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AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXAMINATION OF JOB SATISFACTION

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AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS

IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

AN EXAMINATION OF JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS

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Despite the increase of African American women on college campuses, African American women leaders in higher education administration in the United States are significantly underrepresented and under-retained. This lack of representation has lasting effects on leadership pipelines and how African American women leaders are perceived and valued in the workplace. A contributing factor to this disparity is job satisfaction experienced by African American women leaders in academia. Using Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Higher Education as theoretical frameworks, this critical narrative study described the experiences of eight African American women in higher education leadership to help us understand how individual experiences in the workplace shape job satisfaction at a doctoral-granting, predominantly White public institution in the northeast United States. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, the study investigated the individual experiences of the participants in their professional positions and the factors that characterized their job satisfaction. The study drew from concepts taken from research on job satisfaction in higher education and the structural and systemic issues affecting African American women leaders who work at postsecondary institutions. The thematic analysis of the data presented participant

perceptions about institutional support, agency, and persistence through a CRT lens. By placing African American women leaders in higher education at the center, the study revealed insights into how institutions can further support members of this underrepresented group.

DEDICATION

I am blessed and honored to present this dissertation. It is a labor of love dedicated to the countless African American women in higher education (past and present) who are leaders, scholars, mentors, role models, colleagues and friends. It is my hope that my hard work gives you voice, celebrates your many contributions to postsecondary education, tells your stories of pain and triumph in the workplace, and encourages all Black women in postsecondary education to preserve. The higher education profession and future generations of students need you.

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of the late Annie (who was an educator) and Artis Chambers, parents who taught me the importance of education as the gateway to a meaningful and purposeful life, and my late brothers Vernon and Marvin Chambers. I thank the Lord God for their love and the time we spent together.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful sisters Marcella and Celeste Chambers for their support and inspiration along the way, especially during my most challenging times in the doctoral process. You are the best sisters that anyone could have.

Finally, I commit this work to Judy Burke-Berhannan and Deborah Britton-Riley, precious friends who encouraged me to bring this message to the world in hope for a better future.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The presence of diverse professionals in higher education contributes to institutional excellence in research, innovation, teaching, and scholarship; supports student retention, persistence, and educational attainment; advances institutional diversity; and promotes a positive campus racial climate (Association for the Study of Higher Education [ASHE-ERIC], 2013; Fincher et al., 2009; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Smith et al., 2004; Wright & Salinas, 2016). Precisely, as higher education leaders at U.S. colleges and universities, African American women presidents, senior officers, academic deans, institutional administrators, and division and department heads are positioned to support the institutions they serve in unique ways (Alexander, 2010; Henry, 2010; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

As educational leaders, African American women bring diverse perspectives, leadership styles, and pedagogies to the academy. They contribute to the enrollment, persistence, and academic goal attainment of diverse students; support their colleagues by offering professional mentoring and sponsorship, which also aids in retaining other African American women in the academy; and provide institutional service that benefits both the academic and external communities. Nevertheless, despite the many contributions that African American women leaders make to their institutions and the growth of student diversity in postsecondary education in general, the number of African American women leaders on college campuses continues to be small and lags White women and men (Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Wallace et al., 2014; West, 2020; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015; Wright & Salinas, 2016). Examining the causes of the

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underrepresentation and the job satisfaction of Black women leaders in academia gives insight into this problem.

The underrepresentation of Black women leaders at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) continues to be a well-known reality in higher education. In 2016, only 1.5% of college presidents were African American women, unchanged since 2011 (American Council of Education [ACE], 2017). In 2018, African American women in higher education held only 6.7% of all executive, administrative, and managerial positions (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2019a), a slight increase from nine years earlier, when African American women made up 5.8% of all professionals in the same job types (NCES, 2010). These alarming statistics on the low percentage of African American women leaders in higher education and their slow employment increase in the past decade are significant and cause for concern. The data suggests that access to the college presidency and other chief officer and senior-level positions in higher education's C-Suite is limited for Black women. Factors contributing to the underrepresentation of African American women leaders in postsecondary education must be examined to understand why this problem continues.

Job satisfaction is essential for higher education institutions looking to keep and increase the number of African American women leaders on their campuses. If PWIs are to increase the presence of Black women on their campuses in general and those who are specifically in leadership positions, they must understand how the workplace experiences of members of this underrepresented group contribute to job satisfaction, retention, and career advancement. Failure to keep African American women leaders is a negative

consequence that costs institutions substantial amounts of money, time, and unutilized talent.

Purpose of the Study

The study was conducted to help us understand what African American women leaders in higher education experience and think about their work environments and job satisfaction. By putting African American women leaders at the center of the study, the researcher captured and analyzed authentic, holistic, and reliable accounts about the everyday work lives of members of this group. The study revealed their multiple realities and unique perspectives to show and interpret factors that shape their perceptions about their workplace experiences.

African American women leaders in higher education are individuals with faculty and non-faculty status in executive, administrative, or managerial positions that require direct management of the institution, a customarily recognized department, or a subdivision thereof (NCES, 2020a). The study explored the work lives of African American women who are administrative leaders at a degree-granting, predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher education located in the northeast United States. Individual accounts of experiences in their work environments, the meanings they derived from those experiences, and how they relate to their job satisfaction were examined. An essential goal of the study was to help African American women leaders in postsecondary education gain agency and the ability to "name their reality" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13) through *counter-storytelling* and using their voices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The study revealed factors that African

American women leaders considered when they thought about job satisfaction on an individual level.

Understanding the considerations that support or hinder job satisfaction called for an appraisal of one's work environment and related experiences. The study examined the personal accounts of African American women in higher education leadership to uncover how they defined job satisfaction, how race and gender characterized their job satisfaction, and the strategies they used to navigate their careers. The extent to which African American women leaders felt that they have or do not have a vital role in the institution's management was critical to the study, as were their experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and unfair treatment. The study used the terms *African American* and *Black* interchangeably, as no distinction is made for ethnicity.

The study built upon what is presently known, filled a significant gap in the literature on job satisfaction and leadership studies, and offered insights that needed to be included in higher education research and leadership studies. The study added to the prior research and contributed insights from African American women leaders in postsecondary education who experienced discrimination and social inequities in their institutions. Their individual workplace experiences and insights provided unique perspectives for scholars and practitioners in higher education to learn from and for institutions to address in order to attract and retain future leaders from this group.

This study aimed to make job satisfaction research more inclusive and further promote the fair and equitable treatment of African American women leaders who are assets to their institutions. The study gave African American women leaders in postsecondary education voice and used their experiential knowledge to expand our

understanding of job satisfaction for members of this group. Through varying voices, the study uncovered different experiences, experiential knowledge, and inclusive perspectives of African American women in educational leadership. The knowledge gained from the study contributed to new perspectives about higher education leadership and informed institutional approaches to supporting current and future African American women in leadership positions. The study also informed efforts to increase their representation and job retention on college campuses.

Theoretical Framework

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Higher Education were the theoretical foundation for the study and facilitated a deep analysis of the workplace narratives of African American women in postsecondary leadership. These theoretical underpinnings provided an understanding of the intersecting identities of race and gender for African American women leaders, elucidated their experiences, and informed ways that institutions can address their needs as higher education professionals (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Figure 1 shows a model that illustrates how BFT and CRT are situated in the theoretical framework of the study. For African American women in educational leadership, the constructs of BFT are at the center of their individual racial and social identity and positionality in the workplace. As the primary constructs of BFT, their racial and gender identity and experiences in the work environment shape job satisfaction for African American women leaders in higher education. CRT in Higher Education provided a framework for understanding how race and gender manifest in academic settings. The study used BFT and CRT to examine how race and gender identity shape job satisfaction for Black women in postsecondary education.

Figure 1

An illustration of the theoretical frameworks for the study
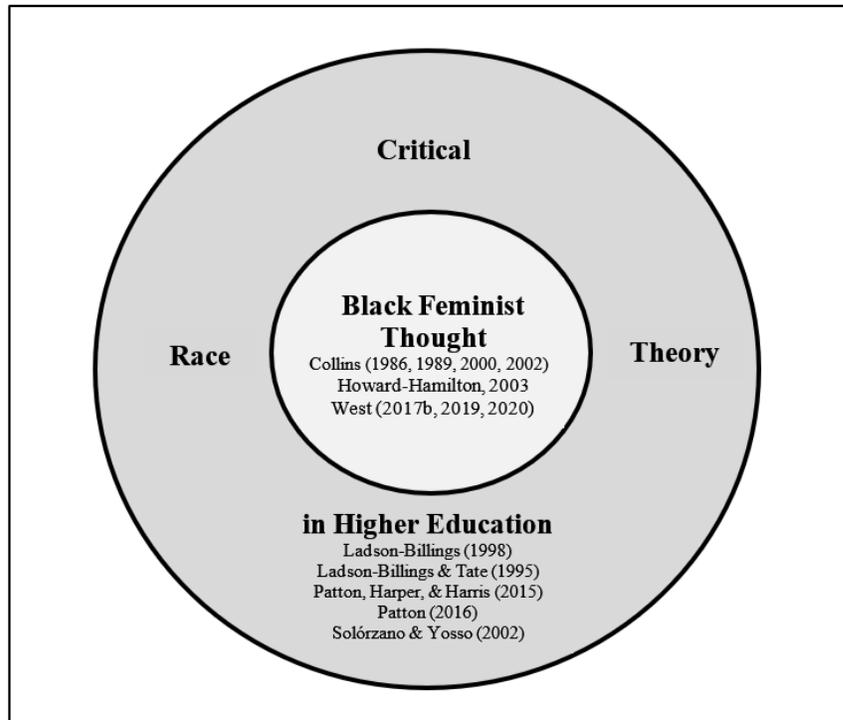
Black Feminist Thought, which emanated from the seminal work of Collins

(1989, 2000) and Crenshaw (1989) and describes the *intersectionality* of race and gender

identities that uniquely characterize African American women. Intersectionality

manifests as racism and sexism, a form of *double oppression* that members of this group

often experience (Davis, 2016; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006;

West, 2017b, 2020). The researcher used BFT to show how perceptions of race and

gender identity are expressed in the work environment and manifested in behaviors and

decisions that affect job satisfaction for Black women leaders. Critical Race Theory in

Higher Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton et al.,

2015; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006) were applied to examine the significance of race

and racism in society in general and the experiences of African American women leaders. In the study, CRT was a tool for analyzing the different narratives collected from the study participants to investigate how the historical legacy of systemic racism in postsecondary education has shaped the workplace experiences and job satisfaction for Black women who are educational leaders. The study employed a social justice perspective to identify institutional changes that are needed to improve job satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

PWIs have yet to make progress in increasing and retaining African American women leaders on their campuses. The low and stagnant number of African American women who are educational leaders and the small number who occupy senior-level positions suggest that institutions do not recruit, keep, and promote Black women into leadership positions. Clearly stated, colleges and universities with small numbers of African American women leaders need to fully commit to promoting workforce diversity, student success, and overall institutional effectiveness. The underrepresentation of African American women leaders at PWIs also hurts the recruitment, retention, and career advancement of members of this group (Gardner et al., 2014; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011).

Although there has been a slight increase in the number of empirical studies on African American women in the academy, more research on this population is needed (Patton, 2009). In their *Special Issue: Women's Status in Higher Education*, ASHE emphasized that "the disparity in the representation of women of color calls for more scholarly attention and strategy development [and that] … more studies are needed to enhance understandings of how to promote parity for women in leadership roles . . ."

(Allan, 2011, p. 120). Due to their racial and gender identities and social class, African American women have an individual yet collective *standpoint* (Collins, 1989) that calls for further research that expands our understanding about their unique experiences. Increased knowledge about how colleges and universities can attract, retain, and increase the representation of African American women leaders is needed to achieve greater diversity within the leadership of higher education institutions.

The study added to the limited number of job satisfaction studies conducted on African American women leaders in academia and centered them in higher education discourse. Specifically, the examination of job satisfaction for this underrepresented population gave insights into workplace experiences and recommended ways colleges and universities can increase and keep Black women leaders.

Connection with Social Justice and Vincentian Mission in Education

Social justice is at the core of the study, which underscored the need for institutional change and transformation that supports diversity and inclusion, professional success, and career advancement for African American women leaders in higher education. Listening to their voices and investigating their work lives allowed for Black women leaders to be included in the discourse and created room to advocate for greater institutional intentionality for supporting their role in higher education decision-making, management, and policy development. A social justice perspective also demands that the knowledge, skills, abilities, and diverse perspectives that African American women leaders bring to postsecondary education be fully recognized and used.

In the tradition of St. Vincent de Paul, the mission of St. John's University is "to provide service to all, with emphasis given to those who lack economic, physical, or

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social advantages" (St. John's University, 2021, Our Mission, para. 3). The study is aligned with St. John University's commitment to searching out causes of poverty and social injustice and encouraging adaptable, practical, and concrete solutions. The conducted research was designed to generate discourse and later action that values and uses African American women leaders' knowledge, skills, and unique abilities in higher education leadership. The conducted research was part of a broader social justice agenda that recognized and cultivates the talents of African American women leaders and empowers them to shape the future direction of postsecondary education.

Research Design and Research Questions

The researcher's goal was to provide rich, thick descriptions obtained from the personal stories of each participant of the study, as they described their work lives and constructed meaning from their daily experiences on their job. A critical narrative inquiry approach was used to understand the workplace experiences of African American women leaders in higher education and their job satisfaction. Critical narrative inquiry is a qualitative method that qualitative researchers use to think narratively and make inquiries about the experiences of a group of people (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher of the present study also used this method to construct common meaning from several individuals' experiences (Creswell, 2014). The use of critical narrative inquiry included a reflexivity process, during which the researcher constantly reflected on how much they affect their research and findings (Creswell, 2014). Self-reflection was critical to the data collection process and was an important part of the research design.

Through critical reflection, the researcher of this study engaged in an alternative way of knowing by collaborating with the narrative, yet not allowing themselves to be in

the center. This approach helped the researcher understand the nuances of each participants' experiences.

The study investigated what African American women leaders in higher education think about their work environments and job satisfaction. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do African American women leaders in higher education define job satisfaction?

    a. What factors contribute to job satisfaction for African American women leaders in higher education?

2. How do race and gender identity characterize the perceptions of the leadership roles of African American women administrators in higher education?

3. How do African American women leaders who lack job satisfaction cope with this reality?

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are provided to give clarity to their use throughout the study:

African American or Black Women. A North American woman of African descent is also called a Black woman (Davis, 1981). The study used the terms *African American women* and *Black women* interchangeably, as no distinction is made for ethnicity.

Ambiguous Empowerment. First coined by Chase (1995), this term is used in the present study to describe the contradictory experiences of Black women leaders who experience situations that limit their authority due to racial and gender discrimination and inequalities (Turner, 2002).

Code-Switching. Code-switching refers to adjusting one's style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities (McCluney et al., 2019).

Detachment coping mechanism. An effort to eliminate or reduce racial microaggressions by detachment behaviors as a mechanism for coping with their existence (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016).

Dynamic Diversity. A term used to describe "interactions within a particular context and under appropriate environmental conditions that are needed to realize the educational benefits of diversity. Dynamic diversity is not a generalizable number and appropriately emphasizes the context-dependent nature of the notion of critical mass" (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014, p. 116).

Faculty. In higher education, faculty include professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, assisting professors, adjunct professors, and interim professors. In the present study, faculty leaders hold formal leadership positions and faculty status, including academic department and program chairs, directors, and senior-level academic positions such as dean, assistant/associate provost, and academic vice president/provost. (NCES, 2020a)

Faculty or Non-Faculty/Administrators of Color. Individuals of faculty or non-faculty/administrator status who identify as African American/Black, Asian American/Asian Pacific Islander, Latinx/Hispanic American, or Native American/Indigenous.

Gender. In the historical research and throughout the study, gender is a binary term to describe men and women or males and females.

Identity Politics. This term is used "to describe any mobilization related to politics, culture, and identity, scholarly analyses, [including] …normative political evaluations of identity politics as a political practice with sociological analyses of the relationship between identity and politics" (Bernstein, 2005, p. 48).

Imposter Syndrome. A phenomenon that describes women who feel like academic or professional frauds, despite their elevated level of achievement and recognition. They consider themselves to be "impostors" and do not experience an internal sense of success based upon a strong belief that they are not intelligent; in fact, they are convinced that they have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241).

Job Satisfaction. In the present study, job satisfaction is an individual's feelings about his or her job situation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and the positive emotional response to a job situation resulting from attaining what the employee wants and values from the job (Busch, Fallan, & Pettersen, 1998).

Leader (Executive, Administrative, and Managerial). A person whose assignments require direct management of the institution, a customarily recognized department, or subdivision thereof. Standard job titles in this category include president/chancellor, chief academic officer/provost/vice provost, chief diversity officer, senior vice president/vice president, dean/associate dean/assistant dean, registrar, bursar, department chair, director. Some institutional leaders also have faculty status due to their academic appointments for instruction, research, and public service (NCES, 2020a).

LGBTQIA+ Persons. LGBTQIA is an inclusive term that stands for individuals who identify lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity), intersex, and asexual/aromantic/agender (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). For the

purpose of this study, LGBTQIA+ is a term that represents individuals whose sexual identities are other than lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity), intersex, and asexual/aromantic/agender.

Marginalization. "Any issue, situation, or circumstance that has placed [African American] women outside of the flow of power and influence within their institutions" (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 83).

Mentoring. The process for providing a career function(s) by which an individual with more professional experience (the mentor) helps advance the career of someone with less experience (the mentee or protégé) (Burke & Carter, 2017). Mentoring may include coaching, instruction about organizational culture, and sponsorship of professional development activities for the mentee.

Microaggressions. "Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

Networking. "The application of one's skills and available resources to cultivate relationships with individuals and group as a means to professional and personal advancement" (Burke & Carter, 2015, p. 142).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI) of Higher Education. For the purpose of the study, "predominantly White institution" is a college or university where White students outnumber any other *single* racial/ethnic group of non-White students.

Professional Employee. An employee who engages in work that is primarily intellectual and varied.

Racial Battle Fatigue. The encompassing "physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain exacted on racially marginalized and stigmatized groups and the amount of energy they expend coping with and fighting against racism" (Smith, 2008, p. 617).

Social Capital. The totality of resources within a social structure, accessibility to those resources, and their use by individuals for purposive actions (Lin, 1999).

White. A group of people of European origin or descent.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the research on job satisfaction for African American women in higher education who are in faculty and non-faculty leadership positions at PWIs. Little research has been conducted on the workplace experiences of Black women who are educational leaders and job satisfaction. Therefore, prior research on factors that influenced job satisfaction for African American women, regardless their position and rank in the academy, informed the present study. Prior research on factors that contributed to job satisfaction for members of this group were examined. A review of the literature on the coping strategies that Black women leaders used to manage the challenges they experienced and approaches that aided in their survival in academia provided an understanding of how Black women in educational leadership persist and address workplace challenges.

This chapter begins with a detailed discussion of the study's theoretical framework, which was introduced in Chapter One. The chapter ends with a discussion of the research gaps that the study addressed. Later chapters described the research methods and procedures used in the study, and its findings and implications.

Theoretical Framework

The prior research on the experiences of African American women who worked at PWIs used Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education (CRT) as theoretical underpinnings. These frameworks were foundational to the present study.

Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist Thought, which emanated from the ground-breaking scholarship of Collins (1989, 2000) and Crenshaw (1989) and described the *intersectionality* of race and gender identities that uniquely characterizes African American women. Intersectionality manifests as racism and sexism, a form of *double oppression* that members of this group often experience (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2016; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006; West, 2017b, 2020). BFT has three main themes (Collins, 2002), which Howard-Hamilton (2003) further described:

1. The framework is shaped and produced by the experiences black women have encountered in their lives, even though others have documented their stories.

2. Although the stories and experiences of each woman are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among black women.

3. Although commonalities do exist among black women, the diversity of class, religion, age, and sexual orientation of black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood. (p. 21)

BFT emphasized that the role of "Black female intellectuals is to produce facts and theories about the Black female experience that will clarify a Black woman's *standpoint* [my emphasis] for Black women" (Collins, 2002, p. 468).

Collins (1986) also described the marginalized and isolated status of African American women in various academic and professional settings as "*outsider-within*" (p. S14). Expanding upon this, Howard-Hamilton (2003) observed that African American women in higher education

> ". . . have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when

dialogue commences. A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American women and the dominant group" (p. 21).

The unique standpoint and outsider-within positions are personal identity categories African American women have that call for group members to be self-defining, self-valuating, self-reliant, and self-empowering (Collins, 1986, 1999, 2002). Notable Black feminist scholars have maintained that these qualities are necessary to confront race, gender, and class oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 2015; West, 2017b, 2019b, 2020). In the present study, BFT emphasized that knowledge about what it means to be an African American women leader in postsecondary education can only be described and authorized by other African American women. This place of legitimacy created a unique social and cultural standpoint for Black women leaders that required that their authentic voices be heard and that individual actions and systems of power that promote racism and sexism are addressed.

Subsequent higher education research has confirmed the outsider-within status for African American women leaders in academia and expanded our understanding of their experiences (Alexander, 2010; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; West, 2017b, 2019b). As a theoretical construct, BFT explained how the outsider-within position prevents African American women leaders from gaining full access to the levels of power and decision-making that their non-Black colleagues have. BFT also revealed that due to their outsider-within status, members of this group developed forms of resistance to institutional hegemony and ways to cope with resulting inequities in their workplaces (West, 2020). Understanding this distinction for African American women in

educational leadership underscores their unique experiences as an underrepresented group.

From a social justice perspective, the present study on African American women in educational leadership and job satisfaction called for an examination of the obstacles and barriers to their full participation in the academy and career advancement as higher education professionals. BFT emphasized self-definition and self-determinism as critical to the liberation of Black women that, within the context of the study, is a means to transform colleges and universities into institutions where African American women leaders are treated equitably and justly as contributors to the educational mission.

As a theoretical framework for the study, BFT helped us understand how Black women leaders in postsecondary education define themselves, their positionality in the academy, their contributions to higher education, and their unique role in transforming colleges and universities into equitable and just communities.

Critical Race Theory in Higher Education

Initially introduced in the legal profession in the 1970s by Derrick Bell and further developed by Delgado (1987), Harris (1993), Lawrence (1995), Matsuda et al. (1993), and Crenshaw et al. (1995), Critical Race Theory (CRT) remains a significant factor in society in general and education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) posited that CRT should "build on and expand beyond the scholarship found in the critical race legal literature" (p. 268).

Patton (2016) framed the pivotal work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) to examine the tenets of CRT within the context of higher education. Patton's (2016) position is that "Critical Race Theory can and should be used as an epistemological lens

for studying and transforming higher education as part of a larger social justice agenda" (p. 335). According to Patton (2016), CRT explained the permanence of racism in postsecondary institutions, including PWIs historically rooted in centuries of slavery of African American/Black and Indigenous people that today's colleges and universities have financially benefited from.

Patton (2016) also asserted that "the functioning of U.S. higher education is intricately linked to imperialistic and capitalistic efforts that fuel the intersections of race, property, and oppression" (p. 317). In CRT, *property* is defined as a person's legal right (Harris, 1993). CRT scholars have pointed to the history of the U.S. legal system for "constructing Whiteness as property and validated those with White skin as full citizens, while granting them–namely, White men−the right to own land" (Patton, 2016, p. 320). As a theoretical construct of CRT, Whiteness is a property that legitimizes those who possess it, promotes privilege, and carries an expectation of entitlement.

The application of CRT explained how "U.S. higher education institutions serve as venues through which formal knowledge rooted in racism/White supremacy is generated" (Patton, 2016, p. 321). As the primary source of knowledge production, which is decided and "owned" by the faculty members of the dominant culture, postsecondary institutions engage in research and pedagogy across academic disciplines that are not racially inclusive. In many instances, the scholarly work on race and gender by African American women researchers and institutional leaders is not regarded as central to advancing knowledge.

As a theoretical framework for the study, CRT presented a contextual and historical analysis that showed that African American women leaders at PWIs often

contend with the historical legacy of the impact of slavery. The negative manifestations in everyday academic life and institutional complicity maintained a status quo that perpetuated inequities and injustices. In CRT, the construct of property suggested that, although they are members of the academy, African American women leaders were not considered as individuals who had the rights of full citizenship that their non-Black colleagues possess. CRT showed how the intersection of race and property rights created a state of oppression that denies Black women in academic leadership access to levels of power and decision-making that influenced institutional policies and practices that address inequities and shape the future of higher education.

When applied to the present study, CRT allowed for the counterstories produced by Black women leaders in higher education to be a means for them to gain agency and the ability to "name their reality" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13). Through counter-storytelling and by using their voices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), the participants in the study counteracted or challenged mainstream discourse from which they have been historically excluded. Their narratives described valuable experiential knowledge (Matsuda et al., 1993) and gave different perspectives from the dominant viewpoints that have become normalized in the academy. The counterstories provided by the participants informed research and served as a point of advocacy to aid in addressing workplace concerns for the improvement of job satisfaction.

In CRT research, the use of voice by scholars of color was often deemed problematic by the academy, described by some researchers as a form of *epistemological racism* that puts the scholarship of faculty of color in the margins when the focus was on race and ethnicity (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Dixson & Rosseau, 2005). In

the present study, CRT was used as a theoretical construct to not only illuminate the inequities that African American women leaders contend with, but also to legitimize their voices and "truths," and validate their lived experiences at work by centering their stories in the research and legitimizing their scholarship.

The application of CRT to the study promoted inclusivity while acknowledging the harmful effects of racism in the academy on African American women leaders and their resiliency amid oppression. An analysis of the narrated experiences of African American women leaders and the quality of their work lives from a CRT perspective uncovered the challenges in their daily existence and the coping strategies they have developed to survive and progress in their careers.

Review of Related Literature

Most researchers and scholars on African American women leaders in postsecondary education have applied Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education as theoretical foundations for their studies. Due to the scarcity of available research on job satisfaction for African American women in higher education leadership, analogous studies that date from 2000 on Black women in postsecondary education are presented. The following overarching themes categorize the prior research and are discussed in this chapter:

- intersectionality of race and gender

- underrepresentation and under-retention

- marginality, microaggressions, and social isolation

- limited mentoring, networking, and leadership development

- career stagnation and job turnover

- resistance and coping strategies

Additional themes from studies specific to African American women in faculty leadership include tenure and promotion, ambiguous empowerment, institutional climate, under-resourced, and salaries (Turner, 2002).

A search of peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles on job satisfaction for African American women leaders in higher education, published from 2011 to 2021, were accessed from computerized databases typically used by social science researchers, including EBSCOhost (multiple social sciences and education databases), ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), and JSTOR. Additional resources used for the search included Google Scholar and the academic journal databases of reputable publishers of higher education research (e.g., Taylor & Francis, Sage, and Emerald). The key terms used in the searches were *job satisfaction, African American/Black women, leader(s), faculty, faculty of color, administrators, higher education, postsecondary education, underrepresentation, race, gender, intersectionality, mentoring, networking, coping strategies, Black Feminist Thought, and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education.* Each resulting journal article was carefully considered for inclusion in the literature review according to its purposefulness, thoroughness, and relevance to the topic under study (Boote & Beile, 2005). The ground-breaking studies that were most notable are discussed below.

Early Studies on African American Women in Higher Education

Black women have had a presence in U.S. education since the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877) that followed the Civil War (1861-1865). Yet, most Black women pioneers of American education, such as Catherine Ferguson, Lucy Ann Stanton, Mary Jane

Patterson, Julia Anna Cooper, Fanny Jackson Coppin, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida B. Wells, remain in the margins of American history, with little known research on their experiences as educators and academic leaders. One hundred years after the Civil War, a few studies were conducted on Black people in education. Earlier researchers regarded Black faculty and administrators as a monolith or focused solely on Black male educators (Andrulis et al., 1975; Moss, 1958; Smith, 1980). The studies did not examine the distinct characteristics of Black educators that resulted from their gender differences. Although Black women have been present in academia for over 150 years, a literature search revealed that only one study on this group was conducted before the 1970s. It is suggested that higher education scholars had not sufficiently studied the experiences of African American women leaders in the academy.

The first known study on Black women students and administrators in higher education was from historically Black colleges and universities (Slowe, 1933), since laws prohibited racial integration at PWIs. Slowe's (1933) groundbreaking research revealed the limited academic development and social opportunities that Black female students and administrators alike had, due to conservative viewpoints and societal expectations that Black women in academia only pursue teaching as a profession. Slowe (1993) found that "few women achieve administrative positions in co-educational colleges, consequently, little stimulus comes to women students from outstanding examples of women who have achieved high rank in their institutions" (p. 357). This discovery suggested that Black women administrators did not benefit from support and professional mentoring provided by role models and other high-ranking Black women at their

institutions. Role models who looked like them did not occupy top-level positions at the institutions where they worked.

Fifty years later, Moses (1980) and Mosley (1980) conducted two of the first empirical studies on Black women administrators at PWIs. Moses' (1980) comprehensive report for the American Association of Colleges (currently the American Association of Colleges & Universities) was derived from climate studies on the experiences and needs of Black women students, faculty, and administrators at both PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities. Narratives from interviews conducted with the Black faculty women and administrators who took part in the study revealed the following salient themes unique to the experiences of Black women in academia (Moses, 1980):

- chilly and unwelcoming work environment

- racism and sexism, a double discrimination

- being the only, the other, or viewed outsider

- tokenism and assumed expertise on Blacks

- devaluation of intellectual ability and presumed professional incompetence

- superficial treatment in terms of one's sexuality and being sexually harassed

- lack of respect and validation from colleagues

- exclusion from collaborative research, less access to research opportunities, and the lack of academic sponsorship

- expectations of high institutional service contributions. which interfered with time spent on preparing for tenure

Despite these negative experiences, the research showed that Black women in academia, including those in leadership roles, enjoyed their jobs but were challenged to

find ways to survive in unwelcoming work environments where "they [did] not perceive themselves and their concerns as integrated into the missions, goals, and social structures of college campuses" (Moses, 1980, p. 22). Mosely's (1980) research concluded that

> "Black women administrators at PWIs are, for the most part, invisible beings who are socially at the bottom and isolated, having limited academic opportunities, little psychological support in the workplace, and "no one with whom to share experiences or with whom to identify. . .. She is an alien in a promised land, obscure, unwelcome, and unwanted" (pp. 306-307).

Like Moses' (1980) work, Mosely's (1980) study confirmed that most Black women administrators experienced tokenism in their positions and had no authority to create or change institutional policies. As a result, the women lacked self-identity as members of the academy. They did not experience the stages of professional development needed to ascend to positions where they would be responsible for making decisions that shaped the future of their institutions. Despite these experiences, the study participants "saw themselves as democratic, assertive, and aggressive leaders [and change makers], not as mere followers. Their role models were Black activist women, including Barbara Jordan, Shirley Chisholm, Mary McCleod Bethune, and Angela Davis" (Mosley, 1980, p. 305).

In 1989, Williams added to the literature on Black women college administrators at PWIs by administering a quantitative study to Black women leaders employed by the City University of New York (CUNY), the fourth-largest university system in the U. S. by enrollment. Like the women of Mosley's (1980) study, the participants in Williams' (1989) inquiry were concerned about salary inequities and uncertain about their pathways to higher-level positions. Although the women perceived that most of their decisions were accepted by their supervisors and received a degree of recognition for their ideas,

many expressed feelings of being excluded from their administrative team and support networks (Williams, 1989). Most also expressed that "the Black female administrators must work twice as hard as her male counterpart" (Williams, 1989, p. 105). Over half of the respondents did not have a mentor.

Williams (1989) uncovered essential insights about the experiences of Black women in higher education. These Black women professionals felt obligated to succeed in the male-dominated area of college administration, and cited racism and sexism as barriers. They indicated an obligation to encourage other Black women to earn a college degree and take on mentoring roles (Williams, 1989). Despite the challenges that the study showed that Black women administrators encountered, the researcher of the study recommended that more Black women consider working in higher education administration at CUNY and other PWIs.

Almost ten years after Williams' (1989) study, Benjamin (1997) published *African American Women in the Academy: Promises and Perils,* a book of 33 essays by Black women administrators. The essays are authentic detailed accounts of the work lives of Black women professionals. Their writings provided epistemological and ontological perspectives based upon their cultural orientations with racism and sexism and confirmed the challenges and barriers uncovered in earlier studies: stereotypes, loneliness and isolation, and tokenism. The contributions made by the women who contributed to Benjamin's (1997) book gave pointed insights into areas that Black women at all levels of educational leadership must be aware of and learn to navigate: organizational culture, communication styles, building professional networks and external support, pay equity, the salience of gender or race, institutional economic environment, and coping

mechanisms. By centering African American women in higher education discourse, Benjamin's (1997) compilation gave presence and voice to Black women who were historically marginalized and isolated from the mainstream of higher education.

The contributions made by Slowe (1993), Moses (1980), Mosley (1980), Williams (1989), and Benjamin (1997) are foundational for investigating and understanding the workplace experiences and social status of African American women in leadership positions in higher education. The findings of the research conducted by these early researchers helped shape the present study and provided context to the historical significance of the contributions to postsecondary education made by Black women in the academy.

Prior Job Satisfaction Studies on African American Women Leaders in Higher Education

Job satisfaction is a complex concept that has its origins in management and psychology. For the present study, a classic definition of job satisfaction was used. *Job satisfaction* is defined as an individual's feelings about his or her job situation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and the positive emotional response to a job situation resulting from attaining what the employee wants and values from the job (Busch, Fallan, & Pettersen, 1998). Research on job satisfaction evolved from quantitative investigations about job performance (Fisher & Hannah, 1931; Kornhauser & Sharp, 1932; Likert, 1932), followed by studies on job attitudes in industrial and organizational psychology (Herzberg et al., 1959; Locke, 1976; Vroom, 1964). Race and gender as characteristics of job satisfaction were not examined in the early research, which solely focused on White males as workers and managers.

Most job satisfaction studies on administrators in U. S. higher education were conducted within the last 20 years, mainly as empirical analyses in the form of questionnaires and surveys that did not make a distinction for African American women leaders as a demographic (Bilimoria et al., 2006; Harris et al., 2016, Hermsen & Rosser, 2008; Morris & Laipple, 2015; Rosser, 2004; Smerek & Peterson, 2007; Volkwein & Zhou, 2003). The first study on Black women professionals who worked in higher education and job satisfaction was conducted by Steward in 1987. In this ground-breaking quantitative investigation, 30 Black doctoral-level professional women at a PWIs responded to two questionnaires that measured how they interacted with and felt about their colleagues. Steward (1987) sought to identify their interpersonal interactions and how they responded to their colleagues as an indication of their job satisfaction. The research found that the participants experienced higher levels of job satisfaction when they exercised caution with approaching colleagues, had a social support network, and had high self-confidence and need little affection from others (Steward, 1987).

In 2016, another quantitative study on job satisfaction for African American educators in higher education and K-12, conducted by DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby, showed that racial microaggressions negatively affected their job satisfaction and promoted *detachment coping mechanism*s in response to racism in the workplace. Detachment coping forced African Americans to ignore race in the workplace. As a coping strategy, "strongly associated with less job satisfaction, this most likely relegates the racist experiences of People of Color as nonexistent, thus allowing their White colleagues to continue their racist behaviors and remaining color blind while ignoring its effects" (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016, p. 406).

Relationship Between Prior Research and Present Study

A search for literature on job satisfaction specific to African American women leaders in higher education administration resulted in no known studies. However, there exists one known quantitative study on Black professional women in postsecondary education and job satisfaction, administered by Steward in 1987. For the study, fifteen of the 30 Black doctoral-level professional women at various institutions throughout the United States responded to two questionnaires that measured how they interacted with and felt about their colleagues in general. The study found that the Black women professionals experienced higher levels of job satisfaction when they exercised caution with approaching colleagues, had a social support network, and had high self-confidence and need little affection from others (Steward, 1987). These findings offered valuable insights that were considerations for informing the present study.

Related research on the work lives of African American women in academia has been conducted (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Henry, 2010; Mena, 2016; Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Patton, 2009). These earlier studies revealed that Black women in postsecondary education encountered challenges and barriers to their leadership roles and career advancement due to racism and sexism in the academy. The present study suggested that the obstacles that African American women experience in educational leadership contributed to their lack of job satisfaction. Therefore, earlier research on factors that characterize job satisfaction was also considered.

Research on Factors that Characterize Job Satisfaction

The extant literature on African American women in academic leadership at PWIs examined the following factors that shaped job satisfaction for this population:

- the intersectionality of race and gender

- underrepresentation and under-retention

- marginality, microaggressions, and social isolation

- limited mentoring, networking, and professional development

- career stagnation and job turnover

Prior research on the strategies that Black women leaders used to address and withstand the challenges and obstacles they encountered also is discussed.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender. Race and gender are intertwined and inseparable for Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). The resulting racial and gender bias and discrimination they experience form a double oppression (Collins, 1989; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006; West, 2017b, 2019a). The compounded oppression manifests as unfair treatment and exclusion from critical decision-making for members of this group. African American women at PWIs, including those in leadership positions, frequently experienced stereotyping, microaggressions, tokenism, discrimination, and other barriers to institutional leadership, primarily because of their racial and gender identities (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Mena, 2016; Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006, Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2011).

As a result of having to contend with race and gender bias in their work lives, African American women leaders experienced microaggressions (Mena, 2016; Mena &

Vaccaro, 2017). Campus invisibility, disciplinary/professional invisibility, and community invisibility are specific types of environmental microaggressions. The microaggressions created contexts for multiple marginalities that Black women at PWIs experienced due to their race and gender (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017). The researchers also found that Black women in academia experienced interpersonal invisibility in the form of professional and leadership invisibility.

A qualitative study by Turner, González, and Wong (2011) revealed that White male academics challenged the existence of Black women at PWIs. The Black women felt isolated and under-respected by their White colleagues. The Black women also shared that they experienced the salience of race over gender by White colleagues, were under-employed and overused by their departments and institutions, challenged by students, and found themselves torn between their family, community, and career. These obstacles impeded the professional progress that the Black women strived to make as institutional leaders and hindered the potential for their ascension to senior-level positions, despite their leadership abilities (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). In earlier research, Turner (2002) underscored that African American women in academia were assumed by their non-Black colleagues to be intellectually inferior and professionally incompetent, a viewpoint that created additional obstacles.

Although race and gender are personal characteristics that shape the identities of Black women leaders, members of this group had mixed perspectives on how race or gender influence their leadership. Another qualitative study on African American women higher education administrators found that while being an African American woman in a leadership position is a source of pride, it comes with assigned race- and gender-based

expectations from non-Black colleagues (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007). Participants of the study did not let their racial or gender status determine how they conducted themselves at work but added that "[they] needed to work harder than White professionals to be recognized as successful leaders" (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007, p.132).

Underrepresentation and Under-retention. The problem of underrepresentation was well-documented throughout the literature (Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Henry & Glenn, 2009, 2010; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 1999; West, 2018; Wright & Salinas, 2016). Understanding the impact of underrepresentation or the lack of representation for African American women leaders in academia is essential. Turner (2002) referred to Kanter's (1977) theory of proportion to explain the characteristics of the social interactions of those who are a minority within an organization, which in the study are PWIs where the number of Black women leaders was small.

The underrepresentation of African American women in educational leadership and lack of dynamic diversity (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014) or critical mass created work environments where they were viewed and treated by their non-Black colleagues as *tokens*, a term coined by Kanter (1977). Turner (2002) stressed that, as numerical tokens, African American women at PWIs experienced a cumulative disadvantage characterized by the following:

- being more visible and on display
- feeling more pressure to conform, to make fewer mistakes
- becoming socially invisible, not to stand out
- finding it harder to gain credibility

- being more isolated and peripheral

- being more likely to be excluded from informal peer networks, having limited sources of power through alliances

- having fewer opportunities to be sponsored

- facing misperceptions of their identity and role in the organization

- being stereotyped

- facing more personal stress (Turner, 2002, p. 76)

West (2015) further explained that "underrepresentation can be conceptualized as both the physical experience of existing within a group where members of your cultural group are disproportionately fewer in number than individuals from the other cultural groups present, *and* the psychological strain that is a consequence of this disproportion" (p. 115). This reality magnified the isolation that Black women in the academy experienced daily.

Although some African American women in higher education have obtained executive and senior-level positions, progress has been slow. The under-retention of Black women in postsecondary leadership is a complex issue that has not been thoroughly studied. Little is empirically known about how underrepresentation affects under-retention for members of this group. A recent qualitative phenomenological study on experiences related to the retention of Black women administrators at PWIs proclaimed that their racial, gender, and cultural identities, microaggressions in the workplace, and *identity politics* have impacted their retention as institutional leaders (Townsend, 2020).

Prior research on the recruitment, retention, and promotion of African American women in educational leadership emphasized the need for institutions, including PWIs, to

develop and implement multiple strategies to attract, hire, retain, and promote members of this group (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Turner et al., 2011). The present study suggested ways that institutions can address this ongoing concern.

Marginalization, Microaggressions, and Social Isolation. Due to their underrepresentation and racial and gender bias and discrimination, African American women in leadership positions at PWIs experienced multiple marginalities and ambiguous empowerment (Chase, 1995), a term Turner (2002) applied to describe the contradictory experiences of Black women leaders who are confronted with situations that limit their authority due to racial and gender discrimination and inequalities. Due to their position as a numerical minority with outsider-within status (Collins, 1986), the marginalization that Black women experienced is intensified. The marginalization manifests as racial microaggressions expressed as forms of invisibility (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017). A critical ethnographic study on women of color at PWIs—including Black women leaders—showed that Black women in academia experienced invisibility as a form of oppression in multiple contexts (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017). Invisibility reinforced their feelings of marginalization, social isolation, and loneliness (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017). Furthermore, it creates a psychological burden that Black women are forced to carry, despite their efforts to 'fit in' with their non-Black colleagues (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; West, 2015).

The seminal research of Sue et al. (2007) explored the characteristics of racial and gender microaggressions, which are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile,

derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (p. 273). The extant research on Black women administrators in higher education was replete with accounts of microaggressions, microinsults, and microinvalidations regularly experienced by members of this group.

More specifically, it has been found that African American women experienced five forms of invisibility: three are forms of environmental microaggressions as campus, disciplinary/professional, and community invisibility, and two are forms of interpersonal microaggressions as professional and leadership invisibility (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017). Despite their senior title, their study participants who were in senior-level academic and administrative positions felt that their status was dismissed or invisible to other colleagues and that they were voiceless and invisible in meetings and on their campuses (Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; West, 2019). Their narratives also described how failure to view women of color as current or potential leaders was a usual form of leadership invisibility that limited their opportunities for career advancement.

The above studies revealed that African American women leaders in academic settings do not experience a complete sense of belonging in the workplace. The studies also showed that marginalization and invisibility come from being the only one or one of the few people of color in a leadership position (Pearson, 2020; Collins, 2002; Mena & Vaccaro, 2017).

Mentoring, Networking, and Leadership Development. In the literature, the term *mentoring* had several definitions. For the present study, mentoring is the process by which an individual with more professional experience (the mentor) helps advance the professional development and career of someone with less experience (the mentee or

protégé) for leadership development (Burke & Carter, 2015). Earlier researchers agreed that mentoring is essential to the development of women in executive leadership positions (Davis, 2016; Patton & Harper, 2003; Nickerson-Guidry, 2012; Patton, 2009). Jernigan, Dudley, and Hatch (2020) found that "Black women in leadership flourish when they can create and sustain connections with those within and outside of their networks—allowing for the development of complex strategic initiatives and the actualization of goals" (p. 47).

In a 2007 study on the importance of mentoring for African American women administrators who selected higher education as a career choice, Crawford and Smith (2007) noted that "the respondents in the study all believed that if they had been mentored, they would have had greater job satisfaction" (p.65). This finding suggested that the lack of mentoring experiences can limit the career advancement of African American women leaders. Prior research also emphasized the benefits of role models, mentors, and sponsors for Black women professionals (Crawford & Smith, 2005, 2007; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Penny & Gaillard, 2006). These studies and related research concluded that women have greater job success and satisfaction with one or more mentors (Nickerson-Guidry, 2021; Riley & Wrench, 1985).

Mentoring is an important "factor leading to upward mobility in employment, success in education, and personal development" (Crawford & Smith, 2005, p. 52). Historically, African American women in higher education have lacked the networking skills and professional mentoring needed for developing *social capital* (Lin, 1999), which is needed for advancement into mid- and senior-level positions (Burke & Carter, 2015; Jernigan et al., 2020). The research showed that the absence of mentoring for this group

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has lessened in recent years, as more Black women in academia create networks and seek mentoring experiences for themselves.

An exploratory mixed-methods study showed that perceptions about networking varied among African American women professionals and that some of them had multiple mentors and established networks with both men and women colleagues from other institutions who were from various cultural backgrounds (Burke & Carter, 2015). In another study, most Black women leaders (participants) had adopted a strategy of seeking sponsorship specifically by both White and non-White males who supported their career development (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The study participants recognized that their sponsors occupied positions of institutional power, had access to networks of power, and could influence their career advancement. In examining how African American women in academia developed as leaders, Davis and Maldonado (2015) found that they considered themselves predestined for success and that sponsorship by "unexpected individuals," Black and non-Black male colleagues, contributed to the success they obtained. The participants credited their sponsors with providing guidance, professional mentoring, and opportunities for upward career mobility (p. 57).

A phenomenological study by Nickerson-Guidry (2021) explored cross-race and cross-gender mentorship for a select group of Black women seeking leadership positions in higher education. For many participants of the study, their mentoring experiences were found to be similar to what any mentoring relationship might be (Nickerson-Guidry, 2021). However, the Black women who had White male mentors felt that they were able to "make professional strides due, in part, because their mentors gave them increased access and social connections" (p. 87). At the same time, "the mentors were unable to

offer helpful insight regarding the unique challenges Black females encounter within the [organizational] cultures [of their institutions]" (p. 88).

The unique social status of African American women as recipients of racial and gender bias and discrimination in the workplace has kept them from exercising full citizenship at their institutions and advancing in their careers. Establishing mentoring, relationships, and sponsorship helps the individual, the mentor, and the institution. Mentoring and sponsorship also help dispel the presumption that women of color in academia, including African American women leaders, are incompetent scholars, teachers, and participants at their institutions (Comer et al., 2017). Mentoring and sponsorship also provides opportunities for leadership and career advancement and increases the number of Black women in hierarchical leadership positions throughout the institution, which also contributes to a decline in underrepresentation for members of this group.

Career Advancement. African Americans in higher education administration have limited opportunities for career mobility (Evans & Chun, 2007) due to the lack of a formal rank and promotion process for the limited number of administrative positions that exist at a university (Gardner et al., 2014). For career mobility, one often must move to another institution (Gardner et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2012). These phenomena are harmful for the small number of African American women leaders who seek job stability and career advancement. The slow increase in the number of African American women in executive and senior-level administrative positions in higher education is a major concern. Failure to retain these professionals due to job turnover is a negative

consequence that costs institutions substantial amounts of money, time, and unutilized talent.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Townsend (2020) posited that the slow progression of Black women into high-level leadership positions is attributed to individual and institutional responses to perceived *identity politics* exercised by their non-Black colleagues. In the Townsend (2020) study, the participants highlighted the impact of "the psychological weight or stressors that Black people experience from consciously or unconsciously thinking about how White Americans perceived the social construct of Blackness," as defined by Palmer (2020). Two primary factors that negatively affected the professional advancement of Black women leaders in higher education were reactions by colleagues to them expressing their authentic selves as African American women in the workplace and the impact of microaggressions on their retention as administrators (Townsend, 2020).

A search for literature on career stagnation and job turnover and attrition specific to this population of postsecondary leaders did not result in any known studies. However, it is understood that career stagnation and job turnover negatively affect an individual's ability to achieve career stability and job satisfaction, and an organization's efforts to attract, retain, and promote their employees (Abele, et al., 2012).

Research on Resistance and Coping Strategies

Resistance. Women of color faculty members at a major U. S. research university (including African American women) have developed ways to use their positions to resist racial and gender bias, discrimination, and classism at their institution, a revelatory finding from a mixed-methods study on Black Women and other women of color faculty

members at a research university, conducted by Thomas and Hollenshead (2001). One Black women who participated in the research chose to ignore the lack of respect she received from White colleagues and focused on achieving national attention and recognition for her research and professional ability. Another Black woman who took part in their study was quoted saying, "I am working against the status quo. I don't want the status quo!" (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001, p. 171). Another respondent stressed the importance of resisting the pressure to "fit in" and that "women of color should not internalize their oppression" (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001, p. 171). Other study participants limited the amount of time they gave to institutional service and working outside of their research and teaching agendas. The researchers noted that the African American women and other women of color faculty members in their study developed creative strategies that showed their resistance to bias and discrimination. They aggressively sought career advancement opportunities, which included establishing mentorships and sponsorships outside of their academic departments and as a peer group.

Support Systems. In their phenomenological study, Davis and Maldonado (2015) found that despite the challenges and barriers they encountered, African American women leaders sought and received support from parents, spouses, other family members, and friends who encouraged their determinism and discipline and mentoring and sponsorship from men and women colleagues. The participants of the study experienced a measure of success "by learning how to play the game skillfully, [and] these women learned how to become politically savvy and navigate around potential organizational landmines" (Davis & Maldonado, 2015, p.59). Another finding of the study was their recognition of the importance of "paying it forward" by ensuring that

mentoring by more senior African American women in leadership occurred to retain the existing professionals and help increase the number of Black women advancing into leadership positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

The study also revealed that despite their challenging work environments, Black women faculty and administrators survived and also coped with support from colleagues and supportive supervisors. The participants described additional ways that they survived and coped in their work environments by "laughing, crying, praying, retreating, physical illness, a sense of self, and moving on" (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 84). Maintaining one's religious faith and spirituality was another coping strategy that created connections with other Black women (Henry & Glenn, 2009; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; West, 2015). Another study emphasized that career pipelines are needed to promote the success of African American women leaders as individuals and as a group, through mentoring, establishing support systems that affirm and validate their existence in the academy, and providing opportunities for members of this group to expand their professional knowledge and skills (Turner et al., 2011).

Professional Counterspaces. Despite experiencing marginalization and social isolation, African American women leaders at PWIs have found ways to individually cope with the negative realities of their workplaces while continuing to develop their careers. Studies show that African American women use professional counterspaces as affirming and supportive environments for themselves and as a means of coping with the effects of institutional and systemic racism and gender discrimination (Comer et al., 2017; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; West, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2020).

Research on professional counterspaces for African American women in higher education leadership included several in-depth studies on the African American Women's Summit (AAWS), a professional development program in the United States designed by and for African American women student affairs administrators (West, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019a). The studies revealed that African American women leaders at PWIs contend with many challenges and obstacles to their professional success. The challenges and barriers they experience are the results of underrepresentation and marginalization. West (2017) emphasized that the AAWS counterspace helped Black women leaders by providing "identification and validation of their oppressive experiences, dissemination of strategies to resist oppressions, and fortification of African American women's standpoint" (p. 281). Counterspaces and professional groups like the AAWS provided a support structure and pathway to career success to Black women in higher education who aspired to leadership positions and roles as agents for change.

For over 25 years, the Sisters of the Academy (SOTA) Professional Organization has facilitated the success of Black women in academic leadership (Mabokela & Green, 2001). For just as long, the Sisters Mentoring Sisters (SISTERS) Project, an Africentric professional development program at a public PWI, ". . . [has been] deliberately structured to provide Black women with numerous opportunities to become familiar with women in leadership roles who are involved in formal and informal decision-making activities throughout the institution" (Green & King, 2001, p. 157). Data from focus group participants in the SISTERS Project informed the creation of a broad-based program for all women employed at Central Florida State University, a large state research PWI. An Africentric worldview is incorporated into the Project's structure for

the career development and leadership development of its participants, adopting the principles of Kwanzaa as guiding concepts.

Green and King (2001) found that the Black women participants wanted to receive mentoring in the following areas, which are typical for members of this group:

- structure of the university

- the university decision-making process

- the social, political, and economic realities and constraints operating within the university environment

- spirituality

- self-empowerment and specific strategies for attaining personal career goals

- financial planning

- strategies for collectively improving the workplace for others" (p. 162).

The professional programs and counterspaces discussed above helped African American women make meaning of their experiences, function as sounding boards, and are nurturing places where group members received recognition and acknowledgment from others for their contributions and achievements (Comer et al., 2017). The programs provided unique places of connection and psychological well-being for African American women leaders, who are small in number and invisible to most colleagues at their PWIs.

Professional counterspaces can evolve naturally, as in another study on a support group of women faculty of color at a public PWI, whose participants sought each other for help with managing stress in their roles, support, and encouragement (Comer et al., 2017). The group provided a nurturing environment where the women received validation, opportunities for reflection, self-affirmation, emotional support, and

connection (Comer et al., 2017). The support group helped the Black women "develop a

work identity that was uniquely based upon their individuality as women of color and

based upon common values of collectivity, reciprocity, relationality, and connectivity"

(Comer et al., 2017, p. 150).

Coping Through Technology. African American women leaders who were

physically isolated have used Internet-based communication methods such as chat rooms,

online social network sites, and discussion boards to supplement the traditional face-to-

face interactions with other Black women in academia (Henry, 2009). Coping strategies

such as professional mentoring, support and counterspace groups are enriched by

computer technology. The use of computers for this purpose helped to combat the social

isolation that Black women oftentimes experienced on PWIs and provided opportunities

for them to amass social capital beyond the confines of their institutions.

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Although African American women leaders in higher education contribute to institutional excellence, support educational attainment, promote institutional diversity, and help create a positive campus climate, they continue to be underrepresented and under-retained. Chapter One explained that African American women leaders continue to make essential contributions to their institutions, despite the challenges they experience in their workplaces and throughout their careers. Marginalization, isolation, tokenism, microaggressions, and discrimination are challenges that were well documented in extant literature (Patton, 2016; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Turner et al., 2011).

The research presented in Chapter Two examined the challenges and barriers resulting from racism and gender discrimination, institutional power structures, and systemic oppression encountered by African American women leaders in postsecondary education (Patton, 2016; Turner et al., 2011; Wright & Salinas, 2016). Studies have shown that job stress and racial battle fatigue developed over time for Black women in academia (Chancellor, 2019; Kersh, 2018; Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2006). Recent studies also revealed that many African American women who work at colleges and universities do not reach their fullest potential because of the lack of professional mentoring and networking that is essential for job success and career development and advancement (Burke & Carter, 2015; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Patton, 2009; Holmes, 2008). However, despite all of these obstacles and barriers to career fulfillment, African American women leaders continued to add value to their institutions.

Although much job satisfaction research has been conducted since the pioneering

work of Fisher and Hanna (1931), most studies used qualitative methods to examine the workplace attitudes of White male workers in management. As noted in Chapter Two, research on job satisfaction on Black women leaders in higher education remains mostly unresearched and untheorized, with only a few related studies conducted in the past 20 years. The present study helped fill this void so that African American women leaders are included in the literature on job satisfaction and higher education administration. Another goal of the study was to underscore and help facilitate change in this area of academia.

In this chapter, the methods, design, and procedures used to conduct the study were explained. Descriptions of the study's setting, the study participants, approaches to data collection and analysis, the research design's trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the researcher's role were presented.

Research Design

Critical narrative inquiry, critical reflection, and critical reflexivity werethree approaches used to capture the authentic, holistic accounts of the participants in the study and are explained below. The use of critical race methodology provided a unique lens for examining the participants' narratives within the broader historical context of race and the political, economic, and socio-cultural experiences of African American.

Critical Narrative Inquiry Methodology

In the study, a critical narrative inquiry was used to understand the workplace experiences of African American women leaders in higher education and their job satisfaction. Critical narrative inquiry is a qualitative method that the researcher of the present study used to think narratively and make inquiries about the experiences of a group of people (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher also used this method to

construct common meaning from several individuals' experiences (Creswell, 2014). Through critical reflection, the researcher of the present study engaged in an alternative way of knowing by collaborating with the narrative, yet not allowing themselves to be in the center. This approach helped the researcher understand the participants' experiences. For the present study, non-numerical data in the form of words was gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to provide an enhanced understanding of the experiences of African American women leaders in higher education, the impact of race and gender, and the resulting influences on their job satisfaction.

The researcher's goal was to provide rich, thick descriptions obtained from the personal stories of each participant of the study, as they described their work lives and constructed meaning from their daily experiences on their job. Their interpretations allowed the researcher to go beyond the experience itself to uncover the nuances in the meaning of the participants' experiences, creating space for rich, authentic narratives about their lived experiences. A holistic and authentic account of the study participants cannot be captured by a quantitative method of inquiry derived from numerical data.

Critical narrative inquiry required the researcher to actively engage with their participants, "yet step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). Narrative inquiry, which includes critical narrative inquiry, calls for the research questions to be ontological, focusing on perceiving and understanding being, existence, and reality. Knowledge is based on individual experiences and beliefs, and communication with others introduces a diversity of perspectives, requiring us to re-examine our personal beliefs. The researcher had to use the words as data for to

internalize and interpret the narratives. In this way, the researcher was fully immersed in the study.

This method also involved an epistemological approach to inquiry, which emphasizes the nature of knowledge and how it is determined. African American women exist at the intersection of race and gender, two interlocking dimensions of diversity that place them in a unique position in society (Crenshaw, 1989). For this reason, their stories are best narrated by Black women who share this exact place or *standpoint* (Collins, 2000). Framing Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Patton (2016) used Critical Race Theory methodology to examine the effects of race and racism in American higher education to facilitate change for social justice.

Since race and gender identities are central in the lives of African American women, critical race methodology is a proper framework for examining race and racism in the higher education setting (Patton, 2016; Patton et al., 2015). Using CRT methodology to explain the experiences of Black women leaders in higher education settings helped reveal the impact that race and racism have on their professional lives, personal development, and job satisfaction.

Critical Race Methodology

Understanding America's historical legacy of racism in higher education provides a context for examining the lived experiences of African American women leaders in higher education. As a marginalized group, Black women who are educational leaders in postsecondary education face inequities created by systemic racism and gender bias. The study used a critical race methodology to analyze race and how institutional policies, practices, and power systems in the workplace affect job satisfaction for Black women

leaders in higher education. As an approach for the study, critical race methodology showed how institutions' failure to address racism and gender discrimination affected African American women in leadership positions as a framework for the study. This methodology also revealed ways that African American women leaders cope with working in institutional environments where racism, forms of discrimination, and systemic oppression persist. However, despite this situation, Black women leaders on college campuses continued to show up daily and perform their jobs with excellence, adding value to their academic institutions.

The following five tenets created the framework of CRT: counter-storytelling; the permanence of racism; Whiteness as property; interest conversion; and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy, 2006). The goal of CRT is to disrupt and dismantle the complex systems of oppression that fuel social injustice (Bell, 1986; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton, 2016). When applied to the higher education setting, applying a CRT lens aligned with the researcher's intent to present the stories of Black women who are educational leaders as a historically marginalized group while underscoring the need for social change in the academy. The findings of the study demonstrated why it is vital to create work environments that recognize, empower, and value their Black women leaders.

In their research, which expanded upon CRT, Solórzano & Yosso (2002) defined and used *counter-storytelling* as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). Counter-storytelling provides a methodological framework for understanding the identities, experiences, and social realities of a group of

people in the margins. By conducting the study, the researcher intended to help African American women leaders in postsecondary education, as a marginalized group, gain agency and the ability to "name their reality" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13) through counter-storytelling and using their voices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). By centering Black women who are educational leaders in the literature, the researcher of the study intended to add to the body of knowledge about this group and move them from marginality to centrality as persons included in the conversation on job satisfaction. The researcher hoped that including African American women leaders in the discourse contributed to their increased representation and retention in higher education.

Research Questions

The study investigates what African American women leaders in higher education think about their work environments and job satisfaction. The study address the following research questions:

1. How do African American women leaders in higher education define job satisfaction?
   a. What factors contribute to job satisfaction for African American women leaders in higher education?
2. How do race and gender identity characterize the perceptions of the leadership roles of African American women administrators in higher education?
3. How do African American women leaders who lack job satisfaction cope with this reality?

The researcher used ontological and epistemological approaches to narrative inquiry. Each participant interviewed described their identity and who they are personally

and professionally. They talked about their workplace experiences, what they mean, and how such encounters have informed their job satisfaction. Participants who lacked job satisfaction described ways they dealt with its existence.

Commonly used in narrative research, the researcher used a qualitative interview protocol to ask the participants questions and record their responses (Creswell, 2014). The written interview protocol for the study consisted of specific questions and related probing questions designed to follow up with the participants and allowed them to give more details or elaborate further in their responses. The interview protocol is shown in Appendix C.

Methods and Procedures

Setting

The Carnegie Classification for Institutions of Higher Education has been the leading framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education for the past four and a half decades (Carnegie, 2018). The present study was conducted at a predominantly White research institution (PWI), located in the northeast U.S., classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a Doctoral University, with over 25,000 students. For the past two decades, the student population of the research site has become increasingly diverse, primarily due to its location near a metropolitan area.

Participants

Eight African American women in leadership positions at the middle, senior, and executive levels were purposefully selected to participate in the study. The small sample size for this study was caused by the underrepresentation of Black women leaders at the

setting site, which is indicative of the scarcity of African American women leaders in U.S. higher education and the result of the historic and present-day systemic and problematic issues described in the prior research. Due to the dearth of African American women leaders at the study site and the limited number of potential participants who met the criterion for the present study, it was necessary for the researcher to invite qualified individuals who work in the study setting to take part in the research. As a result, eight African American women in leadership positions at the middle, senior, and executive levels were purposefully selected to partake in the study.

The participants were drawn from a snowball sample from various organizational divisions of the study setting: president's office, academic affairs, finance and administration, student affairs, marketing and communications, advancement, and other administrative areas of the institution. To minimize the risk of identifying the participants and to maintain anonymity, each person was given a pseudonym, as shown in Table 1, which also illustrates the criterion required to partake in the study. The actual job titles and names of the offices and departments where the participants worked were undisclosed.

Individuals selected to take part in the study were required to meet the following criteria:

1. Self-identify as an African American, Black American, or Black woman.

2. Hold a leadership position at the middle, senior, or executive level at the site of the study.

3. Be a full-time administrative leader at the selected institution with faculty and/or professional status.

Table 1

Pseudonyms and Characteristics of the Study Participants

Pseudonym	Marital Status	Number of Children	Highest Degree Earned	Years in Higher Education	Administrative Leadership Level	Years in Current Position
Brenda	Married	1	Bachelors	40.0	Senior	6.0
Candace	Married	3	Doctorate	15.5	Executive	2.5
Diane	Married	1	Masters	10.0	Middle	2.5
Jackie	Single	0	Masters	15.0	Middle	6.5
Mia	Single	0	Masters	16.0	Middle	3.5
Shanice	Single	0	Masters	19.0	Middle	2.5
Stephanie	Separated	3	Masters[a]	9.0	Middle	4.0
Wanda	Divorced	1	Masters	11.5	Middle	2.5

[a] Participant earned two master's degrees.

4. Have been at least two years in their current position at the time of the study. For the study, two years of work longevity was considered a reasonable amount of time for individuals to transition into their current leadership position and role.

5. Have responsibility for leading a department or organizational unit and the direct supervision of professional employees (other administrators or faculty members).

To further ensure that individuals selected for the study met the criteria for participation, the researcher required that each potential participant supply their curriculum vitae or resume in advance for review.

All participants of the study self-identified as African American or Black women, including one individual who described herself as multi-racial. All participants have worked as educational leaders for two years or more. Six participants (75 percent) held

mid-level administrative positions. One participant (12.5 percent) was employed at the senior level and one other individual (12.5 percent) held an executive-level position. All partakers in the study have responsibility for leading a department or organizational unit and directly supervising professional employees (other administrators) or faculty members.

The study participants had a range of nine to 40 years of full-time professional experience in higher education and served in their current leadership roles for more than two years. Nine participants have a master's degree in higher education, the social sciences, or a related discipline. Of this number, one participant had earned two master's degrees and one participant possessed a doctoral degree. The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 67 years. Among the eight participants of the study, three (37.5 percent) were married, three (37.5 percent) were single and have never been married, one (12.5 percent) was divorced, and one (12.5 percent) was separated. Five of the eight African American women leaders under investigation had children (62.5 percent) and three did not (37.5 percent).

Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval, the researcher identified each potential participant of the study through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Due to the small group of individuals to be interviewed, the researcher intentionally solicited the potential participants of the study. The researcher identified one person who met the criteria for taking part in the study and made initial contact via a telephone call to discuss the study's purpose and invite them to take part. To confirm their eligibility to take part in the study, the identified participant submitted their curriculum vitae or resume in advance for

review. Upon agreeing to take part in the study, the identified participant was sent an electronic communication (email) to confirm their participation, accompanied by a Letter of Consent, as shown in Appendix B. Before conducting each scheduled interview, the researcher asked the participant (and every other participant of the study) to suggest other African American women leaders that they thought met the criteria for taking part in the study. The researcher contacted the recommended individuals and invited them to participate in the study, pending a review of their curriculum vitae or resume, to confirm their eligibility to do so.

An electronic communication (email) was sent to each potential participant, along with a telephone call that served as a verbal invitation for the identified individual's participation. The researcher invited each participant selected for the study to engage in individualized audio and video recorded, semi-structured, narrative interviews consisting of open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted using Zoom, a cloud-based video conferencing software. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes long.

Data Analysis Approach

According to Creswell (2014), a critical narrative approach to qualitative research is fitting when the researcher seeks to construct a common meaning from several individuals' experiences. To accomplish this goal, the researcher recorded, transcribed, and interpreted each narrative as communicated by each study participant. After the interview, the researcher contacted each participant and shared the interview transcript for them to review, add to, or edit what they said in their interview. This member-checking step strengthened the study's credibility, confirmability, reliability, and validity.

Following refinement of the transcripts, the researcher began to analyze the data. Dedoose is a web-based application for qualitative data analysis that the researcher used to help them understand the collected data in order to interpret, describe, and communicate the research findings correctly and clearly. The researcher used this software platform to create, modify, and code each transcript, tag various methodology stages, and organize the research procedures. Dedoose is designed for qualitative researchers who work with rich text-based information and was preferred because it is easy to use, well-structured, and affordable.

For the study, the researcher took a series of steps: coding, interpretation, theme detection, categorization, synthesis, and interpretation of the collected data to obtain a thick description and a deep understanding of the workplace experiences of African American women leaders in higher education, the meanings they derive from their experiences and ways that their experiences influence their job satisfaction. By applying these steps, the researcher was able to formulate the study's results and implications and validate the salience of the collected data.

Coding was used to label and organize the collected data to identify the common themes and concepts that emerged from interpreting the participants' narratives. A code is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attitude for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4).

A total of 727 units of data were assigned to 64 deductive and inductive codes. Since narrative inquiry was the research method used for the study, the following broad subcategories of first cycle coding methods identified by Saldaña (2016) were conducted:

narrative coding, elemental methods, affective methods (from the audio and video recordings of the interviews), and themeing the data (pg. 68). "Coding the data is a heuristic (from the Greek, meaning 'to discover') - an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas or algorithms to follow" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9). Since coding is not scientific, qualitative researchers have to modify the coding methods throughout the data analysis process. Although interpreting and coding the data from the participants' narratives occurred within a dynamic, collaborative space between the participant and the researcher, the researcher had to identify and use coding methods that best fit the study. Throughout the data collection and review process's first phase, the researcher remained open to identifying any methods that were most relevant and changed them whenever necessary.

When coding, the researcher's goal was to capture each participant's authentic, holistic, and unaltered account while refraining from revising their narrative and introducing their biases. As an initial procedural step in the coding cycle, the researcher "pre-coded" (Layder, 1998) the data, and reviewed the video recordings and interview transcripts of the collected data. While reviewing the recordings, the researcher made note of and circled, highlighted, or underlined participant quotes or passages that registered with them as "codable moments worthy of attention."

After pre-coding the data, the researcher employed narrative coding. The participants' stories and storytelling were particularly critical cultural attributes of indigenous people (Iseke, 2013), in this case, African American women leaders in higher education. The narrative codes and sub-codes in the study included the story type, form, tone, purpose, setting, point of view, character type, and spoken features (Saldaña, 2016).

Using these codes and others related to describing the narratives, the researcher was able to provide a rich, thick description of the workplace experiences of Black women leaders in postsecondary education.

Additional forms of data analysis used in the first cycle of coding included elemental methods that briefly described various topics that the researcher identified from the collected data. From the video and audio recordings, Affective methods were employed to "investigate participant emotions, values, and other subjective qualities of human experience (Saldaña, 2016, p. 80). Commonly applied to interviews, themeing the data was an extensive process that involved labeling and analyzing the data for thematic statements and creating brief profiles that were validated by the participants' narratives.

During the second cycle of coding, the primary codes from themeing the data were summarized, categorized, and grouped into a smaller number of categories. From the subcategories, the researcher identified patterns that would become the emergent themes of the study. By using focused coding, the researcher determined the most frequent and salient themes from the collected data. In the third cycle, the salient themes were reordered and connected to theory and the researcher's interpretive summaries. This coding analysis process continued until saturation was achieved.

Coding qualitative data is an analytic process that is cyclical (not linear), involving several analysis cycles as the data was collected (Saldaña, 2016). The coding process quickly became complex due to the many coding categories, methods, and subcoding that typically occur throughout the data collection and analytic process. For this reason, the researcher conducted three cycles of coding until exhaustion, at which time all of the essential themes from the collected data were named. By doing this, the

researcher amassed a thick, rich description of each participant's narrative, which further confirmed the interpretation and findings of the study.

Each narrative presented was guided by the themes and individual accounts of the participant's experiences. The themes and critical narrative accounts were further constructed to develop a universal narrative that answered the research questions, was guided by the study, and framed by related literature and the theoretical framework. To capture the authentic, holistic, and unaltered accounts of the participants in this critical narrative study, the researcher conducted a detailed and rigorous analysis of the data collected.

Trustworthiness of the Design

Critical narrative inquiry and critical race methodology require that the data collection process and study findings be valid, reliable, and trustworthy. Most qualitative studies involve a data analysis process where a researcher's subjectivity and biases can heavily influence the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014). The researcher identified with the group members under investigation for the study. As an African American woman and educational leader, the researcher needed to ensure that their personal biases and values did not affect the interpretation of the accounts the participants of the study provide.

To show that theoretical validity exists in the study, the researcher used extant literature on Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education as lenses to accurately interpret the findings. The researcher also used prior job satisfaction studies and research on the history of African American women in U. S. education to

give a broader context for understanding work in academic settings for this group of institutional leaders and how their experiences affect their job satisfaction.

Credibility and trustworthiness are ways to describe the validity of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2014; Mills & Gay, 2019; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The credibility and trustworthiness of the study was established. Specific techniques to verify the research's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Below is a description of each technique. To show the credibility of the study, the researcher examined emergent problems that the findings revealed. During the interviews, the researcher asked probing questions to give greater credibility to the study and investigate participants' concerns and related sub-contexts that surfaced during the interview process.

Transferability refers to how much the reader can identify with the study setting. Since qualitative research is context-bound, the researcher will use clear, descriptive language that helps the reader relate to the setting without embellishments. By ensuring transferability, the readers of the study are able to "see" themselves in the narratives (Mills & Gay, 2019) and develop empathy with the participants' stories. Transferability is an essential aspect of the study. The researcher wanted the readers to connect with the participants' accounts in meaningful ways that convey a broad and deep understanding of African American women leaders in postsecondary education and their job satisfaction.

By developing thick descriptions from the accounts, the researcher strengthened the likelihood that aspects of the study can exist in other contexts outside of the setting under study and that the study itself could be conducted at other times. Similar research about the work lives of Black women in leadership positions in higher education were

used to compare with the results of the study. These prior studies added weight to the findings of the present study. The researcher was not looking to prove that the findings from the study are generalizable to all African American women leaders in higher education. However, any identifiable themes and concepts shared in prior studies has been noted.

The researcher planned to achieve dependability in the study by showing that the findings are consistent with the collected data and repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, dependability is a step in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation of the study, commonly achieved by conducting an inquiry audit. For the study, the researcher took steps to ensure that the account given by each participant was accurate and that the findings were interpreted properly, without any information missing or poorly presented.

Confirmability of the study will occur by showing that the findings are based upon the participants' responses instead of the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest, which can have a harmful effect on the entire study. In confirmability, the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the participants influence the findings is scrutinized. Using member checks, personal journaling, analytic memos on the collected data, an inquiry audit (audit trail), and reflexivity are ways the researcher strengthened the credibility, confirmability, reliability, and validity of the study (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher used member checking to communicate with each participant of the study during the audio and video recorded interviews and when transcribed. This approach will confirm the accuracy of the data and allow for editing information so that there is overall satisfaction with the participants' responses (Amankwaa, 2016). Member

checking took place in one-to-one virtual meetings between the researcher and each participant using the audio and video-based platform called Zoom, which is commonly used in the institutional setting of the study. Each interview transcript was shared with its respective participant to ensure that each interviewee reviewed what they said, added more information if desired, and edited what they said. This step was taken to strengthen the confirmability and validity of the study

Journaling and creating an audit trail were additional strategies that showed confirmability and the researcher's trustworthiness. During and after each interview, personal journaling allowed the researcher to immediately record their thoughts, ideas, and questions for later review. This approach allowed for rich, thick descriptions from the participants' accounts to emerge and helped provide external validity to obtain a clear depiction of each narrative. The researcher strengthened the study's trustworthiness by checking and rechecking the data throughout the data collection process, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions (reporting the findings).

It was the researcher's responsibility to safeguard the authenticity of each account and treat each participant's story with care. The researcher considered each account to hold rare and "precious" information that not only defined the work life experiences of African American women educational leaders and their job satisfaction but were the "voices" for this group that is invisible, underrepresented in the academia, undervalued, and unresearched.

Critical narrative inquiry includes a reflexivity process, during which the researcher constantly reflected on how much they affected their research and findings (Creswell, 2014). As part of the data collection process, the researcher frequently

engaged in self-reflection. The researcher's cultural background, firsthand experiences, and beliefs in educational leadership as an African American woman could have affected how the collected data is interpreted. Therefore, critical reflexivity was needed for the study because the researcher also was a member of the underrepresented group that was under investigation. The researcher was required to avoid promoting their personal biases and values in the study. In addition, while conducting the study, the researcher needed to constantly consider how their background could potentially shape the direction of the study (Creswell, 2014).

Establishing credibility and trustworthiness is essential for all qualitative researchers. The steps described earlier are measures to ensure that the study was reliable, examined what it was intended to examine, and that the data collection and analysis processes, interpretation of the data, and conclusions that are drawn fully reported and accurately reflected the authentic and holistic narratives of each African American women who took part in the study. These was essential obligations that the researcher was obligated and committed to fulfilling.

Research Ethics

The study was human subject research and followed all federal and institutional policies, procedures, and practices for compliance as set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the degree-granting institution. Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained approval from the degree-granting institution's IRB. Expressed approval from the IRB of the study site (which is different from the IRB at the degree-granting institution) was not deemed necessary, as the study met the criteria for exempt

research as expressed in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 46, subpart A section 46.104.

To conduct the study, the researcher undertook training set forth by the Office of Human Subjects Research Protections of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Specifically, the researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Institute (CITI) Program of web-based courses in Human Research Protections. An application to conduct the study, which involved humans as research participants, was reviewed and approved by the IRB through cloud-based software called Cayuse. Use of Cayuse IRB streamlined the IRB submission process and provided greater access to all IRB records on one secure website chosen for the researcher's sole use. The researcher sought permission to conduct the said study. A copy of the IRB Approval Memo is shown in Appendix A.

Informed consent is an essential ethical issue concerned with protecting participants in research studies. The informed consent process is designed to protect individuals or groups from psychological, physical, and social harm resulting from taking part in a study and requires that they take part only if they freely agree to do so by giving their consent (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Mills & Gay, 2019). A copy of the Letter of Consent for the study is shown in Appendix B.

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher verbally reviewed the Letter of Consent with each participant to ensure that they fully understood the terms and conditions under which the study was to be conducted and the steps the researcher would take to reduce any unnecessary psychological, physical, and social harm that the

participant might experience during the study. Each participant's signature on their Letter of Consent was obtained for their permission to audio and video record their interview.

Ethical considerations that the researcher implemented included keeping anonymity about individual study participants through pseudonyms. No information that could potentially identify the participants was used in the study. Individual participants' job titles, job descriptions, specific organizational departments, or units where they work were not published.

As part of their informed consent, each study participant agreed that all the data collected would be owned by the researcher and securely stored for five years on cloud-based software licensed by the researcher's educational institution. After this time, all the collected data would be destroyed.

Due to the small group of individuals that were interviewed, the researcher intentionally solicited potential participants for the study. For consistency, the researcher tried to schedule each interview at the same time of day. This was not possible due to the participants' limited availability and required flexible scheduling. Each participant was asked to conduct their one-to-one interview with the researcher in a quiet and comfortable place where they would not be interrupted. Given the sensitive nature of the interviews, additional interview time was budgeted to allow the participants to fully describe their experiences and the meanings they made of them.

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2018), a framework used to classify U. S. colleges and universities, was used to describe the setting of the study. Under no circumstances was the institution's name and where the participants work disclosed. The estimated student enrollment of the study's institutional

setting (25,000 students) was included to provide a context for the study's scope. Institutional anonymity was maintained because many existing colleges and universities in the same geographic region have similar or higher student enrollment.

Researcher Role

The researcher of the study is an African American woman currently serving as an administrative leader in postsecondary education. Prior to the 1990s, studies about African American women leaders in higher education and job satisfaction were almost non-existent. Most inquiries were conducted by researchers whom Banks (1998) identified as *external-outsiders* whose socialization was different from the communities they observed. Their studies often misrepresented the participants they observed and contributed to objectifying the participants as *Other* (Banks, 1998). Unlike the external-outsiders described in Banks' (1998) Typography of Cross-cultural Researchers, the author of the study is an *indigenous-insider:* "This individual endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member" (p. 8).

As indicated earlier, the researcher's primary goal was to capture and analyze authentic, holistic, and reliable accounts about a community of African American women leaders in academia. To do this, the researcher emphasized their same group membership to create an "intimate" relationship with each participant of the study, one characterized by mutual trust, respect, equality of voice, and a collaborative approach to producing finalized accounts of each participant's lived experiences. The role of being an accepted group member is unique to obtain and interpret these authentic stories that "produced by

Black women that clarify a [distinct] *standpoint* of and for Black women" (Collins, 2002, p. 468). The researcher considered the participants' narratives stories "sacred text" that had to be protected.

The researcher used their knowledge about the historical legacy of African American women in higher education to gain a deep understanding of the participants' lived experiences and the meanings they derived from them. Conducting the study was approached from an unbiased perspective, and reflexivity reduced unwanted subjectivity and any preconceived beliefs, opinions, and notions about the participants' experiences. (Amankwaa, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter described how critical narrative inquiry, framed by critical race methodology, will be applied to conducting the study. The data collection, interpretation, and analysis processes using coding methods are explained. The researcher ensured the data's reliability, validity, and trustworthiness. The ethical approaches that the researcher took to maintain each participant's mental and physical safety and respectful treatment throughout the study were presented, along with a clear description of the researcher's role.

The purpose of the study was to understand how individual experiences in the workplace influence job satisfaction for African American leaders in higher education. The next chapter explained the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Chapter One described the concern about the underrepresentation and under-retention of African American women leaders in postsecondary education, despite the contributions they have made to U.S. higher education for centuries. The scant literature discussed in Chapter Two underscored the need to fill the void in the research on Black women leaders in higher education and job satisfaction and the problem of the underrepresentation and under-retention of members of this group. Chapter Three described the qualitative research methods and procedures used to conduct the study, in which the researcher engaged in narrative inquiry to interpret the recorded interviews of Black women in administrative leadership positions at a PWI in the U.S. Northeast. The research findings are summarized in this chapter.

Findings

The three cycles of coding methods described in Chapter Three yielded a rigorous analysis of the collected data that identified the salient themes of the study. Table 2 shows the salient themes and subthemes that emerged from the coding process, which are listed below. The findings that contributed to each theme are discussed in the next section.

- Theme 1: Commitments and Contributions

- Theme 2: Perceptions of Race and Gender Identity and Leadership Roles

- Theme 3: Characteristics of Job Satisfaction

- Theme 4: Resistance, Support Systems, and Coping Strategies

Table 2

Interpretive Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme1	Subtheme2	Subtheme3
Theme 1: Commitments and Contributions	Supporting the Institutional Mission	Promoting the Success of Diverse Students and Professionals	
Theme 2: Perceptions of Race and Gender Identity and Leadership Roles	Racial and/or Gender Bias	Assumptions, Perceptions and Behaviors of Colleagues	Exceptionality
Theme 3: Characteristics of Job Satisfaction	Work Environment	Leadership Development and Career Advancement	
Theme 4: Resistance, Support Systems, and Coping Strategies	Professional Mentoring, Networks, and Counterspaces	Family and Friends; Supervisors and Colleagues	Religion/ Spirituality

Theme 1: Commitments and Contributions

The qualitative data told a story about the historical experiences and everyday encounters of African American women leaders at a PWI. All participants of the study considered their work important and discussed their commitment to support the institution's educational mission, with an emphasis given to helping the African American students enrolled at the institution achieve academic and personal success. The study participants were self-motivated and passionate about their work. They also had a keen sense of purpose and self-obligation to support the students. The participants spent additional time mentoring and supporting their Black junior colleagues. Each

participant's unique narrative is described below, along with findings about their commitment and contributions to the institution where they work.

Candace. Candace, who is in an executive-level leadership position, interacted with a broad range of campus constituents to develop institutional policies that impact the student experience and work lives of all employees. She had 15.5 years of professional experience working in higher education and a multifaceted career consisting of 24 years holding leadership positions in the private and public non-educational sectors. Candace was highly committed to being "at the table" to represent the perspectives and needs of the institution's diverse students, faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni. She explained that "if something is not serving, particularly underrepresented populations, [such as] people of color, people who have disabilities, females, LGBTQIA+ persons, individuals that are non-traditional, our international students, I'm at the table." Her role is to be present to address anything said by others that is intolerant, may have unintended consequences, needs to be considered, or is not in the best interest of the institution.

Candace brings institutional leaders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives together "to share their views, pause, reflect, and take into consideration things that they never would have thought of or taken into consideration before." She is a confident in her role and purpose: "My role here on Earth is to ensure that everyone has what they need, which can range from a pep talk to recognition to resources." As an executive leader, she empowers and inspires senior administrators for institutional change.

Candace enjoys the challenge of providing guidance that helps administrative leaders throughout the institution address complex problems. She said with assuredness,

"I love the fact that in all the things that are keeping everybody up at night, you're looking for a hero, and you're looking for someone that's going to come out fully resource-savvy at full capacity, to get out there and be strategic and solve it."

Candace is self-motivated by the belief that if all individuals thrive, the entire institution will function at its best. Throughout her interview, she exuded high energy and emphasized the importance of high-performance in all aspects of her work. As an experienced executive leader whose focus is on transformational change at the institutional level, Candace skillfully cultivates working relationships with senior-level colleagues who are seeking to make meaningful systemic differences at the university and are inspiring and affirming, rather than individuals who are overwhelmed by the institutional landscape and given to complaining without implementing change. Her goal is to develop an institutional environment where all students, faculty, administrators, and staff flourish and not merely survive.

Although she has a busy work life, Candace invested personal time to mentor and advise talented professionals by providing guidance and promoting their career growth and development. She encourages administrators to apply for job vacancies, serves on university-wide committees, and participates in professional associations. She does this out of a fervent desire to serve others and self-obligation as a successful Black woman in academia. These are personal values that Candace has in common with most of the other participants of the study. Her contributions have added value to the institution and support the retention of its diverse workforce.

Brenda. Brenda's commitment to supporting African American college students and promoting their success began four decades ago. Her desire to serve others comes from growing up in the 1970s within a family of educators, during a time when most

educated Black women had limited career choices and worked in the helping professions as teachers, nurses, or secretaries. Unable to find a teaching position in the 1980s due to the saturated job market, Brenda first worked at a community-based organization, where she created pathways for underserved youth to attend college. After three years, she left the nonprofit sector for a position in higher education at the present study setting. During the ensuing decades, she paved the way for nearly 120,000 students to pursue postsecondary degrees at the university. Brenda described her leadership role in this manner:

> "My leadership grew out of being one of the troops for quite a while [ten years], having been a soldier and then moving to lieutenant, and then major, and now, field commander. I like to use that analogy. And knowing what it's like on the ground. And, really having enjoyed the work at the ground level, I think I have, as a leader, a great deal of enthusiasm and ability to motivate staff in terms of their daily tasks."

Brenda works alongside her staff, with peer colleagues, and executive leaders throughout the institution. Her dedication to her work is embedded in a strong belief in the transformative role of public education and an obligation that she has "to impact the lives of young people in our [Black] communities through education."

Brenda leads a large staff of professionals, with most having worked in her department for ten to twenty years. She and her team meet year-round with prospective high school students and their families to educate them about the college experience and recruit them to apply to attend the university. Brenda's work also includes informing high school students from diverse backgrounds about the unique institution's retention programs for underrepresented students that support their academic and personal success. Her actions reflect her commitment to institutional diversity and giving back to her [the Black] community.

Brenda derived personal satisfaction from sharing information about college decision-making with prospective students, of whom many were the first in their family to pursue a postsecondary education. This is "the service part" of how she has contributed to the institution's mission and what she enjoys most about her work. Brenda's commitment originated in the 1970s and 1980s, which were the formative years of her career. She described it as an era when Black professionals had a strong obligation

> ". . . to use whatever talents or abilities that you [we] had to help our people. We got to help our people. [There] That was that awareness that it was critical that the young people of that generation be engaged and involved in [social] change in some way."

Brenda's sense of duty, obligation to serve others and help uplift her community is ingrained in her persona and is what she enjoys most about her work. She smiled with pride when she added that she is a mentor to two African American women students and that she gets personal satisfaction from helping them envision their future while attending the college.

The senior leadership position Brenda holds helps the institution provides access and opportunities for diverse students to obtain a college education, affects the student climate for diversity, and impacts the financial health of the institution. In her mentoring role, she assists and encourages diverse students to persevere and to obtain a college degree while navigating the personal challenges they experience along the way. She has a nurturing spirit and has maintained contact with many students from the time they are admitted into the university, through their graduation, and as alumni.

Brenda's greatest contribution to the institution and her legacy was the creation of an alumni affinity group that she helped found two decades ago, which primarily consists of former Black and Latino/a/x students, many whose lives she affected when they

attended the institution. She worked hard to help establish this group of caring alumni, which has evolved into an active organization that provides scholarships and career mentoring and networking opportunities for students, and related activities for its members. Students of color and alumni attribute much of their success to Brenda.

In her current position, Brenda has to increase student diversity at the university while also meeting the institution's tuition revenue goals. Meeting these expectations is challenging and frustrating for her because many students of color struggle to pay for their college education. Brenda felt that the emphasis that has been placed on generating revenue for the institution adversely affects her ability to diversify the student enrollment. Yet, as an educational leaders she remains committed to providing access and opportunity to all prospective students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

Shanice. Mentoring African American women college students for success is an activity that Shanice also enjoys as an African American woman in leadership. She shares this strong commitment and self-obligation with Brenda. At the time of the present study, Shanice received a job promotion to a higher-level leadership position within her division. She is proud of the work she does, which includes conducting educational research, providing consultation and assistance to university faculty and staff in designing and implementing program evaluations and assessment tools and methods, and preparing statistical reports and narratives for the analysis of educational evaluative data to support institutional improvements in student learning.

Although she does not regularly interact with students in her daily work, Shanice makes time in her demanding schedule to engage with African American women students. Along with Brenda, she volunteered along with group of 23 Black women

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administrators and faculty to provide one-to-one mentoring to African American and Latina women college students who take part in a university's retention program that promotes success for Black women in college. She is not discouraged by the challenges she has experienced as a mentor.

> "Honestly, that's one of the things that I love about [the retention program]. Is that I just feel like for some reason, I always get the mentee who goes AWOL. …my reason for being a part of this is because I want to give back. I want to give what somebody gave to me. Like, that is my goal, to help somebody realize something and get somewhere because they had somebody who believes in them."

Also driven by a fervent desire to support Black women students, Shanice enjoys serving as a mentor. In this role, she fosters their growth and development within their cultural and social contexts, promotes their engagement with the university community, connects them to critical campus resources, and sponsors them for success throughout their college years.

Shanice is a role model and inspiration who the students identify with and turn to for advice, support, and encouragement. She is compelled to care for African American women students, who are oftentimes marginalized or invisible in the institution.

Stephanie. During the height of the pandemic crisis from 2020 to 2022, Stephanie, an administrative leader for nine years worked on the frontlines for many additional hours to support her staff members so that they could provide essential care to students living on campus. Her commitment to supporting the institution included ensuring that her large team of professionals and student staff felt secure in their positions and equipped to provide adequate care and support to thousands of undergraduate and graduate students, while they also experienced the pandemic and its harmful impact in their personal lives.

Stephanie enjoys the informal interactions she has with the directors on her team. In turn, they take time to visit her office outside of supervisory meetings to socialize, relax, or ask questions that are not related to work. Although she is in a middle management position, Stephanie has occasionally assisted her staff with performing manual tasks, which showed her willingness to support them in their work and has helped dispelled rumors that she, like other upper-level administrators in her division, do not give attention to them. She meets individually with all her reports to get to know them to establish relationships that transcend her department's hierarchy. Stephanie is proud of the rapport and trust she has built with her staff over the years and supports their professional development and personal growth.

Like other participants of the study, Stephanie is a mentor to African American women students. Throughout her career in higher education, she has been fortunate to have had Black woman professionals for mentors and values the interest they have taken in her professional development and their guidance which has helped her avoid pitfalls in her career. Like Shanice and Brenda, Stephanie enjoys being a mentor to African American students, which includes college women. She believes that it is necessary for them to see a successful Black woman professional they can aspire to be like and considers mentoring a way she can giving back to her community.

Diane. A department head, Diane, was promoted into her current mid-level administrative position two and one-half years ago. Before receiving the job appointment, she served in the same position on an interim basis after working in a junior-level job in the department for two years. Diane leads a team that is responsible for annually introducing and onboarding thousands of new students and their families into the college

experience. She supervises professionals and undergraduate and graduate student assistants.

Diane's greatest contribution to the institution has been her ability to transform a three-day program into a complex multifaceted seven-day experience that introduced new students to the university and positioned them for success during their first year of college. When the pandemic hit in the summer of 2020, Diane redesigned, expanded, and implemented the onboarding program in its entirety and transformed it from an in-person seven-day format into a virtual experience for new students. The following year, she converted the program back into an in-person format and collaborated with departments and offices across the institution to successfully implement a revised experience for the students. This was a complex process that required Diane to use her expertise in college student development work and well-honed knowledge and skills to develop and implement campus-wide learning experiences for new students year-round. She is proud of the structural changes she made to the program and continues to improve upon them in her current leadership role.

Wanda. The African American women leaders who took part in the present study also contributed to the retention of staff of color by offering professional mentoring and opportunities for networking for their colleagues. Wanda, a participant of the study, spoke with enthusiasm about an affinity group she established in 2020, when the pandemic was spreading throughout the United States and the country also was experiencing racial, political, and social unrest.

Wanda was deeply concerned about the psychological well-being of the Black administrators and staff in her division who worked tirelessly on the frontlines to support

students throughout the crisis, which was an institutional priority and job expectation. She also was concerned about how newly hired professionals of color who joined her division would successfully transition to working at the institution during this tumultuous time. In response to these concerns, Wanda submitted a grant proposal for a one-time diversity initiative to establish a space for existing and new professionals of color to come together as a community of support during a time of national health crisis, racial and social upheaval, professional challenges, and personal hardship. Thirty-five professionals from throughout the institution participated in this initiative, which gave them voice and agency as individuals and members of a marginalized group. Wanda coordinated monthly meetings for participants to come together and check-in with each other, network, and attend activities for cultural enrichment. A community of support, members of the group also welcomed and introduced new employees to the institution and its surrounding areas. While reflecting upon this accomplishment, gave a big smiled and said,

> "…[This] is what I'm most proud of. Because it's not even just people of color in the affinity group. It's like our White counterparts or White-identifying counterparts, too. Their minds were blown. … But to hear [Black] professionals say it [discuss race and racism] in the way in which we choose to, however we choose to say it, because it's always a tiptoe because of work, that's what I'm proud of. Of what we've been able to do with the staff here and how they feel freer."

Although the grant expired at the end of 2020, Wanda successfully secured additional funding to support the group. She attributed this to the program's success and considers establishing this group of professionals of color to be an important accomplishment. Wanda's concern for her peers contributed to the socio-emotional well-being of Black administrators and other staff of color and aided in the institution's ability

to attract and retain its diverse workforce. One colleague who considers Wanda to be a wonderful role model for others is Mia.

Mia. Mia, a leader with 16 years of experience in higher education, self-identifies as a half-Black and half-East Indian (not indigenous) woman. When she was five years old, her parents migrated from their native home in the Caribbean to the United States, where Mia has lived up to the present day. After completing graduate school, Mia started her higher education career by working at the setting of the present study. Two years later, she left her first professional position, but returned to work at the same institution after fourteen years of employment at five other colleges.

Mia's professional strength is that she is a maximizer. She explained that she has "been able to really flourish in my [her] strength. … It just means that I [she] optimize my resources and bring the best out of whatever's in front of me. And that's what I do with people, procedures, and processes." Mia is extremely proud of how she has used her strength as a maximizer to overhaul technological systems and bring innovation and efficiency to her entire division. Her work has brought added value to the institution.

Like Brenda, Shanice and Wanda, Mia dedicated her time to mentoring students, due to the obligation she feels as a successful Black woman. She identifies strongly with first-generation students of color who are immigrants like herself.

> "I say 'we' in those identities because there's hardly a time where somebody tells us it's okay if we don't go to medical school. It's okay for trying to figure things out. But I am hard on them [the students], too. And I am, like, it's also not okay to make excuses. If you don't finish college, it's definitely not okay. I like to have those candid conversations [and] be the maternal figure. You can talk to me; I know where you're at."

As a mentor, Mia validates the perspectives, experiences, and voices of immigrant students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, encourages them to persevere in their studies,

and advises them on how to navigate the complexities of the institution, while also managing cultural expectations. As a woman of color, she has a quasi-maternal role with the students she mentors. Yet, she takes her role as a mentor seriously, holds students accountable for their actions, challenges them to do their best academically, encourages them to get involved in student life, and supports them throughout their college years. She shares an important culturally responsive commitment with her African American sister colleagues, including Jackie, and contributes to the retention of diverse students enrolled at the institution.

Jackie. Jackie has been in her current senior-level position for over six years and has never been married. Prior to joining the higher education profession, she worked in the private-sector on the international and national levels. A highly skilled researcher, Jackie enjoys her "craft" in research and analytics and is motivated by the innovation she brings to her work. She supervises a team of professionals and her leadership guides the work of nearly three dozen staff members.

> "A lot of what my team does is the first-ever, so that's pretty exciting. And I also like working in the space of STEMM [science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine]. A lot of our academics are definitely innovators, as well as the students. I think of the overall reputation of the university. So, . . . where I'm doing my craft, I think, really, really excites me."

Jackie's greatest contribution to the institution is that she created and built her department from the ground up. She commented with pride that

> "from the infrastructure to policies to methodologies, I've done it all. When I started at [the institution], I was given a pad and a computer. If I had to leave tomorrow, I am confident that they will remain working on everything I created for quite some time."

Jackie has made an impactful contribution that helped the university acquire millions of dollars in just one year, which was a record-breaking accomplishment. The

systems that she has created and manages will financially sustain the university far into the future. Jackie credited her success as an African American woman leader in a professional niche that is predominantly comprised of White male to the trust, support, and encouragement she received from one of her former supervisors who is a Black man who gave her the opportunity and empowered her to bring creativity and innovation to the university. Their common vision for vast institutional growth was the main reason Jackie accepted her current leadership position when it was offered.

The interviews uncovered that these Black women in institutional leadership shared a common values-driven obligation to help college students persist and graduate, with emphasis given to African American college women and other students of color who need additional support. The research participants also were a support system of their Black colleagues. The personal sacrifices they made as mentors were embedded in a belief that, as African American women leaders, they must use their nurturing skills, knowledge, wisdom, and leadership positions to facilitate the success of Black students and their Black colleagues alike. There were times when the leadership roles of these women were shaped by their race and gender identity, which emerged from the collected data as a salient theme and is discussed below in detail.

Theme 2: Perceptions of Race and Gender Identity and Leadership Roles

Throughout the present study, the impact of race and gender in the participants' work lives emerged as a dominant theme. Race and gender identity were strong factors that defined how the participants made meaning of their experiences as administrative leaders at a PWI and perceived themselves within their work settings. The research findings showed that as educational leaders, these African American women leaders

experienced challenges and obstacles that were based upon the beliefs, expectations, and behaviors of others towards their race and gender identity. The participants of the study contended with racial and gender microaggressions and biased behaviors from their colleagues. They were concerned about the beliefs that their colleagues had about them as Black women in authority. The most salient findings about the influence of race and gender on the leadership roles of the study participants are discussed in this section of Chapter 4.

Candace. Candace attributed her accomplishments to her mother, aunts, and grandmother. The women in her family stressed that she had to excel in all areas of her life to overcome the racial and gender bias and discrimination that she would experience as a Black woman. Candace recounted, "I knew like most women of color . . . you know, for everything you do, you have to do it two or three times better." Throughout her career, she has been intentional about constructing an impressive curriculum vitae (CV).

Despite the commitments and contributions that he has made to her institution, Candace has experienced challenges in her work environment that are in response to her racial and gender identity as an African American woman in a leadership role. When facilitating meetings and training programs for faculty and administrative leaders, she addresses attempts made by participants who question her legitimacy as an executive leader. She is aware that "there's not necessarily a respect for her position, so I have to go back to my CV. I've been very strategic in making sure that my CV has the things I know are rewarding." When introducing herself, she tactically presents her educational credentials, extensive research experience, and impressive professional history, which includes holding several leadership positions on the national and international levels. She

does this to keep her colleagues, who are mostly White males, from publicly discrediting her and question her authority as an executive-level leader. She confidently mentioned that "[her] my educational and research background rivals most [people]" who have doctoral degrees. Occasionally, Candace has needed to address the unwelcome and challenging behavior of other professionals. She described her response in those occasions:

> "Because that little bullying that you [they] do with everybody, that's not going to work with me at all. Some people call it strong leadership. Some people call it arrogance. I don't care. … I had someone say to me last week, as we were kind of going back and forth on something, 'you know, you're pretty sure of yourself.' I said, 'Well, I tell you what. I have a resume that I worked very hard on to get this level of confidence, and I apologize for none of it."

Although she knows that the disrespect that is directed at her is oftentimes due to gender bias, Candace does not discount that her race as an African American can create negative beliefs. Despite her holding one of the highest leadership roles at the institution and being deeply committed to supporting its mission, like many African American women professionals, Candace has to constantly tell others about her professional qualifications and validate her role to gain the respect and regard she has earned as an executive leader. This finding of the study is a reality for many Black women administrators in higher education. Another finding was that Black women leaders who serve in interim positions are taken advantage of, as was the situation for Brenda.

Brenda. Brenda also has experienced racial and gender bias in her leadership role. She candidly shared that "there always has been a lot of liberal posturing in higher education." Brenda does not believe in liberal ideologies and the institution's claims that higher education provides opportunity and access to all regardless of race, gender, and other cultural and social identities.

"But I've [she] have found that the glass ceiling in higher ed administration is every bit as rock hard as it is in other venues; I have found that there's meanness and prejudice and bias disguised by pseudo intellectual babble. They're just better at it. They're better at disguising it and a lot smoother . . .."

Brenda stated, "You can encounter every bit as much bias and prejudice within the walls of the academy as you do in the corporate and private sector." She has heard about faculty women on tenure tracks but questioned what happened to women administrators of color, who are absent .

For years, Brenda worked in her department as a middle-level administrative leader. When her supervisor left their senior-level position, she was asked to assume it on an interim basis until the position could be filled. In actuality, the university did not search to fill the vacancy. As a result, Brenda served in the interim position for much longer than she desired.

"I was in a position where I was in an interim role for eight years. I was good enough to be interim and to do the work, but not good enough to [be] given the job. Yet, they allowed me to stay in that status for eight years."

While working in the interim job title, her pay was significantly less than the salary of the actual position. Brenda was eventually offered the position, but only after she had performed the full job responsibilities at the senior-level for eight years and had brought innovation to the university during challenging fiscal periods for the institution. In hindsight, Brenda felt that she was disrespected and used.

Brenda also saw the same treatment with a Latina administrator who was promoted to an interim leadership role for four years. Over the span of her career, Brenda has seen this pattern of treatment with qualified women administrators of color. The message from the institution's senior leadership, which consisted mostly of White males, was clear: "We can use you in this role. ...You're not really worried [about your interim

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status]. Keep on trying. Just keep on trying." Women who are put in this position in their careers usually have no other choice for keeping their employment.

At the start of her tenure at the university, Brenda had another experience that showed her how tenuous her career could be due to her racial identity as an African American. When she applied to her first job at the institution, she already had prior professional experience working with diverse high school students and thought she was highly qualified for the university position. However, at the time of her interview, another finalist, a White woman from suburbia who lacked hands-on experience, told Brenda that she [the finalist] was the best person for the job. At that moment, Brenda realized that there was a strong possibility that the position she hoped for could be given to a White woman who had little or no prior experience working with the demographic populations that she had served for years. Brenda recalled feeling the immense weight of being a Black woman who could be denied an important job because of her racial identity. However, Brenda was offered the position which launched her career in higher education. Decades later, she vividly remembered the experience, which left an indelible mark on her memory and emotions.

Candace and Brenda's accounts illustrate how race and gender identity can shape the perceptions that others have of African American women leaders in the academy. Although both professionals were highly commitment to their institutions, performed more work, and made important contributions that aid in student retention, persistence, and success, as Black women leaders in higher education, they continued to experience biased treatment in the workplace. Another finding of the study was that the unfair treatment of African American women leaders oftentimes manifested as them not being

taken seriously or being ignored by their non-Black colleagues, as was the situation for Shanice.

Shanice. Shanice, middle-level administrator, described herself as "an expert in my [her] field" who is confident in her leadership ability and research skills. In her work, she is more concerned with getting faculty buy-in whenever she must tell them what they must do to further support the university's accredited standing and reputation in the higher education community. As someone who is "visibly a woman of color," Shanice believes that her racial and gender identity informs how colleagues respond to her. She described how being an African American woman in leadership is shaped by how she is treated by her non-Black coworkers and the meanings she has derived from such experiences:

> "I feel like it affects me every day, right? Because I identify as a Black woman, that I am a Black woman. And I feel like that's never hidden. So, to me, every interaction is impacted by that. And I constantly if I feel as if I'm not being heard, I think it's because I'm a Black woman. If somebody downplays maybe something that I say, or doesn't necessarily want to take my advice, a lot of times, I think it's because I'm a Black woman. I'm very confident in what I do. I don't think I'm perfect, but a lot of times, I feel I come up with good and practical suggestions. And if they're not being heard, for some reason, then I do feel as if it's because of my identity."

Although Shanice is knowledgeable in her field, highly skilled, intelligent, and confident in her abilities, she has experienced times when she and her contributions were not taken seriously or ignored by colleagues. She attributed this treatment to racial and gender bias against her as an African American woman. For Black women leaders, these experiences have a cumulative impact that manifests as marginalization and invisibility and causes psychological and physical stress.

Like Brenda and other participants of the study, Shanice is expected to work in an

environment where she feels that she is not regarded and valued in the same way as her non-Black colleagues. Despite how she is perceived and treated at work, Shanice stated that she is proud to be a Black woman in her position, which was not easy to obtain. She proudly mentioned that she tells her children, especially her daughter, that they can obtain a high-level position like hers. The following account from Stephanie underscored other ways that African American women leaders in the academy are disregarded due to their racial and gender identities.

Stephanie. While working at a prior institution as the coordinator for their academic summer program for student-athletes on their football team, Stephanie , a middle-level administrative leader, had an experience that she has not forgotten. One year, Stephanie heard a rumor that the football athletes would not be taking part in the summer program. When she asked the vice president who oversaw the athletics program, he denied the rumor. The following day, the vice president called Stephanie and her male supervisor to a meeting. Both colleagues are White males. To her surprise, one of the football team staff members, who is a Black male and a former football player, also attended the meeting. Stephanie was the only woman present. As she described what was said, Stephanie suddenly became visibly shaken and raised her voice in disbelief.

She described how the vice president announced that the football players would not going to participate in the academic program. In short, he had lied to Stephanie less than 24 hours earlier. Although she was disturbed by this, it was the response of the team staffer that was more upsetting.

> ". . . we don't want to participate in [the Summer Program] because, you know, for the football players, you know, that there's no girls in the program for them. You know, there's, you know, there's no girls for them to hang out with and date

and stuff. So, you know, that's why they don't want to participate in [the Summer Program] either."

In that moment, everyone except Stephanie shook their heads in agreement and their facial expressions conveyed that they understood what was said. No one questioned the legitimacy of the comment that the football team staff member. This behavior shocked Stephanie, who stated to the researcher, "And I'm like, you have got to be serious that no one is going to say anything to this man saying this out his mouth about women? What do girls have to do with them having their academic camp?"

As a campus administrator, Stephanie knew that several football players had been charged with sexual assault in the past and also appeared in the school newspaper due to allegations of sexual misconduct. In response to the reason that was given for discontinuing the summer program for the athletes, Stephanie exclaimed, "And I'm like, wow. Wow! Like, as a woman, I was floored. Floored!"

During the car ride back to the office with her supervisor, Stephanie was "heated," and asked, "Can you believe what they said? Can you believe it?" He laughed and said, "Yeah, yeah. I don't know." It was not a laughing matter for Stephanie. In describing her thoughts and feelings to the researcher, she emphatically exclaimed, "Absolutely not. What are you laughing for? So, yeah. Oh, yeah, that did it for me."

Although the above incident occurred years ago, it remained deep within Stephanie's memory. Her narrative illustrates how gender bias can be compounded by the dynamics of race for African American women leaders. She was the only woman at the meeting. Stephanie's male colleagues disrespected her as a woman when they espoused a boys club culture that is based upon their common gender and stereotypical perspective that objectified the role of women. This shocked and upset Stephanie, who also was

appalled that her Black male counterpart would use "not having girls in the program" as a "valid reason for them [the football team] not to participate in an educational program and opportunity." The explanation he gave strongly resonated with Stephanie as an African American and a woman. She was insulted that a Black male professional who shared her racial identity had disregard for her gender. She found what he said highly offensive and based upon a disturbing stereotype about women in general and Black women specifically.

Stephanie said that she has witnessed how African American men who work in higher education oftentimes are held in high regard by their non-Black colleagues, primarily due to their gender affinity and race, even when they do little to earn recognition. The meeting she attended illustrated this perspective:

> "I'm sure they looked at him [the Black staff member] as this god in athletics, you know, as a person of color. He also played on the football team as an undergraduate. So, he was just this knowledgeable person who understood the football players and their wants, which is why I'm sure he was asked to come to this meeting and not the assistant coach."

Like the narratives of her Black women colleagues, Stephanie's account gave evidence that African American women leaders oftentimes are viewed and treated differently due to their racial and gender identity and intersectionality. At times, the resulting behavior towards them is biased, negative, and unfair. Many Black women in higher education administration experience this reality daily. Yet, like Stephanie, they continue to give their time, skills, talents, and resources to support the institutions they serve. Like Stephanie, Diane is an example of how institutional expectations and gender bias on the job shaped the experience of a Black women leaders.

Diane. Although Diane, a mid-level leader, works hard to support her institution's mission, she has had negative experiences based upon her racial and gender identity. Her job responsibilities do not include working for the institution's admissions process. Yet, she has been expected to help with the outreach and recruitment of prospective students of color. Diane said "I should not be present at these kinds of things. But when it was posed to me, my identities were part of that conversation."

The expectation is based upon an assumption that, as an African American woman in a leadership role, Diane has the knowledge and skills needed to effectively attract and recruit Black and other racially diverse students based upon her racial visibility. She has not been compensated for the added time she spends preparing presentations and engaging with hundreds of high school students, their parents, and guests who attend the institution's campus visitation programs. It is common for African American women in the academy to be expected to spend more labor to support the institution's diversity goals without consideration given to their current workloads and compensation for the extra work they perform. Yet, they continue to do so to help support Black students and other diverse students.

Shortly after assuming a new leadership role and while she was also pregnant, Diane had an encounter that she has not forgotten. During the last trimester of her pregnancy, she wore a backpack to support her posture. One day, while in the presence of other professionals, a White male colleague of equal rank jokingly and audibly commented to her that she "looked like a 12-year-old child."

As she recalled the moment and described the psychological and emotional impact of this negative experience to the researcher, Diane's eyes filled with tears. The

pain she felt as she recollected what happened was visible and palpable. In an instance, her workplace became a hostile environment where Diane, as a Black woman could not take steps to safeguard her health and the health of her unborn child without being insulted, ridiculed, and made fun of by colleagues. The incident deeply affected her.

The recollection of what had happened made Diane question if she is "a good fit" as an administrative leader.

> "And that has been a memory that has stuck with me a lot. And this is why, you know, that the idea of imposter syndrome comes up where I don't feel like I fit in. Because I am one of the youngest staff members in our [divisional] leadership and [unit-level] leadership. And, you know, I've had multiple experiences where, because of how I wear my backpack, I have been thought of as a child, both in that meeting and other in other areas as well. So, I think about that a lot."

The question of fitting in or belonging continues to plague Diane and has influenced her self-perception. She said that she suffers from imposter syndrome. Despite her professional skills, abilities, achievements, and intelligence as an educational leader, for Diane, the experience created feelings of not fitting in and led her to believe that she is not worthy of recognition and a fraud. Imposter syndrome, a belief that is common among African American women, has harmful psychological and physiological effects that manifest as feelings of discomfort and stress due to the ever-present concern that others will discover that one is not the professional that they claim to be (Clance & Imes, 1978). Although some time has passed since Diane had this negative encounter, she said that she will never forget it.

Diane shares a belief with Candace and Shanice, that due to their race and gender identity, Black women professionals must work harder than their non-Black colleagues and be exceptional in their jobs to be taken seriously and succeed in the workplace. Whenever she interacts with coworkers, Diane believes that she is judged based on her

appearance and language as a woman of color rather than for her leadership skills and ability. She shared that, "as a Black woman, I think about how I look at all times, how I sound when I'm speaking to someone. I code-switch constantly." In Diane's leadership role, code-switching helps her navigate the work environment so that she can gain acceptance and support. For African American women in higher education, code-switching is a skill and a burden that many must master to be successful leaders at PWIs.

Wanda. Like the earlier participants that are highlighted in the present study, Wanda "must work twice or three times as hard" to gain acceptance in her leadership role because she is an African American woman. As the administrator responsible for staff recruitment for a large division, Wanda has seen her male colleagues, which include Black men, not being held to the same standards as Black women, yet more likely to get promoted.

> "They [male staff] don't always do what I do, crossing T's and dotting I's, but because they're men, no one holds them to the standards that 'Black woman' [Wanda] is held to. … How, do you [I] know? I'm like because I work with them. I'm there when something isn't right, or something goes wrong with their staff, and they are continually promoted. Whereas [for] me? What I've seen in higher ed, is that you get your *one* Black woman [who gets promoted]."

Wanda stressed that some of the biased treatment that African American women leaders experience is due to their racial and gender identity. While at work, Wanda has experienced times when she was aware of being Black and a being woman. On one occasion, Wanda, who is a divorced single parent, was discussing the poor job performance of a male colleague with a senior administrator, who replied, "Well, you know, he has a family." In her work culture, gender inequality is perpetuated when male employees are not held accountable for poor job performance based on whether one has or does not have family obligations.

Wanda added that when she enters a room, people at once take notice because of her physical height, statuesque appearance, and extroverted behavior. She explained,

> "I don't have a problem speaking and people get intimidated by it. So, I have dealt with a lot of things, you know, and what the stereotypes are. … And I'm thinking to myself, … I'm saying the same thing that my counterparts are saying. And you hired me to manage something."

Wanda knows that how her colleagues perceive her can be based on stereotypes and misperceptions about her race, gender, and status as a single parent. Regardless of these perceptions, she is expected to find ways to manage her feelings while continuing to excel in her leadership position. As an African American woman leader, Wanda said that she maintains a keen sense of purpose and deep commitment and obligation to support her Black colleagues and other professionals of color who work in her division.

Mia. Throughout most of her career, Mia, a mid-level administrative leader, has had to contend with insults about her race and ethnicity. She painfully spoke about how a former supervisor at another institution who is a White male accused her of deception when she applied for a job. Mia recalled:

> "He said, ". . . you fooled us.' ... I was like, 'What do you mean?' … I was really lost. Did I miss something? He was like, 'Yeah, well, I mean, your name is [Mia]. But you're all, you know, [Caribbean] or whatever.' Hi, I'm Black, I thought. He's like, 'Yeah, I mean, if we had known who you were then, we probably wouldn't have hired you.' I felt really uncomfortable. I was still a young professional."

The conversation left Mia asking herself if she was pretending in her job and as a woman of color, to be someone that she was not. If the supervisor had read her resume closely, he would have deduced that it was highly likely that Mia was African American because it listed the Black professional associations that she is a member of and the African American student organizations she advised. The questions Mia was asked about

her race and ethnicity and what her former supervisor said to her was shocking, upsetting and has been etched in her memory.

Mia said that she constantly has to deal with misperceptions about her race and gender identity based on her looks. Her physical features do not reflect the typical stereotypes and perceptions of someone who is from the Caribbean, which is to have a dark complexion and speak with an accent. She identifies as Black, has a light-skinned complexion, and does not always speak with a Caribbean accent when communicating to a non-Caribbean. When she shared that she is from a Caribbean country, it confused people. Mia admits that "I [she] know I'm racially ambiguous for a lot of people. Um, they just choose to see what they want to see."

One finding of the study is that African American women in higher education do not feel psychologically safe in their work environments for fear of being misunderstood. Mia mentioned that "it's hard as a Black woman to feel safe [at work]. I've never felt safe." Mia, tearfully explained,

> "I've never felt safe, be that, if I said something wrong, did something wrong, I could be misread, right? My ability to be independent and take care of myself and live on my own could be taken from me. The part where people could attack my character. The part where I can be vulnerable, you know, like in this moment, is not an option because Black women aren't allowed to be delicate or vulnerable. We're just supposed to, like, keep taking these hits. We're supposed to be able to ingest being spoken to treated, micro-aggressed regularly, and be grateful that they let us, Master let us in the house."

Being an African American women leader in higher education comes with an inescapable weightiness that effects one's mental well-being and sense of self. Mia described the accumulative effects of the burdens that Black women leaders experience and the resulting fear their have of being misunderstood, which can have negative consequences and threaten their job security. Those who experience biased treatment,

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microaggressions, and discrimination, yet are expected to remain silent. So, they work and move in spaces that are not safe and are not free to be their authentic selves for fear of retaliation. This reality creates psychological and physical stress for African American women in leadership positions at PWIs who have a strong obligation to help Black students and their Black colleagues survive and succeed.

Jackie. Jackie, a middle-level leader, recalled an experience she had during the first week in her current job. In the office's copy room, she noticed a posted list of each staff member's birthdate, including hers. This made her uncomfortable, so she spoke to her supervisor and was told that the information came from the institution's personnel department. This disturbed Jackie even more and she responded that it was a breach of confidentiality to post her birthdate publicly without her consent.

Jackie told her supervisor that she came "from an organization where not everyone even celebrates birthdays, not all religions celebrate birthdays, . . . you got to respect people's privacy." To Jackie, "the display of my birthdate was an invasion of my privacy." In response, the supervisor, a White male, minimized her concern and replied, "Well, we're all family here." At that moment, Jackie thought, "I get that, but the reality is that for working occupations, for many people of color, the workplace is not their family." She did not consider the people she had just met as family members. Shortly after the conversation, the list was removed from the bulletin board.

When Jackie told her staff members what had happened, some of them were upset and saddened by the change. She felt that several assumptions had been made that led to the posting of confidential information had occurred. As someone who worked with data, Jackie felt that this was a privacy issue. She also viewed the practice of posting birthdates

as a cultural issue. Jackie, the only African American in an upper management position in her office, experienced the unintended consequences of culturally insensitive behavior in the workplace. Months later, other staff members thanked Jackie for voicing her concern, which she did at a significant risk to the first impressions she was trying to make as a new employee and a Black woman in a new leadership position. While this may have appeared to be a minor incident for some, for Jackie, it created a large amount of stress as she was trying to understand the office culture through the lens of her personal identity.

Jackie also shared that her White female colleagues have repeatedly asked her for advice on how they should address difficulties they experience in the workplace because she is a "strong woman." She has interpreted their compliment to actually mean that she is a strong *Black* woman whom they can go to for support.

> "I've had many of my colleagues come to me for support or to lean on me. … My White ones, don't say, 'I'm a strong Black woman.' They just say, 'You're strong. You know, tell me what to do.' And so, I also kind of play this mama role. I don't even know how I got there. But most of my [staff], especially the junior staff, will come to me. So, sometimes I take it as flattery, you know, but sometimes I'm like, 'Wow! They must really think something of me to come to me to think that I can help solve their problems, or, or help them work through their problems.'"

The belief of Jackie is a "strong Black woman" has created an expectation that she be available to give counsel whenever her colleagues need it. This has become an added burden that she must manage. In addition to being a competent administrative leader, as an Africa American woman, Jackie has become a caregiver for the emotional and psychological well-being of her non-Black staff. These experiences have suggested that a Black women's role is to take care of White people in the workplace.

Like Wanda, Jackie has experienced bias treatment in the workplace based upon her status as a single Black woman. In the interview she mentioned once she was told that

a male colleague in her division received added compensation and was given a flexible work schedule because "they have families." In contrast, Jackie does not have a spouse or children and was expected to work longer hours than her married colleagues. When she requested a promotion, she was asked why she needed more money since she does not have children.

> "My colleagues who have families tend to leave work at five [o'clock] and those who are single can work away, you know. I've noticed that when you are in an environment where the majority of people have children and or are married, it's a very different dynamic."

From these experiences, Jackie has concluded that "race and gender are very much a part of this [the experiences], in terms of my group [Black women leaders]. …Yeah, without a doubt, and you feel it because there are times where it can be emotionally draining."

A major finding of the present study was that beliefs of their racial and gender identity are central for African American women administrative leaders in higher education. Their identity informs how their colleagues perceive and treat them and what they think of themselves. The present study found that for African American women leaders, this intersectionality of race and gender is ever-present and places them in unique position or standpoints that calls for our understanding (Collins, 1989). As institutional leaders, they constantly experience the dualities of their identity which are inexplicably intertwined (Crenshaw, 1989). For Black women in educational leadership roles, this is a reality that supersedes their professional expertise and skill sets, and can have harmful effects on their psychological, emotional, and physical well-being.

Theme 3: Characteristics of Job Satisfaction

Despite the commitment and sacrifices that African American women leaders make to support the mission of their institutions, the findings of the study revealed that

their contributions come with systemic and problematic issues that negatively shape their job satisfaction. In the present study, job satisfaction is defined as an individual's feelings about his or her job situation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and the positive emotional response to a job situation resulting from attaining what the employee wants and values from the job (Busch, Fallan, & Pettersen, 1998). For the study participants, their job satisfaction is shaped by their experiences, observations, and how they are treated in the workspace as Black women educational leaders and as Black women who have other multiple identities as wives, mothers, unmarried individuals, and community members.

Systemic and Problematic Issues. The study found that there are systemic and problematic issues that African American women in educational leadership at PWIs have had to contend with from the time that they started working in American higher education. underrepresentation, marginalization, social isolation, and the lack of support for career advancement emerged as subthemes and areas of concern for the research participants.

Underrepresentation. The underrepresentation and under-retention of Black women leaders in postsecondary education contributes to the lack of job satisfaction and has implications for maintaining a diverse workforce. Jackie expressed her concern in this way:

> "I just don't see the numbers in higher ed. Me, personally, just using my own institution, our numbers are just not there. And it's kind of ironic because when I look at higher ed, you want to work for a great institution. But if the faculty doesn't even represent your group, . . . it's a very powerful statement."

Jackie knew qualified and overqualified people of color with doctoral degrees who applied for jobs at the institution but were not interviewed or hired. She attributed this to an institutional culture that does not give them equal and fair consideration for

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jobs. She said, "Higher education is not diverse because people of color are applying but are not getting hired."

The small number of African American women leaders who work in the setting of the study and in higher education, in general, affect their leadership experiences and career development. Wanda shared that she left the institution some years earlier "because I was a woman of color, . . . and there was no one that looked like me working here." Later, she returned to work at the same institution because there was an increased number of diverse professionals working there.

The findings of the study revealed that seven participants (Candace, Brenda, Jackie, Shanice, Stephanie, Diane, and Wanda) worked in departments where the presence of other African American women leaders who make impactful decisions and develop policy is scarce. Mia and Wanda considered themselves fortunate to have immediate supervisors who people of color and leaders in positions of authority who make important decision and policy. The presence of colleagues who look like them makes them feel more connected with the institution, included in their workplaces, and less marginalized.

Candace said that she has seen a slight change in the institution's diversity and that "the table's getting more diverse, that it's not just me anymore," in reference to the recent appointment of another African American woman to an executive-level position. Nonetheless, the overall number of African American women in leadership positions of power at the university continued to be small and lag White women and men employed with the same ranking.

Marginalization and Social Isolation. Although she is in a senior leadership

position, Jackie, who is not married and does not have children, experiences

marginalization on her job and feels that she is not central to where the power exists in

her division. There are times when coworkers ignore her at meetings and treat her as

though she is invisible. When this happens, Jackie feels that their behavior toward her is

because she is a single unmarried Black woman without children, and, therefore, has

little or nothing in common with them. She is an outsider-within (Collins, 1989), one

who is not fully included in their conversations.

> ". . . you have to take into consideration the emergencies with children and in the families. And when I first started . . . I literally felt like 'the other' because I'm not married, and I don't have any children. Whereas I was walking into a suite of people who were literally all married and had multiple children. And so, you'd be amazed at the level of banter around children and spouses, the social climate."

Jackie is rarely invited to activities that her colleagues host outside of work. The

social rejection and psychological isolation that she endures as someone who is invisible

to her coworkers is emotionally painful. Yet, she goes to work daily, aware of this painful

reality. Experiencing social isolation on the job is a reality that Africa America women

leaders experience because of working at a major PWI.

Lack of Support for Career Advancement. The study found that although most of

the participants have the support of their supervisors for professional development, some

are not guided in the steps they need to take for career advancement. African American

women leaders who show a fervent desire to move into higher levels of the institution are

perceived threats to those who are in leadership positions at higher levels in the

organization. As a result, many did not discuss their ambitions, request more professional

training for the next job level, or talk about their desire to further their education to earn a higher degree.

Jackie, who wanted to pursue a terminal degree and has witnessed first-hand what happens when staff in her department announced their intentions to advance their education and career.

> "I've seen [majority] people who talk about getting a master's degree get time off. I know people of color, including myself, who don't talk about that on the job because there's a fear that they [management] will start playing around with your evaluations, and that'd be retaliation. …This is directly tied to my race and my ethnicity. So, . . . I'm putting [contributing] into an organization that I can't benefit from [educationally] nor can benefit from [by working] in other areas. I don't know too many people of color at this institution who've had positive experiences trying to get a PhD from here."

Unlike Jackie, Wanda had the full endorsement of her supervisor, who also is a woman of color, to take part in leadership development opportunities and obtained a recommendation from her supervisor to enroll in a doctoral program. For Wanda, "it's mature leadership that understands, if you are making yourself look good, it makes us all look good. And that's what it's all about. That's job satisfaction to me." Other findings of the study on what job satisfaction means to the participants are discussed below.

Characteristics of Job Satisfaction. Each research participant characterized job satisfaction differently, depending upon their workplace experiences and observations. From the collected data, fifteen factors that characterize job satisfaction were identified and listed in Table 3. The findings were grouped under the following four over-arching subtopics for ease of understanding:

- Institutional Culture

- Work Environment

- Supervision

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Table 3

Findings of the Study: Factors that Characterize Job Satisfaction

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Institutional Culture
- Being valued, acknowledged, and compensated for working outside of one's job responsibilities to support the institution's agenda for diversity, equity, and inclusion. (Diane, Stephanie)
- Compatibility of one's personal values with the institution's values. (Diane)
- Public praise for one's leadership abilities and unique perspectives. (Mia, Wanda)

Workplace Environment
- A bias-free work environment where everyone is treated equitably and with respect. (Candace)
- A workplace culture that is psychologically safe (free from fear). (Mia, Jackie)

Supervision
- Inclusive supervision that supports one's multiple identities and promotes multicultural competence and inclusion. (Diane, Jackie)
- Work autonomy and being trusted to perform one's work. (Candace, Brenda, Jackie)
- Opportunities for creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and receiving recognition. (Jackie)
- Meaningful leadership opportunities and continuous professional growth and development. (Brenda, Mia, Wanda, Jackie)

Interpersonal Relationships
- A sense of belonging with colleagues and as a member of the institution. (Diane, Jackie)
- Support from one's supervisor and colleagues. (Stephanie)
- Positive relationships outside of one's immediate work environment. (Brenda)
- Support for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. (Wanda)
- Contentment in one's leadership role. (Shanice, Stephanie)
- Having a keen sense of purpose and a commitment to serve others. (Candace, Brenda, Shanice)
- Positively impacting the lives of others, especially people in the external community (Brenda)

Note: Each finding indicates the name of the participant(s) of the study who provided relevant narrative data.

- Interpersonal Relationships

Each characteristic of job satisfaction is followed by the pseudonymous name of the participant(s) who identified with it. For the present study, a classic definition of job satisfaction was used. *Job satisfaction* is defined as an individual's feelings about his or her job situation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and the positive emotional response to a job situation resulting from attaining what the employee wants and values from the job (Busch, Fallan, & Pettersen, 1998).

Theme 4: Resistance, Support Systems, and Coping Strategies

Resistance. Another finding was that African American women leaders have used resistance in the face of opposition as a means of survival and coping in their work environments. Candace embraces opportunities to overcome obstacles and challenges rather than avoid them. She views them as barriers that she must navigate and "accelerate over." Candace is a highly-experienced leader, who experiences microaggressions but always listens to those who are "negative, disruptive naysayers" and engages them in working on solutions to the concerns they present.

> "I'll make sure they are on a committee. You don't get to be disruptive in the dark. If they don't like the process, I will bring them to the understanding of the problem with this process. 'Seems like you may be a contributor to our solution, so let's bring you into the . . ..' . . . I'll never shy away from someone that's disruptive . . .. Come to the committee. There may be merit in what you're saying. I always listen to what you say. "

This resistance has given Candace a level of respect throughout the institution. Faculty members and professionals—Black and non-Black alike—reach out to her with their concerns because she is a person of integrity and can be trusted.

Brenda adopted a different approach to resisting the status quo. Although she is a senior administrative leader, occasionally she joins her staff in performing mid-level

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work. Colleagues have commented to her that she should not do tasks that her staff do and has been criticized for not knowing how to delegate. She sees this as a survival strategy in that some of the basic tasks she performs keep her grounded and bring meaning to her work. She takes time to meet with prospective students and their families, which is something that she recognizes that one of her many staff members could do. Smiling and with an expression of deep thought on her face, Brenda described what such a small act means to her:

> "If I don't do that occasionally [visiting high schools], I would lose my mind. I genuinely enjoy and value being out there and feeling. . . . I feel most alive because it really informs my world. . . . sometimes, its about getting back to your roots, getting down to your roots."

Brenda's refusal to separate herself from the many present and future students is a form of resistance that emanates from her strong commitment to help and serve others, especially African Americans and others who need encouragement to attend college and support to succeed.

Support Systems. A major theme that emerged from the collected accounts on job satisfaction was the support systems African American women leaders use to help them deal with the challenges and obstacles they meet in the workplace due to their race and gender identities. The study found that their support systems consist of supervisors, colleagues, family and friends, and their religion and spirituality. Their relationships with professional mentors, participation in professional organizations, and networks also provide the support that support systems consist of African Americans and other persons of color who exist in counterspaces where Black women can find acceptance and be embraced.

Support from Family and Friends. For Diane, the support from her parents has helped her through challenging times. Her mother has taught her to work hard and preserve, which are on the top of the list of her personal values. Like Mia, she also has Caribbean family roots but found it challenging to cultivate deep relationships with other Black women in leadership positions due to their cultural differences. For Diane, it was easier for her to make connections with entry-level colleagues than those who are more experienced.

Jackie, on the other hand, had a network of diverse folks, men and women, who along with her parents challenge her something to overcome her problems. Diane also had networks in her industry who were older in age and more experienced people whom she affectionately referred to as her "Elders."

> "I call them my allies, my environment. I really do have some really great allies, . . . even outside of the workplace. I know that I can get some support there."

Whenever she needs to vent about workplace concerns, Shanice considered herself fortunate to be able to say, "I has a nice group of people I can go to; first and foremost, my sisters." She also had a network of women friends with whom she can discuss anything and get guidance. Stephanie relied upon friends outside of work and her family to open up to and get feedback from. She also valued colleagues whom she has become close friends with because she completely trusts.

Support from Supervisors and Colleagues. Mia said that she greatly appreciates that she has a supervisor who is a Black woman, someone she can relate to as a woman of African descent.

> "There are many parts that I actually enjoy that I never had before. … I enjoy us being able to just talk about 'I got a hair appointment, so I'm not gonna be out.' It's not that I don't [say this]. It's just that I can say it."

When she meets with her supervisor, Mia can express her authentic self as a Black woman. She does not have to project a persona that aligns with that of the majority culture of the institution, which can be stressful for professionals of color who work at PWIs. In her interview, Mia grinned as she described what it is like "being free to say and do things without having to necessarily be a code-switcher or turn [what I say] into something common so that other people understand." She enjoyed being able to speak openly and honestly with her supervisor when she experienced disappointments and maltreatment from colleagues and knows that she will get the emotional support and feedback she needs to help manage demanding situations.

Throughout the years that she has been working at the university, Shanice has received support and sponsorship from a former supervisor who is a White woman who believed in her and the advancement of women in academia in general.

> "She [my supervisor] pushed me even when I did not want to be pushed. I mean, I'll be honest with you, when I first started, I was perfectly fine. . .. And she was like, 'Absolutely not! You're going to lead.' She really pushed me to supervise people, put me on different projects, and put me out there. I was very lucky to have somebody advocating for me, even when I didn't want to advocate for myself."

Shanice's supervisor recently retired. At the time, she was not aware that her supervisor had been training her for years prior to the leadership position that she currently holds. After a national search, Shanice was appointed to her supervisor's former position. She has brought a vast amount of knowledge, advanced leadership skills, and confidence to her new leadership role. Shanice's career advancement was possible because the supervisor believed that she had great potential and took an interest in developing her as a woman and leader in a field that is dominated by male leadership.

Professional Mentoring and Networking. The study found that professional mentors have a crucial role in the lives of African American women leaders. Mia enjoys the relationship she has with her professional mentor, who is an older African American woman senior administrator and faculty member who is highly regarded and respected throughout the university for her knowledge of the profession, expertise, experience, accomplishments, and the support she gives to students and professionals of color. Mia spoke fondly of her mentor, a professor, who acknowledged and validated Mia's feelings when she felt hurt and angry when fellow classmates made disparaging statements about her racial and cultural background. Her mentor has provided a caring and nurturing space for Mia.

Mia's mentor has also introduced her to professional associations, sponsored her participation in major university programs and initiatives, and cultivated her leadership and personal development. From these experiences, Mia has built relationships with colleagues across the campus and throughout the nation. Due to having an African American woman as a professional mentor, Mia's professional and personal development has grown in remarkable ways. She also takes part in the group of professionals of color that Wanda founded.

Professional Counterspaces. The affinity group that Wanda established for colleagues of color who are newly hired in her department and others provides a professional counterspace where colleagues are affirmed, supported, and appreciated by their colleagues. In this unique space, the group member have embraced their new colleagues and introduced them to places where one can find housing, amenities, and culturally responsive services, such as ethnic grocery stores and hair salons.

Funded by a one-time grant from the university, the program provided a gathering space where professionals of color discussed common interests, openly shared their thoughts and feelings about racism and other concerns, formed networks with each other, and engaged in activities for expanded learning and cultural enrichment. As a community of support, the group also introduced new employees to the institutional culture, physical setting, and its surrounding areas. Wanda has coordinated monthly meetings and activities for many, including non-Black professionals who wanted to take part in the group. Wanda said,

> ". . . that [professionals of color] group is what I'm most proud of. Because it's not even just people of color in the affinity group. It's like our White counterparts or White- identifying counterparts, too. Their minds were blown. … But to hear [Black] professionals say it [discuss race and racism] in the way in which we choose to, however we choose to say it, because it's always a tiptoe because of work, that's what I'm proud of. Of what we've been able to do with the staff here and how they feel freer."

At the PWI of the present study, Wanda created support group and counterspace where African American women leaders and other professionals/faculty color, and their allies could come together. The additional work she has put in to make this possible has aided in attracting and retaining African American professionals and other employees of color.

Wanda, Mia, Stephanie, and Jackie have cultivated a large, diversified number of colleagues, mentors, and supporters, who along with family members and friends, they affectionately call their *tribe.*

Of the eight participants of the study, four served as mentors to African American women students who take part in a program initiative at their institution that promotes the academic and personal success of Black college women. These mentors, along with other

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women advisors who mostly are mostly African American and Latina, have organically formed a counterspace where strong, supportive relationships are developed and women of color help each other cope with their work environment and personal challenges.

Religion and Spirituality. Maintaining one's religious faith and spirituality is an added support system and coping strategy that creates connections with other Black women while also helping one maintain a healthy sense of self (Henry & Glenn, 2009; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; West, 2015). The research participants talked about the importance of their faith as Black women, which they consider a priority for coping. Mia attested, "I have learned how to protect those things that are important to] me. Like my faith and community service. Nothing else gets between me and my praise and worship. Nothing gets between me and my time with my family."

Conclusion

The findings discussed in this chapter evolved from rich, thick descriptions of the workplace experiences of African American woman leaders at a PWI. The heartfelt narratives are unique to each individual, yet when considered in their totality depict a story of purpose, pain, and hope. For the study participants, job satisfaction is shaped by their racial and gender identity and comes with many challenges and obstacles that affect their psychological and physical well-being. Yet, although small in numbers, African American women leaders continue to sacrifice their time, energy, and resources to support and uplift the students they serve as well as each other. The relationship of the findings of the study to prior research, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future practice and research are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Chapter Four presented the significant findings from the study. This chapter explains the findings of the study and how they relate to earlier research on African American women leaders and job satisfaction. The limitations of the study and opportunities for future research also are presented.

Implications of Findings

The present study was an examination of the workplace experiences of eight African American women in leadership positions in higher education administration at a PWI and job satisfaction. The study investigated how race and gender identity shaped their leadership roles and job satisfaction. Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1986) and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) were the theoretical frameworks that gave us insight into the multiple contexts of the lived experiences of these Black women leaders and their perspectives about their workplaces.

Black Feminist Thought

The study's findings aligned with Collins' (1990) Black Feminist Thought by centering the African American women leaders in the research and examining the intersectionality of their race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989), and their standpoint and outsider-within positionality (Collins, 1986, 2002). Collins (1986) described Black women as outsiders within who

> ". . . have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences. A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American women and the dominant group" (p. 21).

The findings of the study supported prior research that emphasized that African American women administrative leaders experience their institutions as outsiders-within due to their race and gender identity and the cultural differences they have from their non-Black colleagues.

Another finding was that for many African American women leaders, their race and gender identity are harmful to their leadership roles and job satisfaction. The findings of the collected narratives aligned with the viewpoints that Collins (1986) and other researchers share about the intersectionality of being Black and a woman and its manifestation as negative perceptions that are expressed as racism and sexism, a form of double oppression that the participants frequently experience (Crenshaw, 1986; Davis, 2016; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006; West, 2017b, 2020).

The findings also revealed that some African American women leaders are not satisfied in their jobs because they are overburdened by an institutionalized system that disregards their unique socio-cultural position and does not fully support their professional growth and career advancement. An important implication of this reality is that Black women leaders experienced psychological and physical harm resulting from the biased behavior, microaggressions, and discrimination they encounter at work. They were expected to give their time and labor to their institutions—usually in the form of extra service—without receiving adequate compensation and adjusted workloads. Many of the administrators were not acknowledged or recognized for their contributions and the added value they bring to their institutions.

A tenet of Black Feminist Thought calls for Black women to be self-defining, self-valuing, self-reliant, and self-empowering (Collins, 1986, 1999). In the present study,

the participants articulated how they defined themselves as Black women and asserted that they matter in the academy. Despite the harmful consequences of unfair treatment, they have endured, some of the participants have taken courageous steps to change their circumstances by addressing racial, gender, and class oppression in their workspaces.

Critical Race Theory in Higher Education

The findings of the study also aligned with the tenets of Critical Race Theory in Higher Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton et al., 2015; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006) and provided a theoretical framework for analyzing the data collected to investigate how the historical legacy of systemic racism in postsecondary education have shaped their workplace experiences and job satisfaction as African American women in educational leadership. Critical Race Theory in Higher Education presented a contextual and historical analysis that explained that African American women leaders at PWIs often have to contend with the historical legacy of the impact of slavery.

The findings discussed in Chapter Four showed how the negative manifestations of racism and sexism that Black women leaders met in their everyday work lives were caused by an institutional culture that maintained a status quo that perpetuated the inequities and injustices they experience. The findings on how race and gender identities shaped their work lives and underscored Patton's (2016) assertion that, although they are members of the academy, African American women leaders are not considered as individuals who have the rights of full citizenship and authority that their non-Black colleagues have.

Critical Race Theory is concerned with issues of power, authority, privilege, and penalty in a racialized society (Harper et al., 2018). The examination of the data through a CRT lens exposes the reality that Black women in academic leadership have limited access to levels of power and decision-making that influence institutional policies and practices that address inequities and shape the future of higher education. The application of CRT to the present study allowed for the counterstories produced by the participants of the study as Black women leaders in higher education to gain agency and the ability to "name their reality" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13). The study gave them a platform to use their voices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to aid the researcher in gaining critical insights about job satisfaction for a historically marginalized group that have been excluded from the literature.

The goal of CRT is to disrupt and dismantle the complex systems of oppression that fuel social injustice (Bell, 1986; Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton, 2016). In the present study, a CRT methodological approach to the data analysis unearthed findings that revealed Black women leaders in higher education are put in positions where they must self-advocate for respect from their colleagues, fair treatment, and change for a just work environment.

Characteristics of Job Satisfaction

Underrepresentation and Under-Retention. The findings of the present study confirmed the prior research that revealed that Black women in academia were underrepresented due to their small numbers and under-retained due to their workplace experiences. The present study of Black women leaders at a PWI further confirmed earlier research by Fries-Britt, Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, and Howard (2011);

Townsend (2020); Turner (2002); Turner, González, and Wong (2011); and West (2015, 2018), which concluded that African American women in the academy are disproportionately lower in numbers and under-retained in higher education, and as a result, struggle in silence both professionally and personally (Collins, 1986; Wright & Salinas, 2016). The small sample of participants in the setting of the present study, which is a PWI, implies that a small number of African American women in leadership positions continues to exist in postsecondary education. This finding underscores the urgent need for institutions to create and implement strategies to attract and keep Black women leaders.

Marginalization, Microaggressions, and Social Isolation. Findings from the present study also verified that Black women at PWIs continue to experience marginalization, microaggressions, and social isolation. Examples of marginalization include being ignored at meetings and being treated as though one is invisible in the workplace. In their everyday work lives, Black women leaders live with subtle slights and other indignities in the workplace culture that tells them that they are less valued than their non-Black colleagues. Their experiences are based upon negative beliefs about them, biased behavior toward them, and discriminatory practices that manifest as racism and sexism. In the narratives, Black women leaders said that they also experienced gender bias and unfair treatment based on their marital and parental statuses. The findings showed that although they hold leadership titles and responsibilities, African American women leaders were not allowed to fully take part in or benefit from a work culture where they are fully respected and valued. These findings have negative implications for

the institution's climate for diversity and its ability to attract and retain African American women leaders.

Professional Mentoring, Networking, and Career Advancement. Mentoring was found to be important for the study participants. Most leaders had one or more mentors who provided guidance and support and helped them cope with the challenges and obstacles they encountered in their work environments. The participants of the study depended on the support and encouragement of their close colleagues, family members, and friends. A related finding was that most of the leaders also had professional mentors who supplied career advice and sponsored them for leadership opportunities. All the leaders took part in professional associations in their respective fields of higher education and used their involvement as a platform for networking with colleagues outside the institution. The implications are that African American women leaders have trusted relationships with their mentors, aspire to senior leadership positions (whether at their current institution or another), and seek opportunities to further develop their leadership skills and advance in their careers.

Factors that Categorize Job Satisfaction

African American women leadership in the present study characterized job satisfaction differently, based upon their workplace experiences and observations. From their responses, fifteen factors that characterize job satisfaction were identified and listed in Table 3. These factors of job satisfaction were organized into four broad categories: Institutional Culture, Work Environment, Supervision, and Interpersonal Relationships and are discussed below.

Institutional Culture. Job satisfaction is promoted when one's personal and the institution's values are aligned, which further validates one's leadership role and the work they perform. When African American women leaders are valued for their leadership skills and viewpoints, they derive a stronger sense of job satisfaction. To be recognized and compensated for the additional work they perform to support the institution's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is important in achieving job satisfaction. This applied to Diane, Stephanie, and all participants who served as mentors to students of color and a support system for their Black colleagues.

Workplace Environment. The study found that job satisfaction is enhanced for Black women leaders when they are respected, and their work environments are psychologically safe and free from the fear of retaliation by others. The narratives included multiple accounts of how the participants felt when they were ignored or disrespected during meetings and in other work settings, which eroded their sense of belonging and inclusion.

African American women leaders experienced biased behavior and microaggressions at work, whether unintentional or intentional, which contributed to a negative office climate and create negative feelings about job satisfaction. They needed to feel that they could be their authentic selves at work and not be judged by their supervisor and colleagues who did not know her on a personal level. For Black women leaders in the study, having supervisors and colleagues who understand and respect their cultural boundaries greatly contributed to their job satisfaction.

Supervision. In the collected narratives, seven participants emphasized the responsibility of their supervisors in promoting job satisfaction. The findings related to

supervision underscored that bosses must have the knowledge, awareness, and skills needed to create equitable and inclusive working environments for all employees, including those with different racial and gender identities. Diane and Jackie believed that greater job satisfaction for African American women leaders can be achieved with supervisory approaches that recognize their personal identities and require that fellow staff members develop a level of multicultural competence so that everyone can contribute to creating an inclusive work environment for all.

Interpersonal Relationships. Brenda pointed out that "establishing genuine relationships outside of one's professional role is . . . key to job satisfaction," particularly for people with diverse backgrounds.

> "I think for people of color, without those connections [relationships], I don't think we survive and thrive if we don't have connections. … We have an incredible ability to put up with a whole lot of stuff. …Black folks are very tolerant people, we know where to tap into that real connection, that real support."

Like Candance and Shanice, Brenda derived job satisfaction from the keen sense of purpose and self-obligation she shares with them for supporting the institution's commitment to diversity and promoting the success of its African American students and Black colleagues.

Relationship to Prior Research

Most of the prior research on the experiences of African American women in leadership at PWIs used Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory in Higher Education (CRT) as theoretical underpinnings, drawing from the seminal work of Collins (1989, 2000) and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995).

Research on Underrepresentation and Under-Retention

The problem of underrepresentation is well-documented throughout the literature (Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Henry & Glenn, 2009, 2010; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 1999; West, 2018; Wright & Salinas, 2016). The concern about the small number of African American women leaders in the higher education profession is historical and ongoing. The impact of underrepresentation or the lack of representation for African American women leaders in academia is revealed in the findings of the present study, which also create a psychological strain that magnifies the social isolation that African American women leaders at PWIs experience (West, 2015). This finding implies that African American women administrative leaders are not retained because their institutions do not provide the work conditions, considerations, and support that is needed for them to thrive in their positions and in the academy.

Research on Contributions and Commitments

Despite being underrepresented, African American women leaders at PWIs continue to contribute to the mission of their institutions in multiple of ways. They contribute to the institutional excellence in research, innovation, teaching, and scholarship; support student retention, persistence, and educational attainment; advance institutional diversity; and promote a positive campus racial climate (Association for the Study of Higher Education [ASHE-ERIC], 2013; Fincher et al., 2009; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Smith et al., 2004; Wright & Salinas, 2016). The participants of the present study added value to their institution by voluntarily serving as mentors to students of color−including African American students−for them to be able to persist through graduation. Those who took part in the present study either established and/or participated in

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professional counterspaces where they gave, sought, and received support from other Black colleagues. These activities aided in their retention.

Research on the Intersectionality of Race and Gender Identity

The findings of the present study showed that for African American women leaders, their race and gender identity have a harmful impact on their leadership roles and job satisfaction. These findings aligned with the assertions of Collins (1986) and other researchers (Davis, 2016; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006; West, 2017b, 2020) that, for Black women, intersectionality manifests as negative perceptions and assumptions expressed as racial and gender bias in the form of racism and sexism, which is a type of double oppression that the participants experienced as African American women (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2016; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006; West, 2017b, 2020).

A qualitative study by Clayborne and Hamrick (2007) on African American women higher education administrators found that while being an African American woman in a leadership position is a source of pride, it comes with assigned race- and gender-based expectations from non-Black colleagues. Participants in this earlier study said that "[they] needed to work harder than White professionals to be recognized as successful leaders" (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007, p.132). This earlier finding resonates with the present study's finding that most of the participants of the study felt that they have to be "two or three times better at their jobs" (Candace) and "twice as hard to gain acceptance [by their non-Black colleagues]" (Wanda).

Relationship to Earlier Studies

Earlier Job Satisfaction Studies. At the time of the present study, a search for literature on job satisfaction specific to African American women leaders in postsecondary administration resulted in no known studies. However, there are two known quantitative studies on Black professional women in postsecondary education in general and job satisfaction, administered by Steward (1987) and DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016).

The Steward (1987) study investigated how Black doctoral-level professional women responded to two questionnaires that measured how they interacted with and felt about their colleagues in general. The research found that the participants experienced higher levels of job satisfaction when they exercised caution with approaching colleagues, had a social support network, and had high self-confidence and need little affection from others (Steward, 1987). The findings of the present study were consistent with Steward's (1987) research in two areas: 1) exercising caution with approaching colleagues and 2) having a social support network. Although the participants in the present study expressed self-confidence, none commented on their need for little affection from others [their colleagues]. Stewards' (1987) research gave valuable insights that informed the present study.

DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016) presented a quantitative model for job satisfaction that measured the impact of racial/ethnic identity, racial microaggressions, and support systems for coping as they related to job satisfaction. These factors that characterized job satisfaction were studied further by Maldonado (2015), who revealed that African American women leaders in higher education experience challenges and

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barriers due to their race and gender identities, a reality that the findings of the present study were aligned with. Studies conducted by Mena (2016) and Mena and Vaccaro (2017) showed that African American women leaders experienced racial and gender microaggressions due to their identity. This finding also was confirmed by the present study by accounts from participants who were ignored and treated as though they were invisible in the workplace and their unequal treatment due to their gender difference from their male colleagues.

Research on Black women in the academy conducted prior to Steward (1987) revealed that they had limited academic development and no role models to aspire to be like (Slowe, 1933), multiple negative experiences in academia (Moses, 1980), "are invisible with little psychological support in the workplace" (Mosley, 1980, pp. 306-307), experienced racism and sexism and lack mentors and professional development (Williams, 1989). The findings of the present study reflected the same outcomes of the earlier research, but to a far less extent in the following areas: the existence of role models, few professional mentors, support systems, and limited opportunities for professional development. Findings from the present study refuted Williams' (1989) claim that Black women lacked academic development, as all of the participants had earned at least one master's degree.

From 2003 to 2017, a body of research on the work lives of African American women in academia confirmed that Black women in postsecondary education encountered challenges and barriers to their leadership roles and career advancement due to racism and sexism in the academy (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Henry & Glenn, 2009; Henry, 2010; Mena, 2016; Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; Patitu &

Hinton, 2003; Patton, 2009). The findings of the present study corroborated the findings of this earlier research. Based upon these outcomes, it was suggested that the obstacles and challenges that African American women experience in their leadership roles and the limited opportunities for career advancement have contributed to their lack of job satisfaction. Therefore, prior related research on factors that lead to job satisfaction were examined.

Earlier Studies on Marginality, Microaggressions, and Social Isolation. At the time of the present study, job satisfaction research on African American women in higher education in general yielded only two studies on this topic, conducted by d Steward (1987) and DeCuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016). Both studies are discussed in the above section.

Townsend (2020) posited that the slow progression of Black women into high-level leadership positions is attributed to individual and institutional responses to perceived *identity politics* exercised by group members. In the Townsend (2020) study, the participants highlighted the impact of "the psychological weight or stressors that Black people experience from consciously or unconsciously thinking about how White Americans perceive the social construct of Blackness," as defined by Palmer (2020). Two primary factors that negatively affected the professional advancement of Black women leaders in higher education were reactions by colleagues to them expressing their authentic selves as African American women in the workplace and the impact of microaggressions on their retention as administrators (Townsend, 2020). Two study participants confirmed Townsend's (2020) findings, when they shared about being concerned with what they looked like and how they speak to non-Black colleagues

(Diane, 2022) and talked about having to use code-switch with their language in attempts to manage how they may be perceived by their non-Black colleagues (Wanda, 2022; Diane, 2022).

Collins (1986) and Crenshaw (1986) uncovered that African American women in academia were assumed by their non-Black colleagues to be intellectually inferior and professionally incompetent, a viewpoint that creates additional obstacles and suggests why a lack of respect exists for Black women leaders. The findings of the present study included incidents when the participants were not respected by their colleagues due to perceptions of inferiority.

Earlier Studies on Professional Mentoring, Networking, and Leadership Development. Findings from the present study also indicated that African American leaders placed a high value on mentoring (professional and in general), networking, and the pursuit of leadership development. The study participants had at least one professional mentor and/or colleagues and friends who served in a mentoring role. They all had established professional and personal networks inside and outside of the institution that supported their professional growth and development. This finding differed from the earlier research of Crawford and Smith (2007), who found that African American women in academia had limited mentoring experiences which may have attributed to their lack of leadership development. In Crawford and Smith's (2007) study, the women who were successful had mentoring and professional development experiences prior to assuming their current leadership positions.

Earlier Studies on Resistance and Coping Strategies. Disrupting and dismantling systems of oppression is another coping strategy that was uncovered in the

present study. This form of resistance to workplace inequities was emphasized by those study participants in leadership at the senior and executive levels of the institution. Their commitment and actions to confront racism and sexism in the workplace aligned with the goals of Critical Race Theory in Higher Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton et al., 2015; Patton, 2016; Smith et al., 2006) and are well documented in prior studies conducted by Thomas and Hollenshead (2001) and West (2020).

Earlier Studies on Support Systems. All participants of the present study mentioned that they had used support systems to cope with the realities of being African American women leaders working at a PWI. The findings of the study were consistent with prior research that showed that African American women rely on their family members, friends, colleagues, mentors, and professional networks for affirmation and validation, support, encouragement, guidance, and career advice, and as sounding boards for when they experience race, gender, and class oppression in their workplaces. These findings corroborated prior studies by Davis & Maldonado (2015), Henry and Glenn (2009), Patitu and Hinton (2003), and West (2015).

The participants of the present study also described how their support systems helped them survive in the academy and expanded their knowledge and skills, which aligned with Turner's (2011) research. A longitudinal study, conducted in 2020 examined how professional counterspaces helped create pathways for some African American women to advance towards closing the leadership gap (West, 2020). The findings of the present study corroborated with West's (2020) research, in that the setting under study

offered Black women leaders and Black professionals in general opportunities to participate in a group of professionals of color.

The participants of the present study also exercised their faith in God and were active in their churches and places of worship, which also served as counterspaces where they found solace and strength to continue in their work as institutional leaders. This finding affirmed the significant role of faith, religion, and spirituality as a coping system for Black women professionals and is documented in the prior research by Henry and Glenn (2009), Patitu and Hinton (2003), and West (2015). The participants described additional ways that they survived and coped in their work environments by "laughing, crying, praying, retreating, physical illness, a sense of self, and moving on" (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 84). Throughout their interviews, the participants of the present study laughed, cried, and expressed strong emotions aa they recalled their experiences. Some talked about how important of being grounded in one's self-identity is for Black women leaders. Since the time of this study, one participant decided to move on and has left the institution.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the present study that must be considered. For convenience, all recorded interviews were conducted at different times during the workday, with each interview limited to a maximum of 60 minutes. The participants' busy work schedules may have impacted their ability to give a desired amount of time to their interviews. Since the participants were not given the interview protocol in advance, some of their responses were not concise and took more time for them to communicate than expected. Although such occurrences were few, they limited the researcher's ability

to fully capture the thoughts of each participant because many of them wanted to speak for a greater length of time. During the course of the interviews, the participants wanted to share much more and were challenged with identifying and communicating the information that they felt was most salient.

The use of technology is another limitation that impacted the data collection. The interviews were video, and audio recorded on a computer. Each participant was aware that she was being recorded and may have responded differently if the interviews had been conducted in person.

As an African American woman and an educational leader, the researcher is an indigenous-insider and shared group membership with the participants of the study, which facilitated building trust throughout the interviews and aided in the data analysis process. However, the researcher is in a senior-level leadership position, which may have affected how the participants responded to the interview questions.

Although the findings of the study are not generalizable to every PWI, they reflected the authentic experiences and concerns of Black women leaders in academia. The study also offered considerations and recommendations for ways that colleges and universities can attract, promote, and retain an increased number of African American women in higher education by creating inclusive work environments where they can exercise full citizenship as institutional leaders, receive recognition and compensation for their contributions, and embrace opportunities for career advancement.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The following recommendations for future practice were based upon close interpretation of the participants' interviews.

Colleges and universities that do not view job satisfaction for African American women leaders as an important consideration that should to be addressed perpetuate the underrepresentation and under-retention of this group of diverse professionals who bring new knowledge, innovation, unique perspectives, and leadership abilities to the academy. There is an urgent need for institutions to create and implement strategies to attract, promotes, and keep Black women leaders.

To enhance job satisfaction, attention must be given to acknowledging and addressing the harmful effects of racism and sexism in academia, which are two intersecting oppressions for Black women leaders. To reduce microaggressions and other forms of discrimination in the workplace, it is recommended that current and new employees participate in training programs that raise awareness about diversity and engage them in creating action plans for making their workplaces inclusive and welcoming environments. Systems of accountability for implementing their action steps are recommended. Job expectations should be written in the job descriptions of professional employees.

It is critical for colleges and universities to take steps to eliminate the marginalization, microaggressions, and social isolation that exist for Black women leaders who work at PWIs. These behaviors have harmful psychological and physical effects on this group of professionals. In addition to implementing policies that address biased behavior and discriminatory practices at institutions, strategies for making work environments more inclusive spaces where African American women are treated fairly and with dignity and respect are recommended. Supervisors should be required to practice inclusive supervision, which calls for the development of multicultural

competencies for themselves and their teams through training and experiential learning, consideration and support for the multiple identities of their staff members and promoting multicultural competence and inclusion in the workplace (Wilson et al., 2019).

Structured professional mentoring opportunities and intentionally, well-designed programs where African American women leaders to come together as communities of support for each other and to establish professional networks also is recommended. This will strengthen the institutional commitment to attract, maintain, and promote a diverse workforce.

Another recommendation is to build leadership pipelines for African American women professionals that: 1) educates and informs undergraduate students about graduate programs in higher education and related career options, 2) provides internships and professional networking experiences for graduate students, and 3) offers professionals leadership development opportunities and career development advisement. It is recommended that retired African American women leaders form an advisory group whose experiences, networks, and wisdom can be leveraged to provide current and potential Black women leaders learning opportunities for career enrichment and further advancement in the higher education profession.

Programs that acknowledge and honor Black women leaders for the unique contributions that they make to support their institution's mission are needed, including recognition for the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)-related work that they engage in for this purpose.

African American women leaders who are new at their institutions should be provided with an orientation that includes information about the institution's

organizational culture and ways that they can successfully navigate the work environment. Mentoring from their senior colleagues would help bridge the knowledge gap and create a welcoming work environment. At the time of onboarding, Black women leaders who join the institution should be paired with experienced Black women to whom they can consult for information that is critical to their transition into the organization as campus leaders. Such efforts system would make it easier for new professionals to find mentors and other support systems.

The recommendations presented here required institutions to invest resources, time, and effort to creating and sustaining inclusive and just work environments that support the few Africa American women leaders who have given much of themselves to support their colleges and universities in extraordinary ways.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is needed to further expand our knowledge and understanding about the experiences of African American women leaders in postsecondary education and job satisfaction. A longitudinal study on the participants conducted five to ten years from now could tell us if these educational leaders have progressed in their careers, if anything had changed in their leadership roles and work environments, and if they have experienced job satisfaction.

Another recommendation for future research is to conduct a mixed-methods study to explore how narrative inquiry can be enhanced by quantitative data on job satisfaction for African American women leaders in higher education. Administering a study on the best institutional practices for the improvement of job satisfaction for African American women leaders at PWIs would provide helpful data and suggestions for ways that

colleges and universities seeking to attract, retain, and promote more Black women leaders at their institutions.

It also would be helpful to learn about the perceptions that non-Black colleagues have about African American women who are in leadership roles. Research in this area is needed to understand the underlying perceptions that exist so that effective ways of addressing this topic can be developed and implemented.

Conclusion

This study on African American women leaders in higher education and job satisfaction investigated a complex issue that is rooted in the historical legacy of U. S. slavery and the role of Black women in postsecondary education in the present day and in society in general. It was intended to give voice to a group of higher education professionals who have been in the marginals in the discourse on higher education administration and job satisfaction. The collected narratives from the interviews of the eight African American women administrative leaders who participated in the study described the ways that they have added value to the success of their institution. Their stories also attested to the systemic and problematic issues they continued to experience in the workplace that emanated from misperceptions, erroneous assumptions, and negative beliefs about their race and gender identity. Despite the psychological and physical burdens that they have experienced resulting from this reality, the participants of the study persevered in their leadership roles and found creative ways to support themselves and other colleagues of color on their campus, including their African American male counterpart.

Through this study, the researcher discovered that Black women in higher education leadership viewed job satisfaction as an interwoven system consisting of four critical areas: institutional culture, their specific workplace environments, the supervisory support they received, and their personal values and interpersonal relationships. The research clearly underscored that institutions of higher education are responsible for not only attracting, retaining, and promoting African American women leaders on their campuses, but must also be intentional in creating and maintaining affirming and supportive work environments for their African American women leaders. This study is a call for the implementation of institutional policies and practices that are inclusive and ensure that members of this underrepresented group are treated equitably and with dignity and respect. To this end, several recommendations for institutional change were recommended.

Few studies on African American women and job satisfaction exist. There is much research that is yet to be conducted on this important topic. Future researchers and scholars have a responsibility to ensure that the members of this historically marginalized group are included in the discourse and given the place at the table that they rightfully deserve.

IRB Approval Memo

IRB-FY2022-188 - Renewal: Renewal Submission - St. John's

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Sun 1/29/2023 10:06 AM
To: Cheryl Chambers <cheryl.chambers16@my.stjohns.edu>;parnthec@stjohns.edu <parnthec@stjohns.edu>

* External Email *

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Jan 29, 2023 10:06:09 AM EST

PI: Cheryl Chambers
Dept: Ed Admin & Instruc Leadership

Re: Renewal - IRB-FY2022-188 *African American Women Leaders in Higher Education: An Examination of Job Satisfaction*

Dear Dr. Cheryl Chambers:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *African American Women Leaders in Higher Education: An Examination of Job Satisfaction*.
The study is approved through January 28, 2024.

Decision: Approved

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

Letter of Consent for Participant Interviews

My name is Cheryl Chambers, and I am a doctoral candidate from St. John's University. As the researcher of this study, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. This study will seek to gain insight about your workplace experiences as an African American/Black woman in a leadership position at an institution of higher education and your job satisfaction.

As part of this study, I am interviewing African American/Black women in leadership positions at an institution of higher education to understand the experiences of African American/Black women in the workplace and their job satisfaction, and to identify significant aspects that may help colleges and universities support future professionals who are members of this group. The interviews will be one-on-one with the researcher and consist of a series of open-ended questions that should take 45 minutes to 60 minutes to answer.

The interviews will be conducted through Zoom (an online audio and web conferencing platform) and audio and video recorded using a digital device, to help the researcher accurately capture your insights in your own words. Should you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. After the interview, the researcher will contact you through Zoom to share the interview transcript, to ensure that you have an opportunity to review what you said, add more information if desired, and to edit what you said. As a participant, you agree that all data collected will be owned by the researcher and securely stored for five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

The researcher will maintain strict confidentiality throughout the duration of the study. While there is no direct benefit for your participation in the study, you will be supporting researchers with the knowledge you provide. Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. Your name and the school's name will not be identified in any documents within this study other than this form consenting to be a participant. If at any time you decide not to participate, just let me know.

By participating in this study, you and others will help provide much-needed insights into how African American/Black women in educational leadership experience the workplace. If you have questions about the purpose of this investigation, you may contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮@my.stjohns.edu. If you have

questions concerning your rights as a human participant, you may contact the University's Human Subjects Review Board at St. John's University, specifically Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D., Chair, St. John's Institutional Review Board, at (718) 990-1440 or via e-mail at digiuser@stjohns.edu . You may also contact Dr. Ceceilia Parnther, Assistant Professor, Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership at (718) 990-1467 or parnthec@stjohns.edu.

Your signature acknowledges receipt of a copy of the consent form as well as your willingness to participate.

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Cheryl Chambers, Researcher

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Research Questions and Interview Protocol

Research Questions	Interview Questions
	Demographic Characteristics and Background 1. Please tell me a little about yourself, including your age, gender, marital status, history, and educational background. 2. Please briefly describe your career path.
	Leadership Position and Role 3. Briefly describe your department or administrative unit in terms of its mission, size, and staff composition. 4. What is your current job title and leadership responsibilities? 5. Why did you decide to become an educational leader? 6. What do you enjoy most about being in your current position? 7. Please tell me about the contributions you have made in your current leadership position. 8. What are the challenges and obstacles you have experienced in your leadership position?

Research Questions	Interview Questions
Job Satisfaction	*Job Satisfaction*
1. How do African American women leaders in higher education define job satisfaction?	9. What does job satisfaction mean to you?
a. What factors contribute to job satisfaction for African American women leaders in higher education?	10. What factors contribute to your job satisfaction?
	a. Probing Question: Please describe how the factors you mentioned influence your job satisfaction.
	11. How has being an African American woman affected your job satisfaction?
	12. What needs to change for African American women leaders in higher education to be satisfied in their work lives?
Intersectionality of Race and Gender Identity and Leadership Role	*Intersectionality of Race and Gender Identity and Leadership Role*
2. How do race and gender identity characterize the perceptions of the leadership roles of African American women administrators in higher education?	13. Please tell me about a time(s) when you recognized that your race/ethnicity and gender influenced your professional role. What happened? What was the outcome(s)? What conclusions did you draw from the experience(s)?
Support Systems and Coping Strategies	*Support Systems and Coping Strategies*
3. How do African American women leaders who lack job satisfaction cope with this reality?	14. As an educational leader, how do you cope with the areas where job satisfaction is lacking?
	a. Probing Question: What strategies do you use to help you cope with the lack of job satisfaction?

Research Questions	Interview Questions
	Closing Questions
	16. Is there anything you have not mentioned in this interview that you want to add this time?
	17. What advice related to job satisfaction would you give a newly hired African American woman in a leadership position at your institution?

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