concerning the greatest challenges and barriers experienced the African-American women described challenges experienced in connection with various job surroundings, job applications, and support system or the lack of a support system. The theme navigating the challenges and barriers to success described the participants’ experiences. The purpose of this component was to identify African-American women barriers and challenges experienced and their navigating approaches that led to senior and executive-level leadership positions. The women conveyed their experiences detailing some of the barriers and challenges that have been created: policies and procedures placed in print and practice by men in the work environment preventing African-American women from attaining executive leadership positions.

Greatest challenges and barriers experienced. This theme related to the barrier component was a description of some of the African-American women greatest challenges and barriers experienced. The African-American women participants shared unique barriers, but all participants recounted race and gender as challenges and barriers experienced in the work environment. Seven participants communicated experiences encountered with race, gender, and ageism advancing to senior and executive-level positions. Two women participants explained that they did not have challenges or experienced any barriers moving to senior and executive-level positions but observed disparagement of treatment from colleagues when African-American women participants were promoted to leaderships positions at a higher level than European American female and male counterparts.

Frances explained that she had,

> Difficulties working with some white male faculty members that did not have belief in my leadership or my leadership approach. So, there were difficulties working with them because they weren't hostile, they weren't hostile at all, but they were resistant to my leadership.

She also perceived that the European American males' resistance to her leadership was due partly to her age and gender. She was younger, and the men were "very senior male faculties and had been at the institution for a very long time." Frances stated that she had experienced "wonderful relationships with both of these men until I became the leader and I think a lot of that was about gender." Frances further identified that the greatest

barriers she observed and experienced were" sexism, racism, and issues of power, privilege, bigotry, and implicit bias."

Michelle described a similar challenge to that of Frances concerning "age discrimination." Michelle explicated that age discrimination has been consistently found at all universities where she worked. She explained further her interaction with administrators at different and various leadership levels:

> Administrators initially reacted to my outer appearance and of course I cannot control how I look because I am actually am older than I look … and I am often mistaken as a student. Initial reactions can be challenging. However, once conversations are shared, ideas or connections with administrators, I am able to break and navigate through and break down the barriers.

Priscilla, alternatively, perceived that European American individuals' cognizance was that different people experience the world differently. Priscilla experienced challenges and perceived barriers to advancement at HSI institutions more direct than what was not experienced at PWIs. At the HSI, Priscilla believe that, "it was related to religion being a dominant factor the very patriarchal religious bent in the community … and being a woman was more challenging there." She explained further:

> A larger barrier was that the people who don't know how to walk in white space; it is such a struggle because it is a struggle that is not expected. I think a lot and know my brown colleagues would talk about how the Brown women compete with Brown women, the Black women compete with the Black women. But we expect that. … What was happening with Brown or Black people ended up

> translating into obstacles. Because if intelligence can only be one way, and the people who decide what intelligence looks like don't look like me; they don't look like my Brown sisters; then by default we are not going to stand a chance of looking intelligent, unless we figure out how to walk in white space. There were at my formal institution White leaders who knew that people of color didn't experience the world in the same way and didn't experience education in the same way that White people had. One of the significant obstacles that feels like reality and is talked about is code switching. I could code switch, but I don't. Code switching that I do is to preserve what feels much like Black culture. I don't diminish my truth, but I also don't share everything; I know what to keep for myself. Code switching is where I find myself in places that are dominated or appear to be dominated by white culture.

Priscilla was told by her European American mentor and "boss" that she is a great communicator, and "honors her people by telling them the truth." She recollected that, "…I was used to being candid and direct in my communication, and was mostly challenged when people would say, hey tell us; tell us if you see behavior that marginalizes people and behavior that is perpetrated unfairly! TELL US! And I actually did that; it was not what they wanted. It came back to where I was supposed to be the happy Negro."

During the interview, Priscilla was asked if she thought there was jealousy because the students under her were excelling. Priscilla recounted, "No, I don't think there was jealousy because we are talking about the senior and executive-level

leadership…and I had to work with students in a different way from anybody on the campus. I think it was that I made people fill uncomfortable with what they knew was true." Priscilla described the two experiences as "very, very, very uncomfortable."

Rene Terry stated that she "did not have any problems moving up" or while advancing to senior and executive-level roles compared to the perception of what it was like functioning in senior and executive-level experiences as an African-American woman at a PWIS. The barriers or challenges Rene Terry experienced occurred as she was functioning in leadership roles. She described the effects of intersectionality occurring at PWIs with several identities interlocking first gender, second as an African-American woman administrator, and coupled with "student affairs professional as its own identity," she added. Rene Terry recollected that the greatest challenges and barriers to opportunities advancing to senior and executive-level roles were forms of institutional racism. She named three sectors as forms of institutional racism reflected in employment and education where race, gender, ageism, and other identities interlocked and impacted the identities of African-American women employment experiences. She explained that institutional racism reflected in employment operating daily.

Monique expressed similar barrier views as Rene Terry regarding institutional racism related to employment and education at PWIs, specifically. Monique communicated that persons of color seeking employment are hired in areas that were "pigeonholed into mid-level and junior level leadership who sit over their retirement and in diversity or multicultural areas." She recounted that as an African-American Black woman, intersectionality of race and gender, she has been disappointed:

> Disappointed in and very, very disappointed in all the people for their lack of support. Specifically, other people of color not supporting other people of color. The folks don't come out to support another Black woman on campus students' Martin Luther King program. I am in a city that is almost 100% White and with "no one there to lean on and White folks can only offer so much, but the people who are of color really could be valuable, but unfortunately that's not the case.

Thus, Monique shared that the greatest barrier in accomplishing senior and executive-level roles is "other people." In other people, the hiring of persons of color, at higher education institutions, most jobs posted already have someone in mind or have already been filled.

Deborah described barriers – race and gender, a dual status often affecting the climate of African-American women in their workplace. She explained, "women of color are ignored in higher education and ignored when people talk about women whether it is higher education or corporate." She further explained that it is hard to separate her identities race and gender to clarify which is more significant; they are both significant. She articulated the effects of the interlocking system of race and gender and her lived experiences in the work environment. She conveyed:

> I am someone when I walk in the room people assume that I am not in charge. Whereas, when a White male walks into a room, they assume he is in charge. There is a lot of extra work that I have to do to basically validate my position, … myself, … my work's worth, and … my value. A White male or White woman or … an African-American male would not have to do the same to the extent as an

> African-American woman … because of intersectionality. It is like having a double negative assumption about whether or not you should be there in the first place.

Deborah described experiencing barriers and challenges pursuing senior and executive-level leadership "came down to implicit bias." Higher education did not understand that Deborah did not take the traditional academic path to achieving her doctorate degree. The traditional path of obtaining her doctorate degree was to become a professor, make tenure, become a chair, an associate dean, and then make president. This became a big uncomfortable piece in higher education particularly for Deborah for her academic was slightly different. She did not follow the traditional path. She explicated:

> That's why people talk about the leaky pipeline for women and people of color in leadership because every step along that traditional path, you know there is an opportunity to leak people out (laughter)! And to weave them out. I think that is a big barrier, ah! I have my doctorate from a very prestigious doctoral program from one of the top graduate school education in the country.

Deborah encountered a lot of barriers from the institution who questioned the earning of a doctor of education (EdD) degree as oppose to earning a doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree. The greatest one was the "goalposts kept moving." She was the one whom the institution hired; they had to think outside the box. It was Deborah's dissertation chair who sat on the board of trustees and "called the alarm to do something differently."

Charity agreed with Deborah that it was a challenge pursuing senior and executive-level roles. Charity described the candidate pools as "really full, they are full."

She expressed the application process for executive positions is replete with "challenges and often becomes a barrier endeavoring to get past the bureaucratic process of ensuring that resumes and cover letters that speak truly to your experience and it is competitive. A second challenge Charity stated that becomes a barrier was "trying to earn the respect of everyone, your colleagues, once you are hired in the position." A third challenge Charity expressed was "taxation part where you are a Black person, a Black woman needed in place whenever issues of race, issues of any types of marginalized person come up, everyone looks to you and you become the voice." Additionally, Charity communicated that often times she is the only person of color and unless relationships are built with White people and other people of color, culture, and races, you may be the only one. No, critical mass was a challenge. Charity further expressed:

> And so, I oftentimes find myself trying to connect with the European women who are my colleagues because I know that if I could build rapport with them, I'm hopeful that they will support my work and I can support their work, when push comes to shove. But oftentimes that doesn't happen! You know the feminism can only go so far sometimes when we don't share the same racial or ethnic background or ethnicity.

Veronica described growing up as a faculty member was challenging. It was challenging to her because she was seen as someone who operates at the senior most level and not have access to resources (people or things) introduced in a private network that would be available through socialize. She felt it was "even more challenging because pursuing the senior and executive-level roles the vast majority of faculty members don't

become administrators." One of the greatest barriers that has been a worry and concern of Veronica was "not having access to the broader network. They see me as being a worthy colleague and a solid scholar, someone in their environment, but not someone with whom they will socialize." Veronica explained that she has always been in a cross-racial and cross ethnic network.

> So, it was not having relations as part of choosing someone to be a leader. You feel like you know them, and you know who they are. Then, if you don't have a relationship type, there's some pieced that feel as though it is missing something.

Veronica described the barriers – race and gender as a double negative because being a woman of color, all females had for the most part each other's back. Women of color were underrepresented "in mid to high level administrative positions whether or not they were faculty or not, and certainly the ones that were faculty member were few in numbers." Thus, Veronica expressed that "not having genuine relationships where individuals were going to pass you the information that you need was one of the greatest barriers."

Grace recounted challenges that she experienced pursuing and sitting in senior and executive-level roles. She recollected that many practices at her university, a small Christian institution, were centered around archaic practices and policies that ostensibly were protected by firewalls and older administration disinclined and reluctant to change. Grace would frequently encounter push back with comments, "well, this is how we do it or this is how we have always done it. Or, when the executive administration was asked to produce written policies for any particular rule, procedure, guideline or program, the

administration would say, “Well there are no written policies.” Grace had been her university longer than most of the executive leadership, including the President and most of her suggestions made to the school would receive “pushback.” During the interview, Grace was asked why did she believe that she experienced those challenges? Grace recalled that, “some of them were just simply (paused) I don’t want to say it is racism, but they did not want me telling them what should be done; and I don’t want you knowing more than I do.”

Navigating challenges and barriers to success. Theme 5 related to this component navigating challenges and barriers to success. Participants described their experiences that assisted them in navigating the process of pursuing senior and executive-level leadership in higher education and, specifically, at PWIS colleges and universities. The participants expressed personal and professional values, strategies, and approaches to navigating challenges and barriers to success. The participants articulated that building and keeping a good network of supportive people who can be contacted when necessary was one significant strategy. Another strategy the participants conveyed they could navigate challenges and barriers was to develop approaches that would assist in managing day-to-day issues when the issues happened in the moment. Finally, the women acknowledged that participation in leadership development training and acquiring knowledge in your area of study were two significant ways to navigate barriers to success.

Michelle recalled how she navigated experiences of barriers and complexities to senior and executive-level leadership roles through masking her interactions with

individuals and “by connecting with someone on a personal level, then it is a lot easier to break those barriers down. Find something that is relatable.” She recounted the stereotypes that are associated with African-American women and other women of color: “being angry, or pretty much being in your feeling as opposed to making a sound decision without emotions being attached.” Nonetheless, she stated that “women are still learning and progressing in administrative roles.”

Frances perceived her strategies into two categories. One is internal and the other is external. Frances expressed:

> I have been able to be grounded and clear in my spiritual belief and connection; and to have a very rich spiritual life, intentionally nurtured, and one that has been based on my own belief system that I am much more than my human ego and so is everybody else. My internal strategies encompassed taking care of yourself, your body, mind, and spirit. My eternal strategies incorporated having a good network or supportive people that included both mentors and colleagues and friends so that when it gets rough, I can call somebody up and say, let me tell you what just happened to day!

Priscilla expressed one word for how she navigated barriers and complexities to success in pursuing senior and executive-level positions, belief. She believed in her capacity and still dream big. She stated, “when I have dreamed big, I don’t believe I dreamed big enough, so I pushed.

Monique recounted that she has been able to navigate complexities and barriers through leadership development, which is huge for Monique. She expressed, “honestly,

really just by being knowledgeable in my field and I consider myself and expert." Another strategy and approach that Monique employed was networking and building relationships. She had to sacrifice and attend events even when she did not want to attend. She explained that she loves people, but she hates networking. She prefers that networking occurs organically. She stated:

> If I am forced to attend a networking event, I will go because I have to go, and I have to be there to establish some relationships and face time with the president and chief of staff.

Monique acknowledged that to be considered for positions "folks have to see your face and that you need to be there, even if you don't like him or her." She further explained that she networks well, and everyone always have positive things to say about her; she gets the job done.

Rene Terry and Charity described navigating their career pathways to get to senior and executive-level positions by being very strategic as much as feasible when applying for employment at colleges and universities. The process for Rene Terry began by researching the school or schools reviewing their mission statement, if the schools had a multicultural office on campus, read the school's newspaper, and review the staff and student demographics. Rene Terry communicated perceived barriers:

> One is being too trusting on one end and on the other end is the fear that PWIs have for bringing in a Black woman because of the fear of the stereotypical "angry Black woman thing." The barrier is that sometime PWIs think if they hire someone of color, they are going to have to watch what they say. I think

> sometimes that an institutional barrier could be or is the fear of exposing that person of color to some of that institutional racism, things, and traditions that are there for fear that it will blow up.

Charity recounted navigating complexities and barriers when applying for jobs. She acknowledged that she applied for jobs even if she didn't have all her "ducks in a row; or if I don't feel like, well I have the educational experience, but I may not have the best years of experience." She believed if she did not have the specific experience and job qualities described in the job description, she could speak to anyone if given the chance to interview. She felt that if she got the interview, she would prepare for the interview, go to the interview, and do her very best. She stated that, "it is a lot of mind over matter, this has helped me."

Grace was also strategic and very purposeful in applying for positions that would advance her knowledge and cognitive capacity. She recalled navigating complexities and barriers with passion about the field in which she was interested, and this was her approach. She expressed:

> I loved the field that I am in. I will tell anyone that I don't think there is anything more important than young children and families, and I have said for a very long time, but I've also just continued to feel and fill on that passion. In doing that, it has put me in some places where it helped me to get to different leadership levels.

Grace was very confident and applied for several State and National Council Committees. She recalled applying "I just cold and sent it up. I was very excited when I was selected to be on a professional teacher's education council team. I just did it and got

selected." She recollected sharing her good news with "a woman who was over her at the time." Grace described the woman's response:

> It is going to be a lot of work. You feel like doing that? My response was, absolutely! I absolutely will enjoy that. I thought that's an odd response. I have seen her be more excited about things that weren't nearly as important.

Grace waited one day to see if her immediate administrator would forward and acknowledge to the president and vice president her selection to the national conference. When Grace's immediate supervisor did not send commendation papers to the executive leaders, president and vice president, Grace took matters into her on hands. She forwarded all paperwork to the president and vice president. She received complimentary remarks, emails, and acknowledgement written in school weekly magazine as was the normal process for acknowledging other senior and executive-level leaders.

Veronica expressed how she navigated complexities, challenges, and barriers. She recounted that it was her "husband who has been on the journey with me, who understood the complexities, twists and turns, and was a champion for me no matter what!" She described how "having friends in lots of places, and fundamentally liking her work" is what sustained her through the journey.

Deborah approached navigating complexities, challenges, and barriers on a day-to-day basis "leading with my sense's eyes, ears, and feet, which allowed me to move around in spaces to be visible when it happened in the moment." She began navigating the career journey by keeping her head focused on her vision, where she was headed, focused on execution and implementation. Consequently, she piloted her career

pathways, always and deliberately to "rolled up her sleeves and focused on just getting things done." She was strategic, self-confident, and resilient in achieving academic success obtaining a doctorate degree because she knew that full respect would never be realize or opportunities afforded her without the doctorate accomplishment. Deborah maintained trust that her results and her performance would propel despite all of the negative forces around. She communicated:

> Focus on the negative would bring you down. Focus on what you know is right and move forward and you almost have to learn to be very strong and ignore the naysayers and negativity because if you focus on that and try to beat that down, you are going to lose focus on how you need to move the organization forward.

Component 3: African-American Women Facilitating Factors to Success

The third component of the research question was related to facilitating factors to success as African-American women advanced to senior and executive-level leadership roles. The two themes that emerged from data: Theme 6—facilitating factors to success, and Theme 7—career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women. The following words were the codes that ultimately communicated the theme for this component of this study: strategies advancing African-American women, greatest facilitating factors, greatest factors advancing, incentivizing and inspiring African-American women in SELL positions, leadership experience, advancing future African-American women, ways PWIs can prepare African-American women, impact and influence of mentoring, recommended career advice African-American women, leaving a legacy. The theme in this component revealed other viewpoints of the women

experiences that they identified were the greatest facilitating factors mentors and role models that encouraged them before and during their ascension to senior and executive-level leadership positions. Additionally, all women recollected that another significant aspect of facilitating factors was understanding the students whom they may also serve during their leadership. The women further described that their career pathway experiences can help future African-American females aspiring to become senior and executive-level leaders.

Facilitating factors to success. Eight of the nine participants, Deborah, Grace, Priscilla, Michelle, Charity, Frances, Rene Terry, and Monique provided evidence of mentors and role models, more than anything, were perceived as the greatest facilitating factors. Deborah recounted personally role models (mother, grandparents, and husband) impacted and supported her career lived experiences movement to senior and executive leadership. She considered herself as a role model because she believed in herself, and therefore, recommended the same facilitating factors for future African-American women aspiring to senior and executive-level roles in higher education. Nevertheless, she appended these factors that were definitely found in academia: “resilience, authenticity, know who you are, embrace who you are, be who you are, and have faith in yourself not worrying about playing a role.” Ultimately, she advised, “go for the best you can and finish. Focus on that and finish.”

Grace advocated mentoring and nurturing at the nucleus of facilitating factors. She believed that “women need something to build around and this is not something that will necessarily be very prevalent.” She perceived that African-American women were

not going to "always run into a whole lot of people in their career who will see something and want to help you continue to grow." Fortunately for Grace, she met early in her career from undergraduate school an African-American woman who saw something in Grace. Grace was very confident in this process of mentoring, nurturing, having support and role models calmed her in present senior level leadership role. She recalled someone helped her and opined that she just has to do as much she can to help others.

Thus, Grace recommended that future African-American/Black women be committed to wanting to make a difference in the lives of others and in the discipline. She suggested that "future African-American/Black women be prepared to advance other people and the field. I think commitment has to be bigger than you. It is not about you."

Priscilla affirmed that she had "an amazing set of mentors who were willing to vouch for me, and that was instrumental." She advised African-American women "to not only seek help from people who look like them. They would be missing an opportunity." She explained that, "what really helped here was having people who had experienced the world in so many different ways and were also willing to teach her because they believe I had a teachable spirit. . . and so, I had these people around who believed in me and took the time to educate me." She advised future African-American/Black women:

> To have mentors who don't look like you. If you are a woman find a mentor who is a man because they would teach you how to walk in the masculine space and in a way, you don't know how to do.

Michelle connected facilitating factors definitely to mentors and a great support system. Some of the facilitating factors that contributed to her progression go back to her

response to Section 1 questions regarding the "idea of educational preparation. . . for career pathways to higher education. She asserted that, "it takes a village, family, friends, community, and church." According to Michelle, mentoring will vary according to different perspectives of individual personal and professional lived experiences that may be able to help someone else's progress. She firmly believes it takes a village in this process. She further communicated: "Mentoring is culturally beneficial. It empowered and encouraged me throughout my professional journey as well as some of the challenges confronted while acquiring education."

Monique expressed that mentorship is definitely a facilitating factor. She believed that as an African-American/Black woman, "I have a fiduciary duty to help another woman of color in anyway and as much as I can. Not to cripple her, handicap her or do the work for her, but to kind of guide her." She also believed that these facilitating factors could inspire and incentivize future African-American/Black women to senior and executive-level roles in higher education, in addition to allowing future African-American women see the way women of color work together.

Charity recounted that it has been very helpful to see Black women represented in leadership positions. She has observed meticulously Black women in leadership roles and specifically two previous supervisors who were Black women in vice presidents' roles. She further expressed that she has been encouraged by her mentors, "they motivated and encouraged me to pursue executive level leadership. She recommended similar advice to future African-American/Black women aspiring to pursue senior and executive-level leadership roles to find mentors, support groups, and most significant is to find someone

who can serve as a sponsor. She also suggested to acquire as much experience as possible to prepare for critical roles, volunteer to serve on various committees, volunteer to perform tasks that are outside of the resume or curriculum vitae. Obtain a sponsor at your institution. Charity communicated that acquiring a sponsor who is willing to sponsor you will volunteer you when an opportunity emerges.

Frances recalled the greatest facilitating factors experienced were the following personal qualities. She also recommended to future African-American women similar factors for pursuing senior and executive-level positions.

> One is clarity in one sense of purpose. The why, or why do you want to be a leader and how did that square with your values. … Being grounded in one spirituality. … Another, …two is know who you are independently of the position.

Frances also described other significant facilitating factors "mentors," "networks as supportive colleagues." Thus, in a leadership role faculty members, administrators, and supervisors cannot be your friends. Consequently, having a network of supportive colleagues "you can bounce ideas off regarding how you are doing in a position you are already in, and can facilitate a position in which you are preparing to hold."

Rene Terry responded similarly to Priscilla regarding facilitating factors. Rene Terry believed that "mentors are definitely facilitating factors and not just Black women mentors." She described an approach when seeking mentors:

> You need to have some male mentors; you need to have a couple of White mentors; you need to have a variety of mentors because if you are an African-

> American woman and all your mentors are African-Americans you all come together and you are not listening to a different perspective whether you agree with it or not. You need to hear a different perspective, and if you have a White male that is willing to actually be honest with you, then get some of the secrets and they will tell you the secret.

One of the benefits that have accrued to Rene Terry has been having White male mentors who have told her the secrets. She recounted this experience as awesome and career wide. She acknowledged that she has had a "good time and it is not over! I have been blessed to have people that were willing to invest their time in me; but you have got to be open for that." She opined that these facilitating factors are similar factors that she would recommend to future African-American/Black women aspiring to pursue senior and executive-level positions. She appends other recommendations for future African-American/Black women: "it is about being strategic, do your homework, . . . ensure that you have all the skills for the job, . . . make sure you have the experience, . . . and make sure you are in control of your own professional development and not waiting on someone else."

Veronica approached facilitating factors from a different perspective as was suggested by Michelle who asserted that mentoring would vary according to different perspectives of persons lived experiences. Veronica equated facilitating factors to "the sense of how in which people want to be involved." She believed that many people of color, particularly African-American women want to get involved in the role of senior and executive-level roles to help other people. She believed that the women of color want

their perspectives heard in a manner that it otherwise would not be heard, if they did not have professional and formal leadership roles. She recommended that future African-American/Black women in pursuing senior and executive-level at higher education institution learned what the currency is in the institution where you desire to be. The currency maybe becoming a faculty or a tenured professor or the currency may be administration, if you desire to pursue administration in higher education. Veronica also recounted that future African-American/Black women should know that they "cannot do it by yourself. So, you have to have friends at the university who will share information and who will provide social support.'

Career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women.

Theme 7—career advice advancing to future aspiring African-American women was evidenced in all participants being ardent about helping future generations understand and define their own success.

Michelle indicated that her career experience has assisted in influencing students that she worked with in the past and currently work. She demonstrated many times throughout the interview how she celebrated the students and celebrated herself just in seeing the progression she has made professionally when students are able to observe accomplished work that she has done rather than someone articulating to them that it can be accomplished. She recommended to future aspiring African-American women that they all have different experiences and background and should not compare themselves to someone else because they do not know the other person's story. She suggested that

education is very significant “the participants need to be knowledgeable about their field overall and understand the trends and best practices in higher education.” She explained:

> Do not allow yourselves to get limited to whatever role you are in . . . I think that it is vitally important to serve on many committees that hire faculty and staff as well as serving as advisors to different types of students . . . there are so many things we can learn from our students.

Frances recalled that her career pathway experiences can help other African American women and future aspiring African-American women by finding out what unique talents and abilities they have in their lives and cultivate them. She communicated that aspiring future African-American women should become familiar with their leadership style to enhance it, take advantage of professional development and get tenure. Moreover, she explained further that tenure should be first.

Rene Terry described her leadership experiences that can help future African-American Black women aspiring or pursuing senior and executive-level leadership begin with mentoring. She communicated, “I believe in mentoring, I have been mentored and I have mentored others. Another approach suggested by Rene Terry for advancing future African-American women to senior and executive-level leadership roles is “acculturation rather than assimilation.” She also proposed:

> African-American women should “expand their knowledge so they become well-rounded in various cultures. . . What PWIs are looking for or even it is not a PWIS are well-versed individuals . . . who are open-minded and educators of inclusivity . . . able to have a conversation.

Priscilla recounted that based on her experience she would recommend to future aspiring African-American Black women, “get an education in something interdisciplinary where the thinking isn’t focused on only one point of view. It is really important to be able to see something through many lenses.” Moreover, she recommended having a cadre of mentors. Priscilla’s final recommendation was likened to on the job experience which was beneficial. She affirmed:

> And I recommend working on putting yourself in places where you have to be around angry people; where you have to serve angry people and you have to serve unhappy people [Laughter]. Because if you can figure out how to serve unhappy people then everything else is gravy [Laughter].

Based on Grace’s experience, she recommended to future aspiring African-American/Black women to find their passion something that they are “really interested in and committed to. Higher education is very broad, so, it can be the academic side, it could be student side, or it could be development.” Grace also emphasized:

> I recommend that they dig deep, do whatever they are there to do, and to actually not just concentrate on themselves or even on their roles or their positions, but to really look at the whole universe and try to see the whole picture. I think that they are likely to move up, if they are more connected and sometimes that might be a strategy that might strategically help them to ascend and move.

Monique described how sharing and being truthful are pivotal. She mentioned that it becomes a “little tough when it is current students who are inquiring about how you as a leader, “do what you do?” “how do you stay here?” “Do you like this school?”

According to Monique, these questions make it challenging and sometimes she would like to say, “no, not the school, but the city.” She pushes that aside and consider the aspiring future senior and executive leaders and continue to help the students build and strengthen their “Grit and motivation.” Consequently, she recommended that students who have completed two or more degrees and are employed at higher education institutions or pursuing senior and executive-level leadership positions “show up and be present at meeting and since you are at the meeting and until you are engaged the meeting has not started.” She explained further that aspiring future African-American women “should be knowledgeable in their field . . .people are checking for you to know the information, then you need to know it. Build relationships authentically, . . . an authentic relationship with folks can help you position yourself.

Deborah recommended the approach of “Just go for it! Don’t let anyone tell you not.” She suggested continuing “going for it, for the top, ignore your detractors.” She argued for having a life partner:

> Having a life partner because it matters who your life partner is. Assume that you are the most important thing because as Black women the rest of the world tells us that we are not valuable. So, know that you have value and that is important. Do not be afraid to take the risk; try different things.

Deborah passed on the best advice that was given to her by an African-American male who is an executive leader at a small college:

> You just have to keep applying at higher education. And they like having a pool of candidates and they get to pick one . . .That's perfect too, don't let it get you down just keep going for it.

She said that the African-American male executive leader was a finalist in applications for eight finals before he got one.

Charity recommended for future aspiring African-American women pursuing senior and executive-level leadership roles do not rush to get to the next level so quickly. She recounted and described her advice:

> There is benefit from learning where you are, but do not remain there. Continue to grow and move up the chain but realize that if you are not moving fast enough, then sometimes that means you have a lot to learn where you are. Take your time to learn at whatever level you are at. Get as much education as possible. Try to go beyond your master and get your doctorate because we want to be well equipped so that when we get to these positions . . . people cannot easily tell us no. Go the extra mile and get your doctorate, then that is one less barrier that you have to come up against.

Charity recalled that the "whole reason" that she is in higher education is to be "able to give back and to help the next generation." There is no age limit for what you can and are going to do.

Veronica recommended career advice or strategies for advancing future aspiring African-American ethnic women to senior and executive-level leadership roles:

> Be prepared to move, make certain that you build a network of people that you truly trust at other institutions, observe people who you admire in the way that they interact with people, the way they get things done, and try and learn from them, either tacitly or explicitly.

She expressed that African-American women understand that they "cannot do it by themselves. They need to have friends at the university who will share information, have friends or relationships that you can get actual information, and have friends who will be watching your back.

The study findings suggest that African-American women attributed their advancement to senior and executive-level leadership roles to an inherited legacy of family values and education that began in their homes, morals, spiritual upbringing, faith and self-determination. They described meaning and comprehension connected to the lived long foundation positioned by family who participated in shaping and influencing the African-American women through the church, community and friends. Additionally, the many family and friends' supporters provided African-American women motivation, inspiration through words, actions, finances, morals, advice, encouragement, prayers, and care packages.

Summary

This data analysis led to findings associated to career pathway experiences of African-American women's encounter with barriers and facilitating factors advancing to senior and executive-level leadership at least five years at PWIs. The findings were associated to one primary research question comprised of three components. The first

component related to African-American women career pathway experiences and how their educational preparation began. Although, their career pathway experiences have been different, there were significant similarities in their lived experiences, morals, self-determination, resilience, values, and spiritual beliefs. The three themes associated with this component, revealed that African-American women participants' immediate family, other family members, friends, church family, and community participated in influencing and shaping personal and professional lived experiences of all participants.

The second component was related to African-American women making meaning of their challenges and barrier experiences. The two themes associated with the second component conveyed that African-American women were continuously confronted with challenges and barriers advancing corporate and executive leadership ladders in businesses and academic sectors of employment. The barriers and challenges have forged and contributed to faithfulness, self-determination, and freedom brought to these women. Additionally, the African-American women challenges, and recognized barriers experienced, although tumultuous and sometimes very long, have in ways advanced these women to leadership.

Finally, the third component was related to African-American women making meaning of facilitating factors toward attaining senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. The two themes associated to the third component were associated with African-American women making meaning of facilitating factors advancing to senior and executive-level leadership at PWIs. Majority of the women participants

recollected and recommended mentoring, networking, and role modeling as the greatest facilitating factors that impacted and supported their career lived experiences.

In Chapter 5, I include an analysis and interpretation of these results of these three components and seven themes through the lenses of the literature in Chapter 2 and the conceptual framework CRT theory, BFT and intersectionality of race and gender, the implications, social change, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women in senior and executive-level leadership roles. By utilizing qualitative methodology, I obtained meaning and understanding of how the participants navigated barriers and facilitating factors to attaining leadership roles. Nine African-American women were interviewed utilizing a two-part interviewing process. The participants responded to a semistructured, open-ended questionnaire concerning their career pathway experiences and advancement to senior and executive-level leadership positions at a PWIs. I analyzed the interviewed data using a step-by-step inductive reasoning process.

The key findings of this study emerged from the participants' perspectives about their experiences at their institutions. The research question that guided this study was: How do African-American women describe their career pathway experiences, including barriers and facilitating factors, toward attaining senior and executive-level positions at PWIs? The key findings were presented as three components of the primary research question: (a) Component 1 was African-American women career pathway experiences, (b) Component 2 was African-American women barrier experiences, and (c) Component 3 was African-American women facilitating factors toward attaining senior and executive-level leadership positions.

The findings related to Component 1 highlighted key elements of career pathway experiences of African-American women to attain senior and executive-level leadership roles. These findings indicated that the participants had a resilient support system from

immediate family members (parents, siblings, and grandparents) and other family members (cousins, aunts, uncles, and friends) who were depended on as a prerequisite to navigating challenges and barriers for elevating professionally at PWIs. One participant, Michelle, referred to this type of support system as a "village" that included a networking system and mentors, some of whom were family members. Three of the participants indicated that support systems also included friends. All participants maintained the family support systems, mentoring, and networking experiences were integral to navigating through personal and career pathways.

The participants expressed that during early childhood years, their parents and grandparents etched out quality time to build upon the legacy and foundation that had been formed by previous generations. Furthermore, grandparents and great-grandparents were role models for the career pathway experiences of these women. All participants recollected weekly conversations regarding personal and professional guidance, encouragements, leadership, and profound spiritual faith to cultivate and sustain them in their journey. The conversations were intentional and helped to shape and influence the participants in their journey to leadership positions in higher education. All participants expressed motivation and inspiration to becoming involved in higher education. Seven participants indicated that their motivation for higher education was to have an impact on students and to help bring about social change in their lives. Michelle desired to be the change she wanted to see in others. Another participant, Veronica, yearned to become an academician in higher education and drew upon her family (educators) and networking systems as role models to measure her success.

The findings correlated to Component 2, African-American women barrier experiences, indicated that most participants encountered race and gender challenges in the workplace environment. Seven of the nine women encountered race, gender, and ageism challenges as they advanced to senior and executive-level leadership positions. Only two women did not report encountering race and gender challenges as they elevated to senior and executive-level leadership positions. However, all participants indicated that they were unfavorably treated when they were promoted to higher positions in comparison to European American males, African-American males, and European American females. Lastly, findings related to Component 3, African-American women facilitating factors, suggested that mentors, role models, and networking positively impacted participants ascension to attaining senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs.

The findings for this study were represented by seven themes: family influences on educational preparation, beginning influences to a higher educational career, African-American women career experiences leading to leadership, greatest challenges and barriers experienced, navigating challenges and barriers to success, facilitating factors to success, and career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women. An analysis of responses to the interview questions specified that participants remained connected to the family legacy and foundations of courage, faith, strength, and determination to obtain an excellent education. This journey involved earning undergraduate and graduate degrees, which included doctoral degrees that enabled the participants to apply for leadership positions and other career opportunities. The findings

acknowledged and identified barriers and challenges of racism, genderism, discrimination, and the facilitating factors that senior and executive-level African-American women at PWIs navigated to leadership success. In this chapter, I present the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

I interpreted the findings of this study through the lenses of a combined conceptual framework that included CRT, BFT, and intersectionality of race and gender in order to provide an analysis of the collected data from nine African-American women participants' experiences as senior and executive-level leaders at PWIs. Seven themes emerged from the participants' transcribed and analyzed data of African-American women in Chapters 4 and 5. The organization of this section is comprised of one research question that is compartmentalized into three components pertaining to how African-American women describe their career pathway experiences, barriers, and facilitating factors toward ascending to senior and executive-level positions at PWIs.

Interpretation of Themes Relating to Component 1

The purpose of the research question was to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women and obtain meaning and understanding of how they navigated barriers and facilitating factors to attain senior and executive-level positions at PWIs. The first component was African-American women career pathway experiences. Three themes emerged from this component: family influences on

educational preparation; beginning influences to a higher educational career; and African-American women career experiences leading to leadership.

Family influences on educational preparation. The establishment of the family foundation began in the early childhood years of African-American families. Research indicates that African-American women acknowledged an inherited legacy of familial leadership, a strong and supportive family structure. The participants perceived these factors to be the framework for shaping and influencing their experiences and kept them connected to faith and belief in God. The participants maintained that their faith and belief sustained and fortified their courage and self-confidence to persevere and endure the struggle to succeed in leadership at PWIs.

African-American women described in a study by Davis (2016) related to similar experiences as the African-American women participants in my study who are in senior and executive-level leadership roles. According to Davis, the African-American women were exposed in early childhood to an atmosphere of self-confidence, self-determination, and strength. The family support structure was village strong, had weekly discussions of words of wisdom and knowledge of success to opposition of adversity.

The participants described the experiences of weekly discussions with families explicating the significance of education and how it impacted the lives of African-Americans, liberating and empowering them as a history of Black people in the United States. The participants highlighted overall that African-American women continued to conserve and uphold positive values of how parents, other family members, and friends shaped and influenced their career pathway experiences. The participants explained that

commonly, they received support from all family members, which included grandparents who supplemented parental support, and in some instances, were the primary supporters, while siblings, aunts, and uncles provided secondary support.

The support system, as Davis (2016) indicated, enabled African-American women to conserve and uphold positive values of how parents, other family members, and friends shaped and influenced their career pathway experiences. The participants also detailed salient life lessons learned and embraced words of wisdom, resilience, fortitude, and morals imbued in daily conversations with parents and other family members from early childhood to adulthood. The participants' general knowledge gained and learned from family members regarding personal and professional pathway experiences motivated and influenced an attitude of positivism and sustainability for their career pathways.

Beginning influences to a higher educational career. The beginning influences to a higher educational career for African-American women has been infrequently researched, primarily because of the insufficiency of African-American women in leadership positions at public and private institutions of higher education (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Glover, 2012). African-American women were underrepresented in senior and executive-level leadership positions at institutions of higher education (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Johnson, 2015). Moreover, the focus of these studies was on intersectionality of race and gender and the disparately number of African-American women unheard voices concerning their views and experiences (Cook, 2012; Davis, 2016; Johnson, 2015; Lloyd-Jones, 2009). In my study, the viewpoints of the participants

pointed to inadequate diversity, and the need for more women of color generally, and African-American women, specifically, in leadership positions. Most of the participants were motivated to pursue a higher educational career by the passion to impact students' lives, bring about changes, and by the need to have more African-American women in leadership roles. Two participants expressed how overwhelmingly inspired they were to become leaders in higher education to trailblaze paths for others in their hometowns and communities. Despite the challenges and barriers that the participants observed through their experiences in college and work environment, they obtained knowledge through professional training, earned graduate and post graduate degrees through self-determination, consolation of their faith, and spiritual connection with God.

African-American women career experiences leading to leadership. This theme related to the African-American women career experiences that led to leadership. The participants generally believed that their career experiences leading to leadership were influenced by the systemic challenges inherent in the intersectionality of race and gender, disproportionate underrepresentation of women employed in PWIs, and the scarcity of women of color at the executive level. CRT has been used debatably to defend underrepresentation of African-Americans, and that race still maintains significant power in mediations and settlements of institutions of higher learning (Wolf and Dilworth, 2015).

African-American women who participated in a study by Davis and Maldonado (2015) substantiated the impact of intersectionality of race and gender on their leadership development at PWIs. According to Davis and Maldonado, the research conducted

focused on African-American women leadership employed at smaller corporations in lower-level roles, barriers, and challenges, rather than on facilitating factors advancing them to successful leadership experiences. The women participants in my study detailed accounts of the barriers and challenges experienced in leadership in different types of institutions where employed; and drew upon facilitating factors (ways and approaches) morals, values, rich spiritual belief and faith upbringing from family and friends. The women participants also discovered in their experiences that they had to be strategic in making plans for employment decisions in transitions from the "lowest ranking job" to senior and executive-level leadership. Beckwith et al. (2016) discovered in their study that deliberate plans and choices for employment were very significant for African-American women pursuing professional career pathways. The failure to conceive a plan was a personal responsibility and accountability ultimately affecting the African-American women's ascension to senior and executive leadership positions.

All nine participants believed they were qualified to be in senior and executive-level leadership positions. As high-profile employees, these women sought to understand what other leaders were doing as senior and executive-level leaders. Most participants communicated that race and gender experiences in senior and executive-level leadership roles were challenging. However, when students were able to connect with participants in their leadership roles, participants noticed and acknowledged feeling comfortable because there were not many African-American women in leadership roles or women of color at the PWIs. In other words, the general feeling among the participants was that as a Black woman, it has not been easy, rather, it has been isolating. According to the participants'

experiences of isolation and marginalization, some participants experienced a false sense of self-doubt, but nevertheless felt satisfaction being able to advise vice presidents and presidents when seated at the executive table.

The women participants in this study described their career perspective in senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. They recollected leadership pathway experiences, personally and professionally, that prepared them for their leadership journey in education as early as childhood, through their college years earning undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate degrees. Most participants perceived that it had not been easy for an African-American woman advancing to senior and executive-level leadership roles. As administrators, some participants received support, and some did not received support. All African-American women participants self-identified as Black, African-American, and with multi-ethnic identities. The participants shared different leadership pathways and similarities found in their spirituality, faith, and trust in God that sustained them.

Interpretation of Themes Relating to Component 2

Component 2 was an exploration of barriers African-American women experienced as they ascended to senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. Two key themes emerged regarding African-American women barrier experiences: greatest challenges and barriers experienced, navigating challenges and barriers to success. In leadership roles at PWIs, barriers are opponents of women and disproportionately against African-American women at PWIs (Gardner et al., 2014). The participants' data suggest that the perceived permanency of barriers often becomes challenging and complicated

(Beckwith et al., 2016; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The distinctive and disadvantaged binary experiences of race and gender are the causal features of African-American women different career pathway lived experiences compared to White female counterparts. Despite participants honorable awards, distinctions, and terminal degrees, these women described their continued struggles, multiple discrimination incidents, and their perseverance, resilience, courage and self-motivation to navigate the challenges and barriers to leadership achievement (Cook & Glass, 2014; Howard-Baptiste and Harris, 2014).

Greatest challenges and barriers experienced. In the first theme, participants related some of their greatest challenges and barriers experienced. Barriers were evident significantly in women's career experiences in all business sectors and African-American women's career experiences, specifically (Diehl, 2014; West, 2016). The disparity in women's leadership is a global phenomenon where women have been disproportionately clustered in "lower-level and lower authority leadership positions" (Northouse, 2013, p. 354). These barriers, according to Beckwith et al (2016); and hooks (1989), have been recognized as opponents to women in generally and significant to African-American women. The participants in this study have encountered other barriers.

The African-American women participants described other barriers experienced related to job seeking and the application process. The barriers were associated with applying for jobs in leadership positions only to discover that jobs previously posted had previously been filled. The participant perceived that while they were attempting to complete an application process, the position was no longer available. Consequently, the

participants described this incident as institutional racism associated with education and employment. The participants recounted consistent, continuous barriers and challenges such as age discrimination, racial discrimination, exclusion and genderism. These women pointed out that when they have applied for jobs with excellent credentials and made it to final interview, they were confronted with another excuse or reason for not receiving the position. The participants also explained that higher education institutions claim they cannot find a diverse pool of applicants even when qualified applicants are staring them in the face. Each participant voiced her unique and different experiences that were mostly negative because of the binary identity of race and gender. The study by Beckwith et al (2016) showed that African-American women participants have overall encountered marginalization, discrimination, genderism, and a scant number of career advancement opportunities.

Beckwith et al (2016) demonstrated that women encounter invisible work barriers that include policies written and practiced in the work environment. Societal norms intensify these barriers to prevent African-American women from senior and executive level leadership positions in all organizations. These invisible barriers are termed glass ceilings that are constructed to impact negatively the business sector career opportunities and advancements of women (Beckwith et al., 2016; Giscombe & Jones, 2004). In addition to glass ceilings, concrete ceilings are unique barriers African-American women encountered that cannot be shattered like glass. Instead, concrete barriers are impenetrable and increase challenges to promotions and upward mobility of African-American women in higher education institutions (Beckwith et al., 2016; Giscombe &

Jones, 2004). The participants described encountering barriers and challenges systemically, often dual status – race and gender – that affected their work environment.

Navigating challenges and barriers to success. The second theme of Component 2 relates to how African-American women navigate challenges and barriers to success. The participants conveyed encouraging and some discouraging experiences concerning the challenges they experienced to opportunities in the context of intersectionality of race and gender and its impact on the participants' leadership experiences. All participants considered that navigating these challenges, barriers, and complexities to success was a part of their career pathway experiences at PWIs. When participants were asked about navigating the complexities, challenges, and barriers to success, all participants communicated some similar and some different approaches to how they navigated and dismantled challenges and barriers to success. The participants included these as facilitating factors: have a family and friends support group, a good network of supportive people, and mentors and colleagues who could be contacted when necessary. The participants conveyed encouraging and some discouraging, experiences concerning challenges they experienced to opportunities, the intersectionality of race and gender, and its impact on the participants' leadership experiences. One participant recalled navigating barriers to success by masking her interactions with individuals and by connecting with individuals on a personal level. This navigation strategy made it a lot easier to break down barriers.

The study by Beckwith et al. (2016) found strategic choices to circumnavigate challenges and barriers encountered by African-American women ascending to senior

and executive-level leadership positions. It is significant for professional African-American women to create strategic choices and plans for employment. Thomas (2006) discovered that it is professionally detrimental to African-American women who do not create a career plan to advance in the work place. Simmons's (2009) study also found that the lack of preparation and mapping out plans impacts African-American women in administration. Thomas (2009) recommended five perspectives for African-American women in their leadership administration and the management of their careers: (a)monitoring the progress, successes, and creating adjustments to the plans are beneficial for determining the advantageousness and efficiency, (b) have knowledge of all plans charting out preparation and cost, (c) always be willing to increase learning capacity, learn from other skills, technology, processes, policies and procedures – that will improve affiliations with other departments, (d) African-American women are to take charge and be responsible for their careers, and (e) African-American women should be enthusiastic about effectively displaying abilities and skills by taking on particular projects.

Interpretation of Themes Relating to Component 3

For Component 3, facilitating factors were considered other than mentors and sponsorship that impacted their ascension to senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. Two key themes emerged regarding African-American women facilitating factors toward attaining senior and executive level leadership positions. The themes were facilitating factors to success and career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women.

Facilitating factors. The first theme of Component 3 relate to how facilitating

factors were used to incentivize African-American women to achieve senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. The participants believed that mentors, networking relationships, role models, and sponsors were significant facilitating factors that could influence and inspire African-American women to senior and executive-level leadership roles at PWIs. There had been a scarcity of research conducted on facilitating factors impacting African-American women success attaining senior and executive-level leadership roles at institutions of higher education (Airini et al, 2011; Chen & Hume, 2011; Gamble & Turner, 2015).

Black feminist theory lens was used to determine facilitating factors in career pathways of the participants, such as personal factors, family support, mentoring, and sponsoring. The African-American women participants observed facilitating factors that assisted them for advancing to senior and executive-level positions through the difficult times. Nguyen (2012) suggested that in his study that three of the most frequently mentioned factors for advancement were personal factors, family support structure, and mentor support.

The participants in my study identified personal and professional facilitating factors that advanced them to senior and executive-level leaders at PWIs. Family support, mentors, sponsorship faith, and belief in God are attributes of professional factors that facilitated resilience, confidence, and endurance for African-American women advancing to senior and executive-level leadership statuses at PWIs. The participants voiced faith and belief in God as helping them through navigating barriers and facilitating factors, encouraging and inspiring them in their experiences. Walker's (2009) study concentrated

on one African-American woman's lived experience at a PWIS. The African-American woman gave voice to how God placed the participant in a leadership role and provided the resources for success. Davis (2016) acknowledged that a strong family support structure is comprised of "a strong family, church, and community" and is very significant to African-American women success in senior administration at institutions of higher education.

Grant and Ghee (2015) affirmed that mentorship was a critical element for African-American women at doctoral levels advancing toward professoriate and senior leadership positions. Stewart (2016) found that nine African-American women considered mentors as valuable resources. The participants in this study primarily recollected experiences that encompassed mentoring. Eight out of nine participants recounted that mentors and African-American/Black women leaders were role models who continued to support them during their tenure and advancement to senior and executive leadership roles. The participants also communicated that networking is a viewpoint of a mentoring relationship and it is significant for advancing African-American women to senior and executive-level positions at PWIs. Dominigue (2015) and Gamble and Turner (2015) agreed that networking is a significant factor for encouraging African-American women who aspire to executive administrative levels.

Career advice advancing future aspiring African-American women. The second theme of Component 3 is associated with advice and strategies the participants would provide to future aspiring African-American women. All the participants based on their experiences, recommended career advice and strategies to future aspiring African-

American women for successful attainment to senior and executive-level leadership positions. Some of the strategies included acquiring content knowledge in the field of discipline studied, understanding best practices in higher education, showing up and being present on the job, participating in professional development and leadership training, acquiring tenure, and as much education as possible.

Three Components: Seven Themes

The seven themes found in the three components of the experiences of the nine participants in this study demonstrate the continual need for PWIs to constantly review and revise their support and outreach programs to encourage a wider, more diverse participation among their African-American women professionals. While they have limited control over applicants' and employees' early experiences, the themes associated with challenges, barriers, and facilitation of process all provide suggestions for how to continue to support and retain their African-American women professionals.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to nine African-American women who were senior and executive-level leaders at PWIs, race, gender, and leadership position. Although the purpose of this research was achieved, a small number of limitations occurred. The researcher made a conscious effort to ensure that the potential participants were highly selected through purposive sampling. Merriam (2016) indicated that, unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative investigators do not use statistical procedures to calculate a proper sample size to ensure the generalizability of a study. According to Leedy and Ormrod

(2010), a limitation of a qualitative study is that it cannot be generalized to a larger population because qualitative researchers usually purposively select the sample size.

Another limitation of my study was that qualitative researchers tend to place judgments on the data. In other words, as the researcher, I acknowledge that my approach could be too subjective, not value-free, because of the close and personal contact with participants and the phenomenon under study. Qualitative researchers interpret the data based on prior knowledge, which, according to Merriam (2009), is an ontological interpretation of the information. The idea is that information from the participants cannot be real until the researcher explores the information. Therefore, the researcher interpreted the themes of this basic qualitative design as reality after merging the information with the researcher's previous knowledge about the subject.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research. This research study will add to the body of literature on African-American women career pathway experiences ascending to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. This present study sought to yield voice to nine African-American women participants regarding their experiences with barriers and challenges (underrepresentation, marginalization, and isolation) and facilitating factors at PWIs. They voiced their experiences of disempowerment career pathways, leadership challenges and barriers, and leadership greatest facilitating factors that participants navigated to senior and executive-level leadership. Literature has indicated a scarcity of research conducted on how African-American women employed facilitating factors to navigate successful career pathways to

senior and executive-level leadership roles and concerning leadership development. I am proposing recommendations for social and systemic change to reduce or eliminate the responsibility and accountability placed on the persons who are in the greatest need for support. Therefore, the following recommendations gathered from this study's findings are proposed to be considered:

I recommend establishing formal mentoring programs that could be planned and coordinated by higher education institutions. The programs would be inclusive embracing current African-American women and women of color in senior and executive-level leader positions teamed (mentor and mentee relationship) with future African-American women aspiring to become leaders at PWIs. Provide a diverse set of mentors of race and gender. Current African-American women senior and executive leaders would give voice to empowering others to perform their very best in work environments.

I also recommend, if the means and methods are unavailable to establish a formal mentoring program, establishing an informal mentoring program where African-American women leaders and other women of color leaders would often volunteer mentoring to students because of the need that a student or students might be experiencing. Provide a well diverse set of mentors of race and gender. Women of color at PWIs recognize and identify with the students' journey experiences because they observe and relate their journey experiences to the students. Women of color often volunteer because colleges and universities may not have the means or methods for mentoring formally but will often volunteer informally to provide their expertise to properly guide students.

I recommend that higher education institutions develop and provide professional leadership development opportunities for administrators, specifically inclusive for African-Americans to attend and fully prepare for advancement to senior and executive leadership. Higher education institutes could offer financial assistance, time-off to attend conferences.

I recommend that a well develop and purposive sponsorship program for practice be provided to support current high profile African-American women in senior and executive-level leadership roles and for future African-American women aspiring to advance to senior and executive-level leadership.

I recommend, lastly, that a comparative study be performed of African-American women career experiences in senior and executive-level leadership positions contrasted with European American women career experiences in similar leadership positions at PWIs. This study could also provide comprehensive and rich data regarding the distinctions and resemblances of both groups ascending to senior and executive leadership.

Implications for Social Change

Synthesizing the seven themes and the three components evidenced in the results of this study it is clear that there is an implication for social change. PWIs need to assess their existing diversity programs (mentoring and sponsoring relationships) and equal opportunity programs for African-American women or develop diversity (mentoring and sponsoring relationships) and equal opportunity programs recommended for the women population in general and African-American women specifically. Such an assessment

could provide a basis for instituting changes to increase the level of participation and diversity at the institutions. This information could affect positive social change by fostering open discourse among administrators, African-American women, women of color, women faculty, and staff at PWIs campus venues. This could open opportunities to galvanize and empower African-American women and all women to voice their concerns and requirements. Achievements of positive social change could possibly minimize and eradicate cultural barriers and challenges of social inequities impeding African-American women upward career pathways and embrace and direct improvements rightfully to African-American women and other women of color. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students together have the power to link the chasms generated by archaic policies and practices. The archaic policies and practices established have marginalized and disproportionately underrepresented women in general and African-American women, specifically, in the work environments of organizations and higher education institutions.

The results also revealed viewpoints that participants had about interactions with administrators at various levels, religion, institutional racism, and building camaraderie with European American female counterparts at PWIs. The results of this study showed that there are positive influences to having facilitating factors: a strong support system (family members, friends, church, and community), mentoring and sponsoring programs for African-American women and other women of color specifically, at PWIs and other higher education institutions. The study suggested that each participant would advocate identical facilitating factors of mentoring, sponsoring, and role models for future African-American women aspiring to senior and executive-level leadership roles. Participants

observed that these facilitating factors (strong support systems, mentoring, and networking relationships) would advance them to success in leadership and give them the confidence and support necessary to persevere as they navigate barriers and facilitate factors. The implications of the absence of African-American women at organizations and higher education institutions would be the inability to benefit from diversity policies and practices.

Conclusion

At inception, I was greatly interested in the epistemology of African-American women career pathways to senior and executive-level positions at higher education institutions, specifically PWIs. In this study I explored nine African-American women senior and executive-level leaders and their career pathway experiences related to barriers, challenges, and facilitating factors they encountered advancing to senior and executive-level leadership positions at PWIs. One research question was explored with three components: African-American women career pathway experiences, African-American women barrier experiences, and African-American women facilitating factors they applied advancing to senior and executive-level leadership roles. Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory were purposely selected to provide a framework for contextualizing African-American women's experiences regarding career pathways, barriers and challenges opposing advancement and applying facilitating factors to assist in navigating and dismantling challenges and perspective barriers to senior and executive-level positions at PWIs.

The literature review underscored the idea that African-American women shared their experiences of barriers and challenges of intersectionality of race, racism, genderism, and discrimination. Research also stated that intersectionality of race, gender, and social class is not arranged separately in the daily experiences of African-American women. Rather, race and gender are interconnected and intersected multiple identities. The intersectionality of race, gender, and social class converged and formed an interconnecting system that gave African-American women voices to communicate deeper understanding of social realities of the influence of the combined race and gender effect on African-American women.

African-American women participants found and learned through other African-American women how to navigate, manage and survive their career pathways in courage (Brazzell, 2012). The participants learned that building networking relationships with self-determination, self-reliance, resilience, and faith to continue the journey were facilitating factors that were passed on to the participants in my study to endure, overcome, and uplift themselves and others. The results further indicated that the participants learned from early childhood how to plan, map, and navigate personal and professional pathways guiding them to careers in higher education.

The findings show that the participants experienced barriers and challenges to success but employed facilitating factors that helped them to endure and overcome the struggles and develop as leaders. The findings emphasized the African-American women participants desired to be included and represented proportionately across all disciplines. The findings also emphasized the participants all-encompassing passion was to help

nurture, influence, and uplift students to develop and become leaders they desire for the future and global society.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Guide Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the career pathway experiences of African-American women, including barriers and facilitating factors, toward ascension to executive positions at PWIs.

Section I: Life history

Probing Questions

A. Tell me what thoughts you had as a child about your career as an adult.

B. Please describe your demographic background.

C. What level of post-secondary education have you completed?

D. In what ways would you say your family participated in shaping and influencing your personal educational preparation?

E. What roles did your family and friends play in shaping your ideas about work and career?

G. How did family members participate in your professional career pathways?

Section II: Career Pathways - Professional and Academic Experience

Probing Questions

A. What was your first job after completing each of your degrees? Undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate degrees?

B. How did your career in higher education begin?

C. What inspired or influenced you to a career in higher education?

D. What has it been like for you as an African-American woman in this role?

Section III: Experiences as senior-and executive-level leaders.

Probing Questions

A. What roles have you played in ascending to senior- and executive-level leadership roles?

B. Based on your experiences, what strategies would you suggest for advancing African-American ethnic women to senior- and executive-level leadership roles at higher education or PWIs?

C. What is your perception of how PWIs value African-American women in senior- and executive-level leadership?

Section IV: Facilitating factors and Barriers that African women executives encounter.

Probing Questions

A. Tell me about how you see intersectionality of race and gender affecting the climate of African-American women in senior- and executive-levels at PWIs?

B. What are the greatest barriers to opportunities in reaching senior- and executive-level positions?

C. How have you been able to navigator the complexities and challenges of barriers to success?

D. Describe the greatest facilitating factors that are incentives for African-American women in senior- and executive-level roles.

E. What are the greatest facilitating factors that will inspire and incentivize future African-American women to senior- and executive-level roles?

Section V: Career Learnings and Lessons

Probing Questions

A. How can your career leadership experience help other African-American women aspiring to become senior-executive leaders?

B. What career advice can you recommend to future African-American women aspiring senior- and executive-level positions?