UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Making it Through the Maze: The Triumphs and Trials of Women of Color Administrative Leaders at Two Historically White Universities in California

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

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DEDICATION

So much hard work, dedication, and diligence went into this project. I would like to dedicate this body of work to my mother, the late Siberia Sheppard Johnson, who embodied the resilience and fortitude as some of the women in this project. You were always my pillar of strength and your everlasting love, encouragement, and motivation have kept my torch burning strong and bright. So much of who I am, what I have become, and what I will accomplish in the future is because of who you were and your belief in me. There are no words to express my deepest gratitude and love for you. All of my love to you.

With appreciation to all my friends, colleagues, and professors; with adoration to my sisters, nieces and nephews; and with anticipation to my son, Clarence.

In addition, this is dedicated to all the women of color leaders who have persevered, strategized, and ultimately made their way to the top! Thank you for paving the way for so many other women like you who aspire for greatness and strive to be senior leaders within their organizations. Thank you all for your kindness, for being change-agents, and for your undying "can do" attitude. You are my inspiration, and I am grateful that you shared your journey with me and the path you have laid for others to follow.

Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have received a great deal of support and assistance but none more than from my doctoral committee members whose expertise was invaluable in helping me formulate the research questions and methodology for this dissertation.

First and foremost, I am extremely grateful to my advisor, Professor Mary Betsy Brenner. Your immense knowledge, invaluable advice, continuous support, and patience and plentiful experience have encouraged me at all times in my academic research, as well as in my academic and personal life. Your always insightful feedback pushed me to sharpen my thinking and brought my work to a higher level. You provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my dissertation.

I would be remiss if I did not thank my other two committee members, Professors Sharon Conley and Jenny Cook-Gumperz. First, let me thank you both for saying "yes" to my request to serve as part of my doctoral committee family. I am so glad that I could count on not only your valuable feedback and suggestions, but on your warmth and kindness as well.

I would like to acknowledge my cohort colleagues, Katherine Lee, Noreen Balos and Elizabeth Villa for their wonderful collaboration. I very much appreciate all of your support in providing stimulating discussions during our writing group meetings, as well as happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research. Thank you all for being not only friends but sisters as well. Thank you!

In addition, I would like to thank Professor Mario Garcia for teaching me so much more about Chicano/a Studies in two quarters than I could have ever learned in two years in a classroom. I very much appreciate your faith in my abilities to lead a group of teaching assistants that I don't think I could have done without your wise counsel along the way. I simply cannot thank you enough for the lessons I have learned from you and your research.

I would also like to thank my former master's thesis advisor, Professor E. Kofi Agorsah. Thank you for your continued support and reminding me that there are no concrete ceilings which can hinder my ability to ascend upward both academically and personally. And also, my thesis committee member, Professor Maria DePriest who taught me how to display grace in the classroom. It works, Maria! Thank you so much!

Lastly, I would also like to thank my sisters, Gloria and Irma who oftentimes did not understand my research agenda but was always supportive, nonetheless. This body of work was also completed as an example for my son, Clarence to remind him that he can return to higher education at any time in his life and be successful. Thank you so much son for always having my back whether it was financially or just listening. I sincerely appreciate all of your support. I love you to infinity and back.

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ABSTRACT

Making it Through the Maze: The Triumphs and Trials of Women of Color Administrative Leaders at Two Historically White Universities in California

by

Clare Johnson Washington

The problems being addressed in this study addresses the lack of voice about the unique leadership experiences of women of color mid-level, senior- and executive-level administrators at two different historically White universities in California. It illuminates the unique challenges that these women must endure, as they negotiate a system deeply entrenched in a dominant ideology. Simultaneously, the study highlights how these women perceived and experienced leadership within their administrative roles. The purpose of this qualitative research, guided by critical race theory, was to investigate the experiences of midlevel, senior and executive-level women of color administrators at the two different historically White institutions and to understand the strategies for success that led to their advancement in the positions they currently hold. Participants included African American/Black, Latina, and Native American women. The twelve participants interviewed recounted experiences of tokenism, perceptions of communication styles, and inequitable compensation. They also reported support systems such as mentors, giving back, and spirituality that influenced their thoughts, actions, reactions, decisions, and motivation to continue in their positions, and in higher education. The implications of the study encourage institutions to provide funding, personnel resources, and training for all employees to address

unconscious bias as well as encouraging and support systems. Current women of color administrators should be encouraged to discuss their professional experiences to continue informing scholarship and practice.

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Introduction and Background

In 2018, women made up 50.52 percent of the United States population and 57.1 percent of the workforce. Now, more than 60 percent of women are in the labor force compared to 74 percent for men (Catalyst, 2019). Yet women are noticeably underrepresented in senior level administrative positions such as presidents and vice presidents in the workforce. This underrepresentation of women is particularly apparent in higher education administration, regardless of the classification of the institution, whether two-year college or research university (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017). Though women as a population still lag behind men in upper-level positions, reports (Catalyst, 2004; Jackson & Phelps, 2004; King & Gomez, 2007) reveal that White women are outpacing women of color (WOC) in acquiring positions and pay that have been traditionally reserved for the dominant White male leadership.

This study seeks to illuminate various career paths of women leaders of color in higher education, as well as unique personal, professional, and organizational challenges that may hinder their ascension. Hopefully, the study will bring voice to the unique leadership experiences of women of color senior, mid-level, and executive-level administrators at two different Historically White Universities (HWIs) in California. It will illuminate the unique challenges (on each campus) that these women must endure, as they negotiate a system deeply entrenched in a dominant ideology, and how these women perceive and experience leadership within their administrative roles.

According to King and Gomez (2007), the percentage of women college presidents more than tripled from 1986 to 2006 from 8 percent to 29 percent, while the percentage of presidents who were members of minority groups rose from 8.1 percent to 13.6 percent during the same period. A 2017 report by the American Council on Education reflects that there was a 3.4 percent increase in college presidents who were members of a minority group, from 13.6 percent to 17 percent (Johnson, 2017). From all indications, community colleges still may represent fertile ground for women of color; in particular, those with aspirations for presidencies since community colleges led all other institutions in hiring women presidents (King & Gomez, 2007). Between 1996 and 2006, more than one-third of the new presidents were women. Additionally, King and Gomez pointed out that community colleges also led the way in hiring minority presidents compared to other institution types.

In 2016, 17 percent (17%) of college presidents were minorities (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). African Americans made up 8 percent (8%) of all presidents, the largest representation among all racial/ethnic minority groups (American Council on Education's Center for Policy Research and Strategy, 2018). Women of color were vastly underrepresented in the college presidency in 2016. They were also more likely than other college presidents to be serving in their first presidency. The percentage of minority college presidents has slowly increased over the last 30 years. In Gray's (2018) study of women of color presidents, one of the questions asked was, "What do you think is the single biggest issue facing women of color interested in a presidency today?" (p. 3). One of the respondents replied,

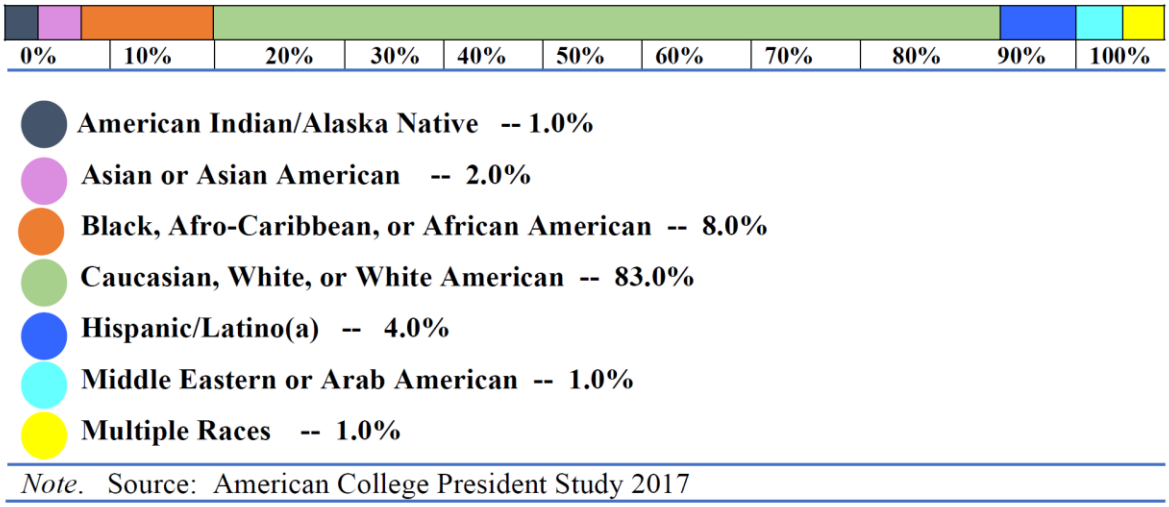
> I think perception. Perception is 90 percent of reality. There is a perception that there are certain characteristics that define women, particularly women of color, that may not necessarily be accurate, but people hold those perceptions. You know, the "angry

black woman," the chip on the shoulder, the always trying to prove something, always has to be right. Those kinds of stereotypes are a challenge. People perceive us a certain way based on those kinds of negative stereotypes, so I think that becomes a big deal, which bleeds into the second biggest factor, which is just positioning and opportunity. The reality is this is based on relationships. Boards of trustee members who are making presidential selections, principals in search firms who are facilitating those searches, if they like you, you get opportunity. If they know you, you get opportunity. If someone called someone who knew someone, you get an opportunity. It's all about relationships. Women have not been in the rooms to make those relationships (pp. 3-4).

As reported in 2017, 17% of college presidents were racial minorities; 36% of minority presidents led associate granting colleges; and 5% of college presidents were women of color (American College President Study, 2017). Figure 1 below gives an idea of how the different demographics are represented.

Figure 1
College Presidents, by Race/Ethnicity

2016



Note. Source: American College President Study 2017

Because higher level college administrators often start as faculty, their work has implications for understanding the importance of what kind of leadership is required to guide campuses successfully outside of the classroom environment. In their empirical study analysis, Bass and Faircloth (2011) pointed out that although progress has been made, women of color (WOC) faculty members (i.e. American Indian/Alaska Native, African American, Hispanic, and Asian/Asian Pacific Islanders) at higher educational institutions continue to experience a number of challenges in the academy. Without proper supports and strategies many of these women will leave the academy prematurely or will not be successful in their quest for promotion and tenure. Their chapter in the leadership volume book identified the challenges these women encounter, as well as the strategies they adopt in response to these challenges. In doing so, the authors argued that a strong sense of self-efficacy is a core trait of successful women faculty of color, a trait that cuts across all racial and ethnic groups. The authors concluded with implications for fostering support for women of color, as well as recommendations for future research.

In a system that was designed for White men, WOC have found themselves existing primarily in the margins (Gonzales & Rincones, 2012). Moreover, I believe that with education being a microcosm of the larger society, faculty representation by race and gender needs to mirror that of larger society. Women of color make up 35.3% of the total female population, not including Native women, according to Catalyst (2016). As of 2013, only 22.2% of full-time instructional faculty members were WOC (Catalyst, 2016). Additionally, in 2017, the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) published three reports on equity and diversity among higher education administrators (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017). They found that women and ethnic minorities — analyzed separately — continued to face disadvantages regarding representation and pay. They then

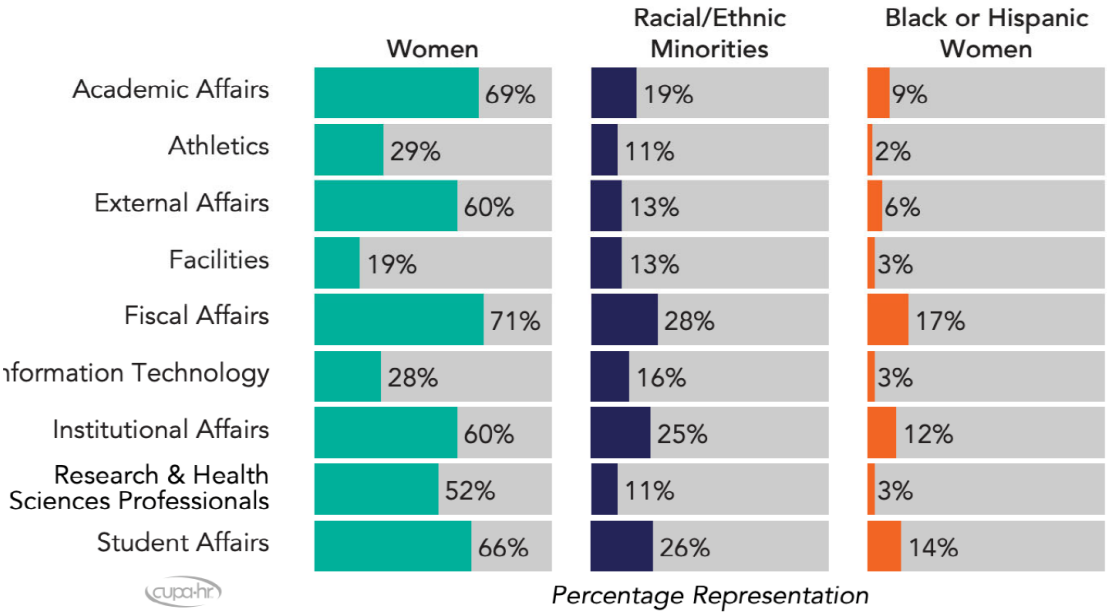
considered the intersection of gender and ethnic minority status and what unique challenges these individuals face throughout the higher education workforce.

In her article, *Who Holds Professional Positions in Higher Ed, and Who Gets Paid?,* Whitford (2020) summarized CUPA-HR's findings of the annual survey, which included demographic information for midlevel college employees in academic affairs, athletics, external affairs, facilities, information technology and other areas. According to the latest report released on October 10, 2020, the data from College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) showed that Black and African American employees made up less than 10 percent of higher education professionals. White employees accounted for more than three-quarters of all higher education professionals. Whitford noted that for administrators and executive leadership, this disparity was even greater. CUPA-HR's report showed that less than 8 percent of administrators were Black or African American, and more than 80 percent were white.

Whitford (2020) noted that women and minority professionals were best-represented in higher education positions overall. Six in 10 higher education professionals were women, and one in five positions were held by racial and ethnic minorities. In a majority of employment areas, women and minorities held far fewer leadership positions than their while male counterparts. (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2

2020 Professionals in Higher Education
Representation of Women, Racial/Ethnic Minorities, and Black/Hispanic Women in Leadership Positions by Professional Area



Note. Source: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), October 10, 2020. https://www.cupahr.org/press-releases/cupa-hr-report-examines-professional-leadership-positions-in-higher-education/

Whitford (2020) also noted that women held 69 percent of leadership positions in academic affairs, but only 19 percent in facilities, 29 percent in athletics and 28 percent in information technology. Racial and ethnic minorities were best represented in fiscal affairs leadership (28 percent) but vastly underrepresented in athletics (11 percent) and research/health science (11 percent). Black and Hispanic women fared even worse, holding only 2 percent of athletics leadership positions and 3 percent of facilities, information technology and research/health leadership positions.

The findings echo an earlier report by CUPA-HR that found women and minorities were also underrepresented in higher education executive roles, according to Whitford

(2020). Women and minority leaders were also paid less than their white male counterparts in these areas, with the exception of positions in fiscal affairs, where women in leadership positions in accounting, audits and finance were paid more than were men in those positions.

Whitford (2020) further noted that fiscal affairs also had the highest representation of Black and Hispanic women leaders. They earned more than their white male counterparts: $1.08 to every white man's dollar, which was s very high, according to the report. In contrast, the pay gap was largest for women in facilities, which also had the highest median salary for professionals at $77,000 and the highest median age, 53. (See Figure 3 below).

Figure 3

2020 Professionals in Higher Education
Pay Ratios for Women, Racial/Ethnic Minorities, and Black/Hispanic Women in Leadership Positions by Professional Area

Note. Source: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), October 10, 2020. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/05/06/report-details-gaps-women-and-minority-professionals-higher-ed

Statement of the Problem

In perusing the literature for this study, I found that women of color who have risen to leadership positions are largely absent from the mainstream leadership literature. African American women scholars (Byrd, 2009; King, 1988; Nkomo, 1992; Parker, 2005) have concluded that when examining the literature of African American women, their voices are even more muted than other women of color, obscured, or not mentioned. However, other women of color are not well-represented in the literature as well.

This study explores the resilience and experiences of women of color in mid-level, senior and executive-level administrative positions at two different historically white universities in California. Other than African American women, the demographic groups represented in my study have not been extensively explored in the available literature.

Lack of Women of Color in Mid-level, Senior and Executive Leadership Positions

Women of color leaders, a marginalized group in the American workplace, experience both racial and gender discrimination. Racial and gender discrimination play an integral role in their leadership development and opportunities within organizations due to frequent exclusions they experience within their work environment (Johnson & Thomas, 2012). And while there is extensive research about African American women as academic administrators at historically white institutions (HWIs), there is not an abundance of research related to women of color more broadly as a unique group in higher leadership roles at historically White institutions (HWIs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). For the purpose of this research project, the demographics represented as women of color (WOC) are African American, Latina, and Native American/Alaska Native. Each demographic group has its own unique history, but there is very little research related to challenges, successes, strategies, persistence retention and paths to leadership pertaining to

women of color in administrative roles at higher education institutions other than African American women.

Although women of color are increasingly becoming equipped with the appropriate educational credentials, they have made rather bare gains in their advancement to senior level administrative roles over the past 20 years (Alexander-Lee, 2014). Scholars have conducted more extensive studies on issues related to African American women in higher education than they have on the other demographics represented in my study. The unique leadership experiences of the other women of color administrators remain nearly absent in the literature. A large gap is in research of women of color as presidents at four-year institutions.

Limited Research on Women of Color Leadership at HWIs

While the search of literature revealed that there are women in positions as presidents at historically White universities, few are women of color. In July 2018, for the first time in the system's 59-year history, the majority of presidents of the California State University (CSU) were female. Of the 23 campuses of the CSU, 12 were led by women (The CSU System News, 2019). And of the 12 women presidents, only three were women of color. During the research period for this dissertation there were no women of color presidents in the University of California system. Given that there are many more administrators at levels below president, the research gap might be larger when considering these other roles. There is a considerable amount of research of African American community college presidents, but a limited amount for other women of color.

The Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is composed of four main areas of focus. Prevalent theorists and researchers in each respective area are listed. They are: 1) Critical Race Theory (Brown, 2003; Delgado, 1998; Parker, 2005; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002); 2) Career Paths (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Gonzalez, 2010; Turner, 2007; Waring, 2003); 3) Organizational Culture (Ballinger, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Carey, Ogden & Roland, 2000; Clunies, 2007; Rothwell & Wallum, 1994); and 4) Intersectionality (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2016; Harris & Leonardo, 2018; Hughes, 2011; Remedios, Snyder & Lizza, 2015; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). A theoretical framework, developed in the mid-1970s from Critical Legal Studies, CRT is used to critically examine race and racism from a legal perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Having origins in legal history, analysis, and applications, Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is a theory that states as its premise that racism is inherent and inevitable in American society and must be actively confronted and redressed to affect racial equality. Audre Lorde, renowned researcher, offered a concise and poignant definition of racism, "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde, 1992, p. 496). Building upon this definition of racism, Derrick Bell's (1992) theory of racism realism was founded on the belief that society is racialized, and argued, "although race may be a social construct, the social outcomes produce concrete forms of hierarchically structured inequality" (p. 375). Through this lens, scholars such as Derrick Bell (1992), Charles Lawrence (1987), and Richard Delgado (1995) underscored the importance of race as central to not only a commitment to social justice, but to equal application of and protection under the law. Brown (2003) asserted, "all our

institutions of education and information – political and civic, religious and creative – either knowingly or unknowingly provide the public rationale to justify, explain, legitimize, or tolerate racism" (pp. 3-4).

Career paths. I assert that examining ways institutions and individuals can prepare for executive leadership can help forge a path for other women of color aspiring to be leaders. Turner (2007) attributed the lack of women in executive leadership positions (ELPs) to disparate academic and professional preparation, lack of opportunity for advancement, and the unique challenges women face in striking a personal and professional balance. Additionally, unique cultural standards and mores present a challenge to some women of color to conform and/or confront barriers to promotion.

Organizational culture. Developing an inclusive succession planning strategy (the process of identifying the critical positions within the organization and developing action plans for individuals to assume those positions) and appropriate career paths for female leaders of color requires an assessment of current organizational culture and needs, as well as determining changing needs of an organization and emerging external trends affecting the organization (Rothwell, 1994). To this end, an examination of an organization's culture and systems through participant stories illuminating ways in which aspiring female leaders of color are impeded can help create actionable recommendations to remedy said impediments.

Intersectionality. Intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression: their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers (Crenshaw, 1990).

Although women of color (WOC) have begun to climb the academic and corporate ladders and are given some opportunities to achieve career success, some WOC, especially African American women (AAW) continue to fight against discrimination as it relates to the

intersectionality of race and gender due to businesses conceptualizing AAW as organizational outsiders (Davis, 2016). Festekjian, Tram, Murray, Sy, and Huynh (2014) along with Key, Popkin, Munchus, Wech, Hill, and Tanner (2012) are sources that spoke to the experiences of AAW and how intersectionality informs their leadership development in academic and other workplaces. According to Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) intersectionality is the manner in which various aspects of identity, which include race and sex, combine in different ways to construct a social reality. As asserted by Choo and Ferree (2010) and Arifeen and Gatrell (2013), in most cases, intersectionality focuses on marginalized people and the interactions they face while working within an environment that collectively creates an unequal atmosphere.

The intersectionality of race and gender is a critical aspect of the role that WOC play within organizations and their potential for being noticed, respected, and promoted as leaders. Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, and Magley (2011) asserted that "modern" discrimination against women of color includes contempt, the endorsement and acceptance of offensive stereotypes, and the support of blatant discrimination, which reduces the likelihood that women of color (and African American women in particular) will be promoted to leadership positions. AAW have two disadvantages: being Black and being female. Davis (2016) posited that women of color face a twofold target of discrimination because they are female and belong to a racial minority group, both of which subject them to discrimination and oppression. However, while the literature reveals that women of color are targets of both subtle and discreet discrimination, the larger body of literature focuses on African American women experiencing both racism and sexism more so than other WOC, which can also be perceived as a compounded form of discrimination (Biernat & Sesko, 2013; Remedios, Snyder, & Lizza, 2015). Also, the race and gender characteristics of AAW can cause them to

go unnoticed, which fosters an environment for marginalization (Hughes, 2011; Miville & Ferguson, 2014). Rocco, Bernier, and Bowman (2014) and Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) stated that racism and sexism still exist and because they exist, women of color face challenges as they attempt to acquire leadership roles within the workplace. Livingston, Rosette, and Washington (2012) further highlighted this thought by affirming that AAW continue to be considered nontypical; they are further marginalized and rendered invisible because they are African American and female.

Purpose of the Study

Myrtis Hall Mosley (1980), whose research focuses on African American women administrators in higher education chided:

> [T]hose research and other educational organizations which spend so much money doing research and reporting on the status of Blacks and women in higher education cease their practices of hiding the disgraceful condition of Black females in higher education by either ignoring their plight or hiding them under categories of minorities, Blacks, or women. (p. 308)

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to address a gap in the literature and to understand how African American and other women of color demographics represented in the study prepared to ascend to leadership positions at two historically white institutions (HWIs) in California. Additionally, this study investigated the experiences of twelve women of color administrators at the two HWIs in order to understand the strategies for success that led to their advancement to senior- and executive-level positions. There are six participants from each of the HWIs in the study.

The study examined the experiences of African American, Latina, and Native American executives (President, Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor, Dean, Associate Dean, Executive Assistant, Senior Executive Assistant, Director) or any administrator holding an executive title (someone who reports to senior management) in higher education.

The study also describes and explains women of color educational administrators' perspectives on work and life. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), referencing Brown and Irby, 2005) shared that "the more we know about women in leadership roles, how they obtain their positions, and how they have become successful, the greater the likelihood of increasing their numbers in the field" (p. 46). As a result of illuminating the perspectives of these women, it is my hope that a greater understanding of the experiences of these women will emerge and enlighten.

This qualitative research multiple case study was designed to address a gap in the literature that exists for studies documenting how the intersectional identity of WOC administrative leaders shapes their unique experiences of leadership development within an organizational context. Additionally, the study focused on the intersectionality of race and gender and how the dual identity of WOC plays an integral role in their journey to acquire executive leadership roles. In addition, the study addressed the barriers, opportunities, and the effects of mentoring on WOC. The research study adds another facet to the sparse qualitative research literature that currently exists regarding the intersectionality of race and gender for WOC in historically White institutions. One of the desired outcomes of my study was to identify key themes that are specifically related to and focused on the lived experiences of WOC holding mid-level, senior and executive-level positions on the campuses of the historically White universities. This study provided the participants a voice and an opportunity to tell their stories about how they became leaders, the obstacles they faced, their

coping strategies that they implemented, and how any mentorship they had aided in their success. The women had an opportunity to express their thoughts about why WOC encounter struggles when trying to ascend to higher level administrative positions at the two historically White institutions in California that are part of this study. It is my hope that this research study will add to a growing body of research and contributes to the overall understanding of the experiences of these women who have successfully obtained leadership positions at the subject HWIs.

The negative barriers that women of color (WOC) administrators face create almost impossible obstacles to performance excellence and retention within their leadership roles on the two historically White college campuses, as well as the impact of exposure on students of color who seek culturally relevant support and motivation to persist from the virtual presence women of color administrators.

Research Questions

Within the conceptual framework of Critical Race Theory, Career Paths, and Organizational Culture, the study seeks to understand how African American and other women of color prepare to ascend to leadership positions at predominantly white colleges and universities and to fill a gap in the literature related to other women of color demographics represented in the proposed study.

The research questions that guided this study are: (1) What is the typical career preparation of women of color mid-level, senior and executive level administrators at two different historically white universities in California? (2) What strategies do women of color utilize to negotiate further upward career mobility? (3) What were factors that affected or shaped their choice of career paths? (4) What strategies do women of color leaders utilize in order to remain in their leadership roles and retain their positions? A sub-question asks: what

strategies and sources of support do women of color at the HWIs use to overcome multiple obstacles in their personal and professional lives as higher education administrators?

Lastly, this study will hopefully bring voice to the unique leadership experiences of women of color mid-level, senior and executive-level administrators at the two historically White universities in California and illuminate the unique challenges that these women must endure, and with increasing numbers, as they negotiate a system deeply entrenched in a dominant ideology, and simultaneously how these women perceive and experience leadership within their administrative roles.

Significance of the Study

Smith (2012) posited that women in general have made vast progress in gaining leadership positions in higher education administration; however, women of color, including Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Latinas, continue to lag behind. But according to Smith (2012), a number of issues prevent women of color from achieving senior-level positions. Smith's (2012) study found that some of the personal barriers to advancement were insignificant, cultural barriers were moderate, and structural barriers were sometimes significant to advancing in higher education administration. However, in my study, participants' personal barriers did play a role in their career advancement at the two subject HWIs in the study. One of the participants in the study from HWI-2 indicated that moving into senior administrative roles had not only work-related challenges, but personal ones as well.

> Internal barriers started to arise as I accepted and assimilated the negative messages associated with my abilities. I had to learn how to handle conflict appropriately, building personal resilience, and developing the "thick skin" to avoid internalizing negativity. But remembering the 'why' of service and

relying on a strong home team of family and friends, I have learned to be resilient in the face of these challenges.

Understanding these participants' experiences can help others aspiring to mid-level, senior-and executive-level positions prepare to attain these roles and hopefully institutions create more inclusive spaces for all leaders to succeed.

This research study explored some commonly reported promotion barriers delineated by personal, cultural, and structural reasons by twelve women of color (WOC) administrators at two historically white institutions (HWIs) in California. I think this study is timely and important to shed light on the leadership experiences of these twelve women of color administrators. And the study also is intended to show the strategies for the empowerment and success of these WOC leaders, and hopefully to inform senior administration at historically White institutions on the abilities, credentials, and drive that women of color mid-level, senior and executive-level administrators possess; to inform the two HWIs institutional values, goals, missions related to strategic planning, including diversity, equity, and social justice initiatives; and to provide encouragement, opportunity, and hope for current and future women of color administrators in order to advance professionally within these HWIs.

Barksdale (2007) recommended that future research on the experiences of African American women administrators be further studied, but herein lies one of the reasons that my study is needed, as it considers not only African American women's experiences of marginalization and alienation within the academy but other women of color as well. It is my position therefore, that this study is timely and important in order to shed light on the leadership experiences of other women of color (WOC), especially as it relates to the two historically white institutions in this study.

While the findings of this study will hopefully be of interest and significant to institutions of higher education, it is my hope that it will be embraced be all women of color administrators as they increase their presence and leadership on historically White college and university campuses. And though some of the women in this study have struggled (and some even continue to struggle) as WOC administrative leaders in historically and predominantly White spaces, Frederick Douglass admonished, “If there is no struggle there is no progress” (Douglass, 1857, para. 3).

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

I surmise from reading the available literature, most women of color are virtually invisible. I find that the literature specific to the leadership experiences of African American women in administrative leadership positions within higher education is limited and sparse, but the literature on the other demographics represented in this study is considerably even more scarce.

Guillory (2001); Harley (2008); Holmes (2003, 2004); Howe-Barksdale (2007; Jackson (2002; Miller and Vaughn (1997); Moses (1997); Mosley (1980); Patitu and Hinton (2003; Penny and Gaillard (2006); and Watson (2001) all posited that while there is a substantial amount of literature based on the experiences and challenges of African American female faculty members at higher educational institutions, and on issues related to African American student academic achievement in undergraduate studies and graduate degree programs (Howe-Barksdale, 2007), but there is a severe gap in the literature that specifically addresses the needs and special leadership experiences of African American and other women of color in administrative positions in higher education. Moses (1997) drew attention to this severe gap in the literature and research on African American woman administrators by declaring, "The result is that [B]lack women are virtually invisible" (p. 23).

At predominantly white and historically white higher educational institutions being in administrative leadership positions are challenging. However, the challenges are considerably above the normal for women of color who have the added stress of having to work hard to prove themselves much more than their White female counterparts (Harley, 2008). In addition, the available literature also suggests that women of color undergo more

discriminatory treatment as administrative leaders, and are highly underrepresented in executive-level administrative positions.

A recent report by the American Council on Education indicated that while demographic data suggest a very diverse student body, with minorities making up more than 43% of students, and 53% of all community college students being female, the representation of this diversity of culture and gender is not as prevalent in faculty, presidents, and high-level administrative posts within higher education (ACE, 2012a; Community College League of California [CCLC], 2012). Although the number of women and minorities in presidential and other executive leadership positions at colleges and universities had increased since 1986 (ACE, 2007), the demographic profile of university presidents in the United States had not changed to reflect its student body further underscoring the need for expanded recruitment efforts and professional development opportunities for a diverse and representative pool of highly qualified candidates. Therefore, Critical Race Theory, career path leadership of women of color high-level administrators, and organizational culture provided a lens through which the narratives of women of color administrators at the two universities in this study can be examined.

Shields (2008) posited that the study of multiple minority social identities has traditionally relied on an additive model, which assumes that each identity has a separate and mutually exclusive but summative impact on the individual. This assumption is best illustrated by the concept of double jeopardy, which posits that disadvantage accumulates with every minority identity (Beal, 1970). Berdahl and Moore (2006) offered evidence for double jeopardy in their study of harassment in the workplace. Specifically, women of color reported more frequent and severe overall harassment compared to those with whom they share one minority identity (i.e., men of color and White women) and those with no minority

identity (i.e., White men). This pattern of accumulating disadvantage is echoed in discrimination literature. For instance, perceived discrimination against women of color—compared to discrimination based on race/ethnicity or gender alone—was associated with higher stress and lower self-esteem for African American women (King, 2003). Together these studies underscore that those individuals with multiple minority social identities—particularly women of color—are at risk of the cumulative disadvantage associated with these identities.

Foundational to a theory of intersectionality is that women of color have experiences with race/ethnicity and gender that cannot be completely shared with White women. In other words, being minorities in terms of race/ethnicity and gender creates a unique intersectional experience. This is especially true when it comes to how African American women have always been stereotyped as workhorses and those who could withstand any kind of treatment related back to the period of enslavement. During the period of enslavement and Jim Crow, Black women were considered mutants and not women, simply because they were not white. The black Jezebel represented deviant womanhood, especially because accompanying her ascribed sexual deviance was a superhuman strength (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009).

Critical Race Theory

Origins and application of CRT

CRT is an appropriate lens through which this study was conducted, in that the methodology by which CRT is applied to remedy disparities in legal proceedings also applies to the disenfranchisement of female leaders of color. It gives voice and credence to previously silenced and ignored experiences of people of color, and the value such experiences have for the production of knowledge beyond the shared cultural group (Parker, 2005). The two-pronged inquiry of CRT asks:

> 1) whether a rule of law or legal doctrine, practice or custom subordinates important interests and concerns of racial minorities and 2) if so, how is this problem best remedied? This subordination question seeks to deconstruct the existing legal order to reveal the ways in which it invalidates or handicaps the claims of people of color. (Brown, 2003, p. 3)

Furthermore, Solórzano (1997) asserted the existence of five primary components of CRT relevant to educational research that will be applied to this study:

1. *Inter-centricity of Race and Racism.* In educational research, CRT is founded on the premise that the concepts of race and racism are permanent, and are "a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences" (Russell, 1992, pp. 762-763). Additionally, racism is interconnected and intersects with other forms of discrimination and systematic subordination including that based on gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, culture, and any other status protected by law.

2. *The Challenge of Dominant Ideology.* CRT rejects the notion that society is neutral, color-blind, or strictly a meritocracy in which all are treated equal and have equal opportunities and consequences (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Rather, "critical race theorists argue that these traditional paradigms act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73).

3. *The Commitment to Social Justice.* The commitment to social justice seeks, as its primary purpose, to not only uncover the stronghold institutional racism has on society, but to offer transformative response to oppression (Matsuda, 1991), and progresses toward the elimination of "isms" in society such as racism, classism, and

sexism, as well as "empowerment of people of color and other subordinated groups" (Yosso, 2005, p. 74).

4. *The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge.* CRT acknowledges the legitimacy and appropriateness of counter-stories and lived experiences of people of color in researching and analyzing racial subordination, and society's role in the perpetuation of said subordination, either by presumption of neutrality or denial of the assumed privileges of majoritarian culture (Carrasco, 1996; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

5. *The Interdisciplinary Perspective.* CRT "extends beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism both within historical and contemporary contexts" (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 663). CRT, although originally born out of legal inequalities against people of color, can and should be applied to various disciplines including higher education and this study's research on women of color assuming and aspiring high level administrative positions at universities and community colleges.

Still further, it is important to deconstruct the race and gender-neutral myth governing most of society to affect systems change that recognizes the value of diversity beyond tokenism (Parker, 2005). Although experiences related to race, class, and culture in disenfranchised groups of color might be appropriately generalized using CRT, the researcher is careful to be thorough in the application of CRT to include specific areas of critical race theory literature and research as it applies to the demographics of the participants in this study. Thus, BlackCrit, LatCrit and NativeAmCrit (TribalCrit) are used as lenses through which to interpret the narratives of respective participants who self-identify with these ethnicities.

BlackCrit. Within this study, hopefully there are multiple examples of resilience illustrated through participant counter-stories consistent with CRT literature as it relates to women of color, beginning with African American women. “Throughout history, in order for Black women to survive their multiple marginalities and the resulting tight spaces of their oppression they relied upon faith, social support, body ownership, and unique defense mechanisms” (Ricks, 2011 p. 6). These examples may be relevant to other African American women in higher education leadership as their experiences converge at oppression and resilience (Smith, 2012). Black women in academia are also caught in what Evans (2007) termed the “politics of respectability.” “Black women often feel additional pressure to prove themselves worthy or better than their colleagues” (Ricks, 2011, p. 46).

Cantey (2010) captured this succinctly through a participant’s narrative in the study of African American women in academe, “I understand as an African-American woman in corporate America that my Caucasian male counterparts can do things that I will get fired from” (Cantey, 2010, p. 94). The “politics of respectability” were further confirmed in a phenomenological, narrative study of 12 African American college presidents. Participants were polled for their views on the importance of social class, educational backgrounds, race and gender issues, and their conceptions of leadership in their attainment of an executive leadership position. Educational and social class varied within this respondent group and did not appear to play a major factor in determining their ascent to leadership. This study seeks to examine how personal histories of leaders influence not only their pathways to their administrative leadership positions but also their conceptions of what a leader does and how they should lead.

In a study seeking to understand how women of African descent with intersecting marginalized identities negotiate their space in academia, Cantey (2010) found:

> In an effort to create choices and adapt strategies of resistance, oppressed groups learn how to cope, negotiate their space, and define their own identity. Negotiating one's space is a mechanism used to cope with these experiences. Moreover, negotiating space is a mechanism used to achieve a personal freedom. (p. 31)

Rather than simply expound on myriad "isms" that women of color face (racism, classism, sexism, etc.), Cantey illustrated, through an asset-based lens, the resilience of female leaders of color, their gender and race-based experiences, and supports that have supported them in their professional pursuits and illuminated organizational culture systems supporting or impeding their progress. As cited by Ricks (2011), Hill Collins asserted, "all African American women share the common experience of being Black women in a society that denigrates women of African descent. This commonality of experience suggests that certain characteristic themes will be prominent in a Black women's standpoint" (p. 22). This is further confirmed by Fong-Batkin's (2011) dissertation research that African American higher education administrators were often marginalized as women of color through the racism and sexism they experienced. The ecological perspective was also useful because it looks at what happens from the individual's and society's standpoints—ranging from some participants growing up in segregation, lacking a mentor, and experiencing racism (pp. 154-155).

According to the renowned feminist, activist, and author bell hooks (1994), being oppressed means the absence of choices. I will seek to use CRT to examine, through the stories of participants, the overt and covert systems in place impeding or propelling the careers of female leaders of color by denying them choices as they ascend the leadership ladder in higher education.

Black Women and Leadership: A Critical Historical Perspective

Bass (1997) related that many people believe that the effects of leadership are in the eyes of their beholders; correspondingly, Peters, Kinsey, and Malloy (2004) stipulated that leadership requires that others perceive one as a leader. With the insinuation from these authors that leadership is a perception, it is easy to understand why Burns (1978) advised that "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). Bass (1981) commented that there are likely as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have endeavored to define the concept. Bolman and Deal (1991) assert that leadership is situational (dependent on organizational, environmental, and/or historical context), relational (a relationship between leader and followers), and distinct from position (not synonymous with authority or high position). It is a subtle process of mutual influence that fuses thought, feeling, and action to produce cooperative effort in the service of the purpose and values of both leader and followers. Consequently, much of the literature reviewed discussing leadership did not offer a concrete definition but more often described leadership as a process. Northouse (2004) describes leadership as a process where individuals influence others to achieve a common goal. He further postulated that leadership involves influence, occurs in groups, and pays attention to goals.

Dating back to slavery, many African American women have been perceived as leaders. Although representative leadership roles within mainstream America have been elusive to African American women, the Black female has been leading for decades. Women such as Harriet Tubman took up the leadership mantle long before women were permitted to lead in official capacities. Tubman was born a slave in 1820 and in 1849 escaped to the free state of Pennsylvania. After the Fugitive Slave Act was passed making it illegal to assist in the escape of slaves, Tubman joined the Underground Railroad (Gikow & McGowan, 2002;

Smith, 2003). During 20 trips from the South to the North, Tubman helped to free an estimated 300 slaves. Later, in 1908 she founded the Harriett Tubman House, a home for elderly Blacks. Tubman was considered an exemplary leader, both in the Underground Railroad and in advancing the pursuit of freedom for Black Americans. Additionally, Collins (2000) provided a reminder of the contributions of two Black women civil rights activists as leaders, Septima Clark and Ella Baker.

But just as many African American women were perceived as leaders dating back to slavery, there was also the idea that they were superwomen—women who could work without stopping—without thinking about themselves at all and only working harder to please everyone else. Thus, the "Super Woman" myth emerged. During the period of enslavement and Jim Crow, Black women were considered mutants and not women, simply because they were not white. In addition, the founder of modern gynecology, James Maron Sims conducted numerous surgical experiments on unanesthetized enslaved women to perfect gynecological methods to be later used on white women. He justified his practice by suggesting that while white women were fragile, black women by their nature were able to withstand more pain (Degruy Leary, 2005).

In my own past and present research on rebellious enslaved women, I discovered that chattel slavery is one of the origins of the unrealistic expectations put on African American women. It is important to know the history of chattel slavery, because it is one of the main reasons that the pressure on Black women to be everything to everyone at any given time; and to always be okay regardless. We can recognize this as a cultural experience between Black women and the societies they live in rather than an individual character trait in one Black woman. It is also another reason that African American women are expected to never complain or to pretend to be strong even when they do not feel up to it.

Fernandez (1999) posited that in order for Black women to be elevated to leadership positions, they must combat stereotypes about their capabilities and must outperform White males. Furthermore, Black women must fight this battle while they lack sufficient power and authority and while they are additionally isolated from the power centers of informal work groups. Black women have had to be overqualified in order to obtain their opportunities, informed Fernandez. Opportunely, the leadership opportunities for Black women seem to hold some promise. Indvik (2004) profferrd that African American women at that time represented the largest group of women of color in management and were surpassing African American men in executive and managerial positions. Although women's inclusion in leadership roles had increased, Indvik indicated that this increase did not reflect their overall proportion of the workforce or population. Perhaps there is a logical explanation as to the reason women in general are not represented proportionately to their workforce involvement. Heilman (2001) argued that competence does not ensure that a woman will ascend to the same organizational level as an equivalently performing man because gender bias penalizes women in work settings. She also posited that female gender stereotypes impede women from advancing the organizational hierarchy because executive level positions are almost always defined as male in sex-type. Thinking such as this precludes the recognition of women's competence.

In addition to facing leadership challenges brought on as a consequence of race and gender, Black women have to contend with what DuBois (1990) called "double consciousness". Dubois, in his infinite wisdom, recognized in his 1953 writing that Black people, especially in the professional world, functioned between two socio-cultural environments, Black and White. Johnson-Bailey and Alfred (2006) described this cultural balancing act as living in opposition of the norm culture while inevitably negotiating between

cultures. With this double consciousness that DuBois wrote about, Black people saw the world from the Black and White perspective and assimilated accordingly. What Dubois termed double consciousness over 50 years ago today has been expressed as biculturalism more recently (Blake, 1999).

Hamilton (2004) reported that women and minorities held a greater share of faculty and senior-level administrative positions than ever before in history; nevertheless, both groups remained underrepresented. In 1989, Yolanda Moses conducted a study to explore the climate for Black women students, faculty members, and administrators in predominantly White colleges and universities and in historically Black colleges and universities. The study paid particular attention to the subtle and not so subtle ways that race and gender can intersect to create double obstacles for Black women. Moses' study utilized data from existing files and reports from the Program on the Status and Education of Women. In addition, she conducted informal interviews with Black women and made use of anecdotal material collected through an informal questionnaire of Black women students, faculty, and administrators around the country. No indication is given in Moses' study of the number of women involved in the interviews or the number of informal questionnaires. The following summary will consider primarily the results of the survey relative to Black women faculty and administrators.

Moses' (1989) study revealed that Black women faculty and administrators faced myriad barriers to their advancement and success. The leadership, advocacy, and career satisfaction that African American women administrators pursued were affected in subtle ways by an unwelcoming environment. The data further uncovered the slow pace that African American women were advancing in career positions as compared to White women. In 1985, only 3.4 percent of administrators in higher education were Black women and they

were concentrated primarily in predominately Black institutions in lower-level administrative positions, usually less than a dean. During the same period, White women held 30 percent of the administrative positions.

Racism and sexism, according to Moses' (1989) study, were still alive on the college campuses and represented double oppressive obstacles for Black women. Moses' study revealed that Black women may have been ignored, isolated and passed over for promotions in favor of individuals who were less qualified. Participants also reported attempts by subordinates to go over their heads or around them in order to subvert the women's authority. Moses' study further disclosed that some Black women leaders indicated that they were considered "tokens," and were therefore treated as representatives of their group rather than as individuals. Black women were also expected to represent Blacks as experts on committees and serve as role models for students. Corresponding to Moses' comments, Brayboy (2003) asserted that Black faculty purported being considered as "token voices of color" whenever the issues of diversity arise. The tokens also "become problem fixers in their departments regarding issues of race and diversity" (p. 81). Because of the paucity of Black professionals, African Americans believed they were sometimes overworked as a result of having to be diversity representatives and role models for students of color.

From her data analysis, Moses (1989) observed that Black women in higher education were often viewed as "other" or "outsiders" and as a result were excluded from networks. Moses' study further determined that Black women also faced gender inequities in predominately Black institutions and that there were fewer women in top administrative positions in these institutions. Moses advised that more research needs to be done on the quality of the campus environment and career satisfaction for both Black women faculty and staff.

LatCrit. LatCrit discusses specific aspects of subordination Latinos and Hispanics experience in addition to race and ethnicity that includes language, accent, and immigration status (Espinoza, 1990). With regard to Latinas, LatCrit is relevant for this study of female administrators of color in that it "can address the concerns of Latinas in light of both our internal and external relationships in and with the worlds that have marginalized us" (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997, p. 885). While LatCrit is specific to the Latino/a and Hispanic experience, it should not be viewed as in opposition to CRT. To the contrary, LatCrit is "supplementary, complementary, to critical race theory" (Valdes, 1996, p. 26), as African Americans, for instance, are not commonly discriminated against for language or accent differences. Narrative research of Latina women in higher education illuminated the feelings of isolation, lack of support, and inter/intracultural conflict they experience, even as well accomplished professionals and scholars (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Padilla & Chavez, 1995). Latinas may face adversity in higher education because they feel tokenized, immersed in an unsupportive environment, and they struggle to find ways to claim their own "voice" in academe (Medina & Luna, 2000).

Additionally, for some Latina college scholars and administrators, the perils of tokenism included invalidation and lack of respect from colleagues and subordinates. This was especially damaging to the leadership effectiveness of Latina presidents as "their ability to carry out their jobs is largely dependent on the extent to which they have the respect of those they seek to lead" (Santiago, 1996, p. 32). Aguirre (1995) offered that Latinas in higher education may be saddled with burdensome and distracting assignments and expectations that their white female and/or male colleagues are not asked to undertake. These include requests to translate official documents and/or serve as liaison to the entire Latino community and serve on minority/diversity-based committees (Padilla, 1994). Furthermore,

"Brown-on-Brown" research, or research focused on the Latino community by Latino scholars is “often considered nonacademic, narrow in scope, and nonobjective” (Medina & Luna, 2000, p. 49). Ray (2016) argued against both the patronizing slander directed against all scholars of color; and the notion that research that examines discrimination, racism or simply focuses on communities of color have been dismissed as “me studies” or “mesearch.” While this outlook may not weigh too much on Latinas seeking higher administrative positions, it can be particularly damaging for Latinas aspiring to the presidency if they are not viewed as legitimate scholars and leaders in academe.

Racial microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Most often, these may be unconscious acts by the perpetrators, but they are hurtful nonetheless both personally and professionally in the workplace. Racial microaggressions “when appraised by racial minority targets as being relevant to their racial group membership…are related to increasingly negative emotions” (Wang, 2012, p. iii). Consider the story of Taunya Lovell Banks, an African American female law professor, whose narrative was included in a publication on critical race theory:

> One Saturday afternoon I entered an elevator in a luxury condominium in downtown Philadelphia with four other black women law professors…The elevator was large and spacious. A few floors later, the door opened and a white woman in her late fifties peered in, let out a muffled cry of surprise, stepped back and let the door close without getting on. Several floors later, the elevator stopped again, and the doors

> opened to reveal yet another white middle-aged woman, who also decided not to get on…Following the first incident, we looked at each other puzzled; after the second incident, we laughed in disbelief…Our laughter, the nervous laugh blacks often express when faced with blatant or unconscious racism of white America, masked our shock and hurt (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 331).

Crenshaw's study sought to delve into the racial microaggressions that may have been experienced by female community college presidents of color for the purpose of illuminating the quiet injustices they suffer, but more importantly to illuminate the supports and resilience upon which they rely to overcome such insults and to advance professionally to become the highest-level leaders of their organizations.

Intersectionality of gender and race

While CRT is the dominant theory that will be used in this study, it would be remiss to ignore the relevance and impact of gender on the life experiences of female leaders of color. Crenshaw (1995) cautioned, "because of the intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both" (p. 358). Thus, the racial and cultural identities, in addition to participant gender, were explored in Crenshaw's study for influence on their personal and professional experiences. That is not to say race and gender are the only factors having influence on one's experience, but rather the "focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 358). As the purpose of her study was to not only illuminate the issues of race and gender that compound the barriers to the ascension

of women of color, but to recommend actionable solutions, CRT is appropriate in connecting theory to practice for real social justice change (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

Career Paths

In a narrative biographical sketch of women of color in leadership positions, Turner (2007) compared and contrasted the career paths of three women of color college presidents (Mexican American, Native American, and Asian American). The choice of selecting college presidents was for the purpose of illuminating a possible "pathway to the presidency" and demonstrating the value of diversity in leadership. Major findings of the study shed light on how to support and empower women of color leaders including early educational career success, mentorship/interpersonal connections, and the organization being accepting of alternate styles of leadership as compared to traditional, Eurocentric styles.

There was also evidence to support the notion that women actually may make better organizational leaders, according to a study of African American female college presidents. Women were seen as effective leaders by engaging various organizational stakeholders in decisions that affect them (Waring, 2003). Waring sought to examine how personal histories of leaders influenced not only their pathways to the presidency, but also their conceptions of what a leader does and how they should lead. A unique thread among participants in that particular study was they believed they needed to grossly outperform their colleagues in order to receive the same recognition lesser performing colleagues enjoyed. Most participants appeared to subscribe to servant leadership, placed relationship building as paramount to professional success, and were consistent in their commitment to expand access to and diversity of their institutions (Waring, 2003). Waring asserted that this type of research best supports the position that the value of diversity is not only in representation but in the variety of experience of people of diverse backgrounds. In addition to cultural diversity, the

professional diversity of a workforce may bring added value to an organization. For English language proficiency (ELP) aspirants, professional development can be an individual pursuit external to the organization, such as through leadership training, or it can be a formal professional development program offered internally within the organization in which individuals demonstrating leadership potential are identified and developed in preparation for future executive leadership positions.

Contrary to the corporate world, educational institutions have not developed and expanded programs and protocols to identify, develop, and promote administrative and instructional talent to ensure successive and sustainable leadership and to support organizational change and growth as needed (Gonzalez, 2010). In addition to developing a viable pipeline for advancement, Gonzalez (2010) posited coveted posts should be rotated, such as department chair, so as to offer opportunities to a varied pool of candidates, including women of color. The same can be said for deans, as they are traditional pathways to the presidency and would benefit greatly from mentoring by experienced leaders in preparation for their future appointment to an executive leadership position (Gonzalez, 2010). Additionally, Miles (2012) cited Rosser's (2001) research finding that lack of formal professional development opportunities for Student Services professionals, of whom women of color are well represented, "is a major source of frustration amongst student affairs professionals" (p. 16). The research further underscored the need for a sustainable leadership strategy that is diverse and far-reaching in its approach to develop leaders for an organization.

Organizational Culture

Brancu (2018) argued that diversity strengthens organizational outcomes and lack of diversity is costly for companies, especially for those who have struggled with gender and racial discrimination issues. Diversity is associated with greater creativity, innovations, and greater profitability. When a company has a diverse set of experiences, they are more likely to meet the diverse needs of customers and stakeholders.

According to the Community College League of California (2003):

> Having highly qualified, diverse faculty, classified staff, and administration is essential to preparing students to be successful in our culturally diverse state and in the world, and creating an environment that supports success for all students. Employees who reflect the many faces of California bring richness to the college. Therefore, boards should affirm their support for equal employment opportunity and support efforts to attract and retain a diverse staff. (p. 8)

Just for clarification, this is not to say that quantifiable diversity and representative leadership is all that is required to demonstrate a commitment to diversity. Rather, Contreras (1998) cautioned that often people of color in higher education, both administration and faculty, are marginalized by being deemed merely role models or personified demonstrations of an organization's commitment to diversity.

While creating and fostering representative and sustainable leadership may appear on the surface to be merely an administrative process, Ballinger and Schoorman's (2007) research and literature underscored the importance of maintaining organizational efficacy and the ability to manage subsequent change through the succession process. Much care should be taken in developing and implementing a succession plan within an educational institution, as the initial and subsequent success of a new leader hinge on the perception of said leader as

qualified to be an effective change agent and transformational leader (Ballinger & Schoorman, 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999). This is especially important for female leaders of color as they tend to assume leadership positions under more intense scrutiny than their male, Caucasian counterparts as there are still great disparities in professional advancement and mentoring opportunities (Pasque & Nicholson, 2011; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001; Thompson & Dey, 1998). Additionally, literature supports the correlation between succession processes and organizational effectiveness, which Ballinger calls the "succession effect" (Ballinger, 2007). This study intends to understand, through participant stories, the extent to which these assertions may be true for female leaders of color who hold or have held high-level administrative positions at universities or community colleges.

While many organizations tend to cherry pick potential leaders in which they will invest and develop, an emerging trend is to select first and develop second. In contrast, Clunies (2007) asserted organizations will be more successful if they develop potential leaders first, then select the highest performing leaders from this pool. This is the group development concept that has been advanced earlier in succession planning literature for higher education (Clunies, 2007). It is also important to focus on striking an appropriate balance between the leadership development of aspiring leaders of color, and "cultural taxation," a concept introduced by Amado Padilla (1994), to describe the extra burden of additional responsibilities placed upon faculty and staff of color due to their racial, ethnic, and/or gender group memberships. While the intent of the organization may be to enhance diversity and offer professional development opportunities to people of color by creating working groups or programs, it actually further marginalizes and burdens faculty and staff of color.

The role of formal and informal mentor relationships with current and past leadership is a crucial one in an effective succession plan, particularly for women of color. Bridges, Eckel, Cordova, and White (2008) suggested mentor networks play a significant role in leadership development in that seasoned administrators can serve the dual role of interim administrators as well as viable mentors for aspiring administrators (Bridges et al., 2008). Bridges et al. further asserted that in regards to representative leadership, it seems a reasonable assumption that women and ethnic minority leaders would benefit greatly from mentor networks that can grant them exposure and validation to decision makers in the organization in an effort to ensure the leadership of an organization reflects the population it serves.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methods

Research Design

The qualitative research approach makes use of different theoretical postulations, approaches, data collection methodology, analysis, and explanation. It is my belief that the qualitative method is the most appropriate for a study of this nature. The qualitative questions allowed the participants to describe their experiences in detail. And my findings will allow for seeing differences and similarities in the experiences of these WOC in leadership roles.

In order to demonstrate that my interpretation of the data gathered is credible, I conducted face-to-face in-person interviews with participants at HWI-1 and conducted Zoom teleconferencing face-to-face interviews with participants at HWI-2. The face-to-face interviews appeared the best tools to use to ensure that my findings are both valid and plausible. During the face-to-face interviews, I asked questions of clarification or repeated the answer back to the participant to ensure I understood the answer correctly. With the consent of the participants, I also recorded each interview to help ensure that the voices and experiences of each participant would be correctly reflected in my findings. The voice recordings also helped to ensure the transferability of data. Each interview was transcribed by hand to secure the genuineness and legitimacy of the collected information. Lastly, the credibility of this research is rooted within the authenticity of my interactions with each participant.

University Contexts

There were twelve research participants in this study. Participants represented in this study are women of color who are employed in leadership roles at two four-year Historically White Institutions (HWIs) in California. The 2020-2021 Campus Profile, published by the two individual institutions' Research, Planning and Assessment departments shows a diverse student population. See Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

2020-2021 Campus Profile Undergraduate (Domestic)
Ethnicity (HWI-1 and HWI-2))

Institution	White	Hispanic/ Latino/a	Black/African American	Native American/ Alaskan	Asian/Pacific Islander	Unk.
HWI-1	35%	28%	5%	1%	29%	3%
HWI-2	27%	22%	3%	.2%	28%	20%

Note. Source: Individual Campuses' Research, Planning and Assessment Departments
Note. Source: College Factual (College Factual.com)

College Factual (2019) authors posited that HWI-1 in this study had a good representation of many races. The statistics in College Factual had HWI-1 ranked 10 points higher than HWI-2 in the Ethnic Diversity Rank category (see Table 3 below). Both universities were ranked in the top 30 of U.S. News 2021 College Rankings. The authors went on to state that this HWI boasts excellent racial diversity. I make note here that College Factual authors were speaking only about student diversity, not faculty and staff diversity.

Table 2

HWI-1 and HWI-2 Institutional Comparison

Institution	U.S. News Ranking (Nationally)	Campus Setting	School Type	2020 Total Graduate Enrollment	2020 Total Undergraduate Enrollment
HWI-1	Top 30	Suburban	Public	3,000	26,000
HWI-2	Top 30	Urban	Public	14,00	33,000

Note. Source: 2021 Best Colleges rankings, published Sept. 14, 2020 by U.S. News & World Report

While the College Factual (2019) authors posited that the historically White university (HWI-1) in this study is a good representation of many races, their report is based solely on undergraduate and graduate student statistics. The same is not true for staff (mid-level, senior level and executive level) and faculty of color (see Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 below).

Specifically, when looking at Non-Academic Personnel in Tables 3 and 4 below, there is more diversity reflected at HWI-2 than at HW-1. However, the diversity of Academic Personnel in Tables 5 and 6 are similar. This may be in part due to HWI-2 being in a larger, more diverse city than HWI-1 from which non-academic personnel are recruited. Academic personnel may be similar because there are national searches performed when recruiting and hiring for professorial positions.

Table 3

2020 Non-Academic Workforce Diversity
Non-Academic Personnel (HWI-1)

Percentage by Gender	***%***					
Women	60%					
Men	41%					
Percentage by Race/Ethnicity						
White	**Hispanic/ Latino/a**	**Native American/ Alaskan**	**African American/ Black**	**Asian American/ Asian**	**Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander**	**Unk.**
46%	29%	.3%	4%	11%	0.1%	7%

Note. Source: University's Information and Statistics Center.

Table 4

2020 Non-Academic Workforce Diversity
Non-Academic Personnel (HWI-2)

Percentage by Gender	***%***					
Women	65%					
Men	35%					
Percentage by Race/Ethnicity						
White	**Hispanic/ Latino/a**	**Native American/ Alaskan**	**African American/ Black**	**Asian American/ Asian**	**Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander**	**Unk.**
27%	33%	.2%	10%	24%	0.2%	3%

Note. Source: University's Information and Statistics Center.

Table 5

2020 Academic Workforce Diversity
Academic Personnel (HWI-1)

Percentage by Gender	***%***					
Women	59%					
Men	41%					
Percentage by Race/Ethnicity						
White	**Hispanic/ Latino/a**	**Native American/ Alaskan**	**African American/ Black**	**Asian American/ Asian**	**Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander**	**Unk.**
66%	6%	0.7%	2%	8%	0.1%	18%

Note. Source: University's Information and Statistics Center.

Table 6

2020 Academic Workforce Diversity
Academic Personnel (HWI-2)

Percentage by Gender	***%***					
Women	55%					
Men	45%					
Percentage by Race/Ethnicity						
White	**Hispanic/ Latino/a**	**Native American/ Alaskan**	**African American/ Black**	**Asian American/ Asian**	**Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander**	**Unk.**
58%	6%	0.3%	3%	22%	0.1%	11%

Note. Source: University's Information and Statistics Center.

Interview Participants

All of the participants were women of color administrators at the mid-level, senior- and/or executive-level positions at the two four-year historically White universities in California.

For this study, recruitment included volunteers from only two universities located in California. I sought and identified WOC who hold positions of leadership at the institution by utilizing the universities' organizational chart. Recruitment of these women was through email requesting them to participate in order for me to learn about the supportive factors of WOC leadership at the historically White institutions. I used publicly available information such as email addresses or phone numbers from public websites to individually solicit participants' participation. All participants met the following criteria: (a) female, (b) person of color (self-identification as Latina, Native American/Indigenous, and African American), (c) currently serving in leadership positions at a university, and (d) currently employed full-time at the university. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' confidentiality. The demographics represented in this research study are women of color as follows: two African American, two Chicano/a/Latino/a American, and two Native American/Alaskan Native from each university.

The Participants

Table 7

Participant Profiles – Historically White Institutions 1 and 2 (HWI-1 and HWI-2)

	Pseudonym, leadership level, and division	**Degree**	**Years in position**	**Years in higher education**	**Institution**
P-1	Participant 1 Mid-Level Student Services	PhD. (in progress)	7	10+	HW-1

P-2	Participant 2 Executive-Level Student Affairs	MS	8	20+	HW-1
P-3	Participant 3 Executive-Level Student Affairs	Ed.D.	9	10+	HW-1
P-4	Participant 4 Executive-Level Student Affairs	Ed.D.	18	25+	HW-1
P-5	Participant 5 Senior-Level Management	AA	8	31	HW-1
P-6	Participant 6 Senior Program Manager; Student Affairs	MS	Less than 1 yr. (just transferred)	8+	HW-1
P-7	Participant 7 Mid-level Department Manager	BA	3	6	HW-2
P-8	Participant 8 Senior-Level Management	BA	15	15	HW-2
P-9	Participant 9 Executive-Level Student Affairs	PhD	9	15	HW-2
P-10	Participant 10 Senior-Level Student Services	MA	6	12	HW-2
P-11	Participant 11 Executive-Level Student Affairs	Ed.D.	11	18	HW-2
P-12	Participant 12 Mid-level Department Manager	MS	8	10	HW-2

Procedures

A clearer understanding of the participants' background and experiences before and during their respective roles in leadership positions can be obtained by conducting interviews. The knowledge of the participants' experiences helps the researcher better understand the context for the individual's behavior and decision-making rationale (Seidman, 1998).

The interviews in this study are considered 'open-ended' interviews (Brenner, 2006). Open-ended interviews are described as "interviews in which the intent is to understand informants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes" (p. 357). This approach may be described as deductive, and the interview protocol can be described, to a certain degree, as structured, although a more accurate description may be semi-structured. Merriam (1998) described the semi-structured interview as "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time' (p. 74). Prior to the interviews, consent forms were sent to the participants to complete and return to the interviewer at the first face-to-face interview for participants at HWI-1. Consent forms were also sent to the participants at HWI-2. However, due to Covid-19 protocols, interviews were conducted using the Zoom video conferencing system and verbal consent was given by the participants prior to commencement of the interview questioning. The semi-structured interview questions were as follows:

1). I read about your job on _____. Can you tell me more about what your job entails; and describe your role in the current position you hold?

2). Are you a first-generation college graduate?

3). Tell me about the personal factors in your life journey that led you to pursue a career as an administrator?

4). What strategies do you utilize to successfully continue in your position, seek advancement to the next level, and motivate you to stay in administrative leadership roles in higher education?

a). What leadership training opportunities have you had?

b). What do you enjoy most about your job?

5). Describe your experiences as a woman of color administrator. How do you perceive it to be different than your white woman counterparts or male counterparts?

a). How do they perceive you to be different?

6). Tell me about your biggest sources of support, professionally and personally?

7). How do you balance the demands of your position with the demands of your personal/family life?

8). What are your thoughts on mentoring? Do you have, or have you had, a mentor? If so, describe them (gender, ethnicity, position, etc.) and how have they impacted your career in higher education administration. What was the experience like?

9). The research has shown that people of color in general, are clustered in positions of low status and power.

a). What would you say is the ideal pipeline, or career path, to senior-level administrative positions in higher education? Have you ever thought you didn't have a choice?

10). How do you define a good philosophy of leadership?

11). What do you see as some of the biggest challenges of being a woman of color senior- or executive-level administrator at this institution?

12). What sage wisdom and advice do you have for up-and-coming new women of color professionals?

Each participant participated in a semi-structured interview ranging from 30 to 90 min. The interviews conducted at HWI-1 were held at the university in a private setting to preserve confidentiality and increase the participants' confidence in the data collection process. The interviews conducted at HWI-2 were all held via the Zoom video and audio-conferencing system. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

The participants at HWI-1 and the researcher met face-to-face for the first interview, then follow-up using Zoom videoconferencing. It was not necessary for a second face-to-face interview. The HWI-1 participants who were unable to meet in person, were given the option of participating in Zoom video conferencing interviews. As stated above, all the participant interviews for HWI-2 were conducted using the Zoom video-conferencing system. The Zoom interviews also allowed each participant the opportunity to focus a lot more on her history (Atkinson, 2012) in a more relaxed environment (usually at home) and speak more about the history of her career path to the leadership role she currently occupied.

Trustworthiness

The researcher can address risks by ensuring and protecting the participants' confidentiality, being transparent in sharing the researcher's philosophical stance, and taking into account the individuality of various campus cultures when making the analysis and reporting of the findings. Furthermore, the researcher should be transparent about her theoretical sensitivity, cultural intuition, and subjectivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to "the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 33). Delgado & Stefancic described cultural intuition as an innate skill attributed to

ancestral and community histories and memories, along with personal experiences of the researcher of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). The researcher should mitigate subjectivity by being transparent to both participants and readers. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) posited that rather than avoid subjectivity altogether, in a narrative counter-story, the researcher may "add our own professional and personal experiences related to the concepts and ideas [of the study]" (p. 34). Furthermore, Peshkin (1988) posited that rather than merely acknowledge subjectivity, a researcher should embrace it. Peshkin suggested in moments when the researcher is emotionally moved, or intellectually provoked through the shared experiences of participants, the researcher should make note of these incidences in the researcher journal and incorporate them in the study as appropriate and relevant. Finally, Shenton's (2004) paper on strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects asserts that to achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions.

Researcher's Positionality

As an investigator of this research and a WOC, I have not as yet held leadership positions within higher education institutions, so I am not an insider to this research. But I feel my awareness of diversity related to WOC helped me to reduce bias. As a WOC, I have had similar experiences as some of the participants in this study based on sexism and racism, yet my experiences are also very different. WOC have different experiences based on race, ethnicity, immigration status, economic status, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, marital status and many other identities.

Ethical Considerations

Great care has been taken to ensure the confidentiality of the responses. Participation was voluntary and participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form prior to the interviews. The research has been reviewed by the university's Institutional Review Board for compliance with the guidelines for protecting human subjects.

Data Analysis

There are a variety of approaches to the process of analysis and interpretation. I will use the Grounded Theory approach for analyzing data collected from the twelve participants through open-ended interviews. Grounded Theory (or the discovery of theory from data) is a method that attempts to develop causal explanations of a phenomenon from one or more cases being studied (Creswell, 2009: 13). Explanations are altered as additional cases are studied until the researcher arrives at a statement that fits all cases.

Researcher's General Observations

The participants were eager to be a part of the research study. Learning about the study and the impact that the research may have on organizations, some of the women suggested other co-worker friends might be potential participants interested in my study. The women were very open during the interview and provided detailed information about their experiences in the workplace. I found that although the women were different from each other in their own right, there was also a connection that was shared among them based on their race, gender, and the way in which they were perceived in the workplace.

A real level of emotion was observed in two participants during the interviews. The emotion came from one participant thinking back to the hardships that she endured in order to get to where she was. The second participant became really emotional just talking about

the lack of support for her in the position she now held, which been previously held by two people before she was hired.

Coding Process

In the coding process, I reviewed all the responses and looked for themes. Responses were separated by common and/or repetitive themes that were found in the data.

As the research methodology for this study has been accomplished, I used a strict protocol for coding and the analysis of data collected. Coding is an important link between the data collection, and the development of emergent themes and theories to explain the data (Charmaz, 2006). To define the themes and determine meaning in the data, Charmaz (2006) identified two pertinent phases for coding data collected in a qualitative research study: open, and focused.

The first coding practice was employed from the individual interviews, and through a line-by-line coding strategy. Through the data collection and transcription, each line of the written data was named to determine emergent themes (Charmaz, 2006). In bringing voice to the experiences of the research participants, it was especially important to use this first coding practice as it crystallizes the significance of any points noted and identifies any gaps found in the data. The second coding practice is focused coding to identify more directed, selective, and conceptual (Charmaz, 2006) elements of the data collected. A focused coding method allowed me to further define emergent themes from the data collected through the interviews.

In the data analysis, I used the line-by-line coding to identify the conceptual themes that emerge from the individual interviews. Second, I examined the data and determined whether similarities and differences existed among the themes. This analytical approach, among other things, allows the researcher to develop a composite description of the

participants' mentoring experiences (Creswell, 2007), as well as other experiences such as formal leadership training, continuing to pursue professional leadership roles or professional mobility, their individual experiences within their positions, and biases are sometimes experienced as they work to gain social and professional mobility within their respective fields.

This study gives a voice to the unique leadership experiences of the women of color administrators at two historically White institutions in California. Their stories are sincere, powerful, eye-opening and some are even painful, yet all are inspiring. All the women in this study showed a lot of strength and fortitude when relating their individual experiences. And the data analysis of the interviews resulted in the following themes and sub-themes that appear in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Resulting Themes and Subthemes

	Themes	Subthemes
1	Leadership Journey	Professional Preparation Accidental Inherited
2	Leadership Styles	Leadership Philosophy and Values The Role of Relationships Social Justice
3	Challenges and Barriers	Ethnicity and Gender-Based Roles Being the "Only One" Stereotypes and Misperceptions Superwoman Myth The Glass Cliff and Concrete Ceiling
4	Retentiveness	Mentoring Opportunities Mirroring Success Support from Family, Friends and Former Co-workers Spirituality and Faith

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership experiences of twelve women of color senior- and executive-level administrators at each of two historically White universities in California, to shed light on some of the challenges they faced in their positions on historically White university campuses, and the means and methods they utilized to remain in their positions. Through semi-structured interviews and observations, this study brings voice to the leadership experiences of these twelve women of color administrators and their strategies for retention, support networks, and perceptions in terms of how they would describe issues related to race and gender, mentorship, and support, within a predominantly White institutional context. The research questions for this study are:

1). What is the typical career preparation of women of color mid-level, senior and high-level administrators at two historically white institutions in California?

2). What strategies do women of color utilize to negotiate further upward career mobility?

3). What were factors that affected or shaped their choice of career paths?

4). What strategies do women of color leaders utilize in order to remain in their leadership roles and retain their positions when faced with challenges? A sub-question asks: what strategies and sources of support do women of color at the two HWIs use to overcome multiple obstacles in their personal and professional lives as higher education administrators?

Howe-Barksdale (2007) contended that the challenges that African American and other women of color encounter and the coping mechanisms they utilize to successfully

manage the conflicts as professionals in higher education have not been adequately studied primarily because there is such a high cost in revealing such personal struggles and such personal pain connected to the challenges of these women administrators face as they pursue advancement and promotion. However, bringing voice to the unique leadership experiences of all women of color administrators at historically White public institutions in California is a story to be told.

The Journey of Twelve Women of Color

Theme: Leadership Styles and Philosophies

The leadership framework of the women of color administrators in this study was based on the context of relationships, values, mentoring, and the theory of social justice. The findings indicated that the research participants framed their roles as administrative leaders around their personal beliefs on leadership, personal and professional values, in addition to understanding the entire perspective of an organization and their role within the organization they are associated with in order to have a significant effect through social justice.

Values-Based Leadership

Values-based leadership is the idea that leaders should draw on their own and followers' values for direction, inspiration, and motivation (Kraemer, 2011). Kraemer went on to say that values-based leadership will restore ethics, regain trust, and build confidence in a time when all those things have severely suffered. In other words, values are the most natural motivators. So, it makes sense, and is natural, for leaders to refer to their own values in creating a vision or making decisions. Leaders who embrace a values-based system both personally and for the organization are ensuring the success of their people and organization.

All twelve participants in this study recalled how the values they grew up with, are the same values they try to utilize when making decisions about their respective departments and the staff they supervise. Participant-2, an executive in student affairs stated that when she hires someone in her department, it is with the idea that the person will want to learn and be trained in becoming a leader themselves within a three-year period either in the same department or another department on campus.

> I don't want somebody who likes jumping from job to job every three years in an effort to move upward to an administrative mid-level or professional senior level position. I want that person to develop. I want to make sure that, that they are getting where they need to be. And so when we hire people, it's with the intent that we're going to train them to do the job in this office. But also if they want to move out into another job on campus, we want them to be successful. So we train them that way and we tell them that. If you want to take on another job in another office, we will support you; we'll help you.

Defining values may sometimes appear to be difficult to define. So, if it is difficult to define values, then how does one build organizational culture that encompasses a set of values? And why should one try? Many have written about this dilemma. In addressing the "why" first, Kraemer (2011) believed that organizations need to strive to take on a greater global awareness. This requires doing the right thing because it contributes to the greater good. Kraemer believes doing what is right is based on values that make a positive contribution not only to the organization but to society as well. He suggests that doing what is right means being the best organization you can be for the employees, customers, stakeholders, and community.

Participant-8, a senior level manager, felt that it just comes down to doing the right thing.

> Your leadership must be rooted in who you are and what matters most to you. When you truly know yourself and what you stand for, it is much easier to know what to do in any situation. You must have the ability to identify and reflect on what you stand for, what your values are, and what matters most to you. It always comes down to doing the right thing and doing the best you can.

Participant-3, a student affairs executive talked about how getting to know people and forming the right relationships can help one to advance in an organization. She also recalled the values-based leadership her mentor exhibited, and how much she appreciated learning from him.

> I think because I'm such a relational person and created a lot of opportunities to get to know the campus in so many different ways. I've volunteered for a lot of committees on campus. I have always been a very curious person; and always wanting to get involved. And I think that set me up nicely for becoming an administrator and the Vice Chancellor asked me at some point after I finished my master's, about becoming an assistant director at the admissions office. I was not necessarily looking for advancement, I think that it happened because the strategies are getting to know people and creating or forming the right relationships. My mentor was very instrumental in helping me learn how to value each person for the person they are and appreciate the values they grew up with.

Having good balance and the ability to see situations from multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints is key to how Participant-10, a senior-level administrator in student services looks at values-based leadership.

> You must have the ability to see situations from multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints to gain a much fuller understanding. Balance means that you consider all sides and opinions with an open mind. You must have true self-confidence, accepting yourself as you are. You have to recognize your strengths and your weaknesses and strive for continuous improvement. With true self-confidence you know that there will always be people who are more gifted, accomplished, successful and so on than you, but you have to be okay with who you are.

Participant-11, a student affairs executive posited that to be a good leader—a leader with good values, you must be a genuine person throughout.

> You must never forget who you are or where you came from. Genuine humility keeps life in perspective, particularly as you experience success in your career. In addition, it helps you value each person you encounter and treat everyone respectfully. And you don't have to wait until you have a lot of people reporting to you. You can always apply the principles of values-based leadership. It is never too early or too late to become a values-based leader.

Burns (1978) posited that leaders in values-based organizations must attend to the lower-level needs and values of followers. Fairness is one example of a lower-level value that Burns believes must be established and met before leaders can move followers from focusing on personal gain to incorporating organizational values into their actions. Treat others as one would like to be treated. These ideals seem easy enough, almost elementary, yet the downfall of many organizations can be traced to the fairness principle and their failure to embody a socially acceptable set of values. Graber and Kilpatrick (2008) postulated that the successful values-based leader will (1) recognize personal and professional values, (2) determine how much variance from established values will be tolerated, and (3) understand

the values of internal stakeholders. This model relies heavily on recognition of the individual's role in upholding personal and organizational values. After all, an organization may have established values, but it is up to the individuals in that organization to embody them. Prilleltensky's (2000) model for values-based leadership focused on personal wellness, collective wellness, and relationship wellness that together indicate that understanding one's own values, understanding the values of the group, and building relationships to bind the two are the foundations for operating through a values-based framework. Prilleltensky assertd that failure to address these three areas of wellness leads those in an organization to focus on individual gain, and the concept of doing what is best for the collective becomes lost.

Bellon (2006) posited that often leadership training is devoid of important discussions regarding the importance of values and how those may influence the individual and the organization. He suggested values can be developed, even learned, through a comprehensive values-based leadership program in which participants learn to model behaviors and have opportunities to work through simulated situations with instructor guidance and feedback. He suggests that this type of training is imperative to achieving sustainable changes and is currently lacking in most leadership programs.

Although only three of the twelve participants in this study were recipients of formal administrative leadership training and development, during the individual interviews it was easy to recognize that all of the participants had some other form of professional leadership training through mentor/mentee relationships or on-the-job training. Additionally, all participants' values-based leadership seemed to fall in line with the position of Della Corte, Del Gaudio, Sepe and Zamparelli (2017), in that for a leader, a certain system of values can represent a guide in facing critical situations or in setting up anticipation mechanisms in future perspectives. Furthermore, a successful leader is able to create followership.

Overall, the viewpoints of these participants were based on never losing sight of who they were and what matters most to them; knowing themselves and their values, being committed to balance; having true self-confidence; and genuine humility. They posited that they can far more easily make decisions, no matter if they are facing a crisis or an opportunity. As Participant-8 stated, "Always simply to do the right thing and be the very best that you can be".

Leadership Continuum Concept

Leadership Continuum is based on Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) model of leadership styles for leaders and managers. It is a simple model of leadership theory that shows the relationship between the level of freedom that a manager chooses to give to a team, and the level of authority used by the manager. As the team's freedom is increased, so too is the manager's authority decreased (Yoder, 2001).

The women in this study were tenacious in their beliefs, values, and purposefulness as leaders. They also had a full-fledged view of what leadership is and how their own personal styles defined who they are, as values-driven leaders, but also the participants were very much aware of and understood the multiple complexities of their institutions, the people they supervised, and the necessity to be multi-dimensional to lead along a continuum.

Participant-1 created her own position because there was a real need for someone in a leadership role for students to look up to for answers. Her supervisor was not really equipped to understand and respond to the Native American students' needs, so she was very much in favor of and assisted Participant-1 in the creation of a position that would be considered mid-level, and which gave her greater responsibility in the department.

> Luckily, I have good relationships where other units and other staff on campus where my White female counterparts don't. And I have partnerships with the different tribes

> across the country, and in several different Indian educational and professional organizations. It's important that when our students have cultural needs or questions, that they be guided by someone who has that kind of cultural competency. And a lot of other departments don't have that, because there is not that many Native staff on campus; and not all Native staff can identify deeply with their culture. So, if a student asks me about what is or isn't normal on the campus, I can answer their questions. This is important in supporting their cultural identities because the average staffer can't answer their questions when it relates to their culture.

By having enough faith in Participant-1 and allowing her to create her own position in order to support students where no real support existed, her department manager exhibited leadership continuum and thereby giving Participant-1 the opportunity to move up to a mid-level position in the department. Participant-8 stated that before the department chair meets with her and other staff members about a problem, he has already thought the problem through and arrived at a decision—but usually it is only a tentative one. He elicits everyone's thoughts and opinions during the meeting which permits the subordinates to exert some influence on the decision. However, after feedback from her and other staff members, the initiative for identifying, diagnosing, and adopting a final solution to the problem remains with the Chair.

Power of Relationships

Each participant in the study openly talked about how they were able to advance their own personal and professional goals, as well as their respective institutions' goals through the power of relationships in their individual leadership styles. Each woman gave an example from their current administrative position, while reflecting on past experiences that helped them understand that relationships were necessary for both professional and organizational

growth. For example, Participant-2, an executive-level manager in student affairs was at a very low-level position at a small liberal arts college, when she offered to help the senior level individual with some overload duties. As it turned out, she ended up being that person's assistant, which then moved her up a bit. And when the senior-level person had to retire due to an ongoing illness, she insisted that a formal search for her position be dispensed with and that Participant-2 be seriously considered. As a result of the great relationship that the senior-level person and Participant-2 shared, she was immediately moved into the senior-level position. She had been trained, was very knowledgeable about the department and university protocol, and was more than capable of carrying on the work. The senior-level person had faith in and trusted Participant-2 implicitly.

Another example of the power of relationships is how the Dean of the department that Participant-5, a senior-level office manager worked, was very instrumental in getting her into the campus' leadership training program because no women of color had ever been admitted into the program.

> I was fortunate enough to be around when the Dean first arrived in our department and my immediate supervisor was not around for the first two weeks to assist the Dean in her new role. I was there to help her with settling in, answering a lot of her questions and just being an immediate asset for her. Because of our relationship, she wanted to see me move upward when in fact, my immediate supervisor did not want this for me. I do not want to say that my supervisor couldn't stand the thought of a woman of color being in a leadership training program, but she sure did try to sabotage my efforts. Thank God, the Dean and I had developed a great relationship from the onset, and she was one of my most staunch supporters.

Participant-10, a senior-level administrator indicated that she learned a lot from her immediate supervisor, a white woman generally viewed as highly competent and powerful. At the time, this supervisor was in the second highest category of her administrative classification, while the participant was in an entry level administrative position. But Participant-10 and her supervisor's relationship began to deteriorate because the dean of student affairs (a white man) showed an interest in her career.

> The dean of student affairs presented me with opportunities to serve on major committees and formulate policies, bringing me broad visibility but these opportunities also brought tension with my immediate supervisor. My supervisor eventually resigned to take a different position at another university. The dean of student affairs recommended me for some highly sought-after campus committee memberships and wrote glorious letters of support for me to move into a higher administrative position, which was previously held by my past supervisor. Even though the dean of student of affairs was a White male, he saw how competent I was in my entry-level position and was more supportive in helping me move up than my previous direct supervisor had been.

Social Justice for All

The women in this study were very much centered and balanced in both their personal values and relationships with people, as well as being fully committed to social justice issues as administrative leaders that sometimes find themselves being the "only ones" in institutional spaces. Participant-4, a student affairs executive-level manager, remembered being bused into a segregated elementary school that was not equipped to handle diversity. She said this prepared her for future social justice needs.

> I got bused into a desegregated school, and that was not fun. There was a lot of racism, and a lot of discrimination. I endured a lot of physical and emotional violence. There were a lot of aggressions; not just microaggressions, aggressions were coming from the school administration and the teachers as well. The school wasn't equipped to handle the diversity of the student body makeup. So, I was really exposed to social justice needs and advocacy at that level. And that really informed the lens in terms of what my focus might be; and having a strong value for what's right.

During the interview, Participant–3 recalled how when attending meetings, she was there as an advocate for the students.

> I go to a lot of meetings where I can represent students and can remind other people in the meeting about decisions affecting students. So I see myself as a big advocate for students. I will manage or get involved when students have concerns or a list of demands or protests. I don't advise them whether the protest should happen or not happen. They don't usually ask me if they should have a protest or not; they might let me know it's happening. I would say my role is being more present; and I don't love the word monitor, but bear witness to a protest; and my goal is to create relationships so that when and if a protest happens, I can best guide them. I make decisions like I had to make when the students protested after Donald Trump was elected. They were marching all over campus and they wanted to go through the library, which is against policy. So when I saw what they were getting ready to do, I quickly had conversations with the student leadership and let them know that they could not occupy the library.

Resilience

Another theme that emerged from my study is that one of the more important and desirable attributes to have as a leader—specifically for women of color and members of other underrepresented groups to be highly successful, in simple terms, is resilience. One can look at the current protests and movements and can see that resilience has been widely celebrated as a character virtue in the past decade, and it still plays a role in every successful movement or success narrative, regardless of a person's or groups' race or gender.

Chance (2021) argued in her study on resilient leadership among African American women, that resilience has many faces, and that it looks different for all people. Chance went on to state that in the face of trauma, adversity, and the stresses of life, developing and maintaining resilience has helped these women get through difficult experiences and promote personal and professional growth. Resilience does not imply that a person will not experience adversity, trauma, or distress—on the contrary, this author finds that resilience refers to those protective factors and positive adaptations a person makes in light of those situations. The women in Chance's study identified several resilience techniques and resources they had used in the face of adversity. Some participants recalled being motivated and inspired by their families (i.e., parents, siblings, children, and spouses), whereas others reflected on external and outside motivators (Chance, 2021).

The women I interviewed for my study seemed to rely heavily on this quality, because of the frequency with which they encountered obstacles and setbacks resulting from the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, and other identities. In each case they bounced back, refused to get distracted or derailed, and maintained forward progress. This is certainly true for Participant-7, who shared during my interview with her that she felt so overwhelmed at times, including feeling unappreciated for all the work she does in the department. It is

during the interview that she broke down and started to cry as she related how unfair she has been treated as opposed to the two Caucasian female counterparts who had held the position before she did. Specifically, the two women administrators working in the department prior to her both had an assistant to help with the department duties. However, she went on to say that she has no help, performing the job of two people, but is paid at a much lower salary than her two predecessors.

> I cannot tell you how many times I have went to the ladies' room and cried my eyes out, but I regroup and remind myself that I have a responsibility to my family, my co-workers and students coming into the office, to be at my best. Talking to my therapist is a tremendous help in reminding me that I am a strong woman of color and if I need to take time for myself, in order to survive in the predominantly white space where I am, then I should do so.

Participant-8 remembered what her parents constantly reminded her of when growing up.

> We were all told that you had to be smarter or run faster or jump higher or be better than anybody else around you just to stay in the game. That was a lesson from early, early on-from my parents, teachers, mentors, church. So, I came to this job with that orientation.

Participant-12 indicated that resilience is important for any woman of color in a leadership role, whether it is in academic or even corporate white spaces.

> I think the experience of being a woman of color in America creates resilience--a steady steadiness. It also creates courage and pride. Not pride in a boastful way, but just being proud, as you need to be in moments when you feel completely rejected, completely ignored, overlooked, or sidelined.

However, higher education's power structure (especially at HWIs), gender-pay gap, and the limited access to power and privilege can result in feelings of tokenism and isolation, leading to diminished resilience and thus, presenting unique challenges for women of color in higher education leadership (Chance, 2021).

Chance argued that having a strong work ethic does not translate into being unbreakable for anyone and having to always be the "strong black woman" as a source of resilience has its drawbacks and benefits.

Challenges Faced

Women of color face unique challenges and barriers in higher education due to longstanding bias that directly impacts how objectivity, meritocracy, individuality, and experiential knowledge are viewed and assessed (Brooks-Immel, 2016). These challenges are amplied by the white imagery they are surrounded by on a daily basis according to Rennison and Bonomi (2020). They point out that when you walk the halls of colleges and universities, you are likely to see portraits of white men. They go on to state that similarly, colleges and universities have an abundance of statues in honor of white men, as well as building names and named professorships. Taken as a whole, these symbols of whiteness send a message about what it means to belong in higher education, and how such visual markers and symbols of whiteness reflect overt examples of patronage and historical bias. Ultimately, they argue, these things delegitimize women leaders of color in colleges and universities.

There were multiple aspects of challenges faced by the women in my study and affected every aspect of their experiences as leaders and their abilities to lead undaunted and confidently. The participants were very humble and sincere when I asked them to share with me some of the challenges of being women of color in mid-level, senior- or executive-level

administration at a historically White institution, how the perceptions of others impacted their roles in a subtle and sometimes overt discriminatory environment.

While anyone can develop imposter syndrome, Participant-3 shared that in her experience being at the same senior level and having the same senior title as her White female counterparts, she was at one time, the lowest paid Dean in the system.

> I also recognize that for the longest time, I was the lowest paid dean in the system. When I was asked to join the chancellor's council or senior officers, at often times I'd sit in that room and feel very tokenized and think about how I am the lowest paid person in this room. I don't always feel like my opinion is valued. Sometimes I still definitely experience imposter syndrome as a woman of color. Sometimes I question about why I am being invited into a space if I am just for a token, or if I am really going to be listened to and heard. It's a very interesting dynamic on a research institution campus, anyway, not being faculty. And then you add that to being a woman of color, being heard, listened to about what I think or what my opinions are, has taken longer for me to be in spaces and accepted then it would have had I been a White male or female.

During the interview with Participant-5, she recalled how there were no African American women who were in the business officer classification and as leaders in any capacity.

> When I began my leadership program in 2008 there were no African American female business officers. I was the first one on our campus. Now I manage my whole department. I like managing people and making sure that the department is flourishing to the best that it can; by just giving the department head and others guidance, to make sure they stay within policy. But what I found out is that I was

> being paid 20% percent lower than other business officers in the same classification as me, but I had far more responsibilities and duties. And once my department head found out that information, he fought for me to get the same amount of pay as my other counterparts. When I shared the news about the inequity of my pay with two other women of color in other departments, they found that they too, were receiving less pay than their White female counterparts, who had the same responsibilities but had not been in their positions for as long as the two women of color had.

Participant-2 shared that in order to move upward to a mid-level or senior level position at the universities where she had been employed before coming to the current university, she chose to hide her true ethnicity. She said she had witnessed how people of color, and especially women of color, had been treated at the different colleges where she had been employed, so she was not going to reveal who she really was and her cultural heritage.

> I have very fair skin, so I got away with it, because I'm part Irish, too. So, there was never a question whether or not I was Caucasian. My parents and their parents were raised in the South, and there's still a lot of discrimination and especially during the times that my grandparents and my parents were growing up. You know, people just had no tolerance. If you weren't white . . . sorry.

Participant-2 went on to say that deep inside she feels guilty because all of those years she was suppressing her history, and not acknowledging her ancestors--everything that they had gone through and done to ensure that their traditions were preserved, and that she would have a decent life. Before the interview ended, she did reveal that she no longer hides her heritage and where she came from but admitted that when she applied to this HWI for the

current administrative position she now holds, she did not disclosel that she was of Native American heritage. She continued to portray herself as a Caucasian.

The Intersectionality of Race and Gender

Most of the women in my study recognized that race was an unchanging variable, which remained a noticeable issue for them, and that it was constant and firmly fixed in every aspect of their leadership roles. Gender and race are intersecting, rather than discrete, aspects of identity. I assert that race and gender intersect to inform experience. This can occur in various ways. For example, the experience of social disadvantage is contingent on multiple category memberships, so that a Black woman's perception of discrimination can be qualitatively different from that of a White woman or that of a Black man. But more broadly, according to Essed (1994), various aspects of social location (including race, gender, and social class) lead to identification with "ideas, beliefs, goals or opinions embedded in different, maybe even conflicting, ideological systems" (p. 100). Thus, intersectionality is the intersections of social identities that create unique experiences that cannot be shared by those holding only one of those identities. A contribution to this sense of uniqueness is the personal meaning and importance derived from these intersectional experiences.

Paul, Zaw, Hamilton, and Darity, Jr. (2018) asserted that the intersectionality of race and gender and the comparative advantage or disadvantage for individuals holding multiple identities are topics that are increasingly more common in the press. They further asserted and observed that women of color get hit twice: they suffer the effects of the gender wage gap plus those of the racial wage gap.

In discussing the intersectionality of race and gender with the women in this study, it remained clear that race was salient in their perceptions of how they were viewed and the

interactions that they have with other colleagues within their institutions. Participant-5 shared in her interview that not only did the new senior executive officer encouraging her wrote a letter of support for her to take a leadership training program, but she always came to her when she knew that what she needed in the way of information, she would be given the correct answers.

> The new Dean and I met one-on-one when she physically took over the position, and we had a meeting of the minds. I asked her to tell me her working style, and she did. So, we had a good understanding. I also asked her to please come to me directly if she had any issues with me or my work, because the last senior executive officer, who happen to be an older White male, would go to my supervisor even though we were actually sharing the same office when he had an issue with me. It was as if he couldn't stand having any kind of conversation with a woman of color employed in the same office.

Participant-5 recalled what it was like for her after completing the leadership training program in the first department she had been employed in, and then transferring into the Engineering department. She felt that she was not really recognized as a person who had completed a very in-depth leadership program that included a very high level of human resources training but was instead treated as someone who was going to serve in a glorified clerical position – a "go fer".

> I mean . . .when I first started working in Engineering, the faculty did not want to give me any work to do because they're like, you're a new person. . . and they didn't trust me. Well, I was going to work, but I had nothing to do. And you know, like they had me typing in codes and stuff. I was basically a research assistant, because they would send me to the second floor of the

library all the time to copy their articles and all this; and pull this and pull that. And so, I said well, I'm here to work and I'm like, you guys . . .and it was five of them. I was like, you guys are not giving me anything to do. And I said, you know, you have to trust me. Give me the opportunity to make a mistake. You have to trust me with all of your work that I have been trained to do. I guess talking to them that way got their attention. And then once they started giving me real work . . . and when they saw that I was performing as a leader . . . the more they gave me. I learned from them and they learned how to trust me implicitly with the work I had been trained to do in the leadership program. So that got me a financial promotion because, you know, the faculty in Engineering have money. They were paying me out of their own funds. They would be like, *"We want her to have a raise,"* you know, and HR would try to fight it, but they were like, *"This is our money. You can't tell us what to do with our money."* I am glad that I spoke up when I did instead of being angry at being treated as a clerical assistant and transferring to another department. When I did find another opportunity for upward mobility to the position that I am in now, the Engineering faculty were sad to see me leave. It just goes to show that you cannot make assumptions about people because of the color of their skin, cultural background, heritage, or gender.

Both women and men of color face challenges in the higher education workforce. A new research brief by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) looked at the intersection of race and gender to examine the pay and representation of women of color in the higher education workforce. The brief,

Representation and Pay of Women of Color in the Higher Education Workforce (McChesney, 2018), looked specifically at black and Latino women to examine inequities and the daily experiences of women of color at work.

The brief reported that women of color were not currently paid equitably in the higher education workforce. They were paid 67 cents on the dollar as compared to white men. In three of the four job types CUPA-HR surveys examined, professional, staff, and faculty, women of color are paid less than white men, men of color, and white women.

Women of color are also underrepresented in the higher education workforce as compared to their representation in the overall U.S. population. Women of color are particularly underrepresented in higher-paying roles such as faculty, professional, and administrative positions. Their representation is higher in lower-paying staff positions.

Colleges and universities that want to take steps to increase representation and pay for women of color may not know where to begin. Jasper McChesney (2018), author of the brief, acknowledged that it can be a long process to rectify inequities in the workforce, but concrete steps can help move institutions in the right direction. "Equity issues cannot be solved overnight, but by planning strategically, with unbiased data, higher education institutions can continue taking steps toward more diverse and equitable campuses," stated McChesney (p. 10).

Being the Only One

Being the only woman of color on a team can be extremely taxing. One is torn between authenticity and assimilating. Some of the women in this study were the first to be hired or promoted in their current positions within the institution. With being “firsts” some of the participants felt that initial successes were particularly crucial to the perseverance in maintaining their positions. They also recognized and acknowledged that along with being

"firsts" one might be faced with the issue of isolation, especially if they are the also the "only one" within their departments or their institutions and among other mid-level, senior-or executive level administrators. Participant-4 spoke about how the dominant culture at HWI-1 was not ready for having a person of color, and especially a woman of color at meetings where people of color were rarely seen.

> I am a re-entry student. There was a 27-year gap between my master's degree and doctorate. So being a first gen, returning student and woman of color, my readiness as a graduate student was questioned by some of the people on campus, including some professors. But you have to challenge that because they're not ready for you as a person of color who's smart. You know, that's questioned at every single level. After moving on to professional positions, I would oftentimes be the only person and woman of color, I displayed just how smart I was. But even then, my smartness as a person of color was questioned in subtle ways during meetings where I would be the only woman of color in attendance at the time.

Participant-5 recalled during the interview how she felt like she was invisible sometimes where she was the only person and woman of color at management meetings.

> As I mentioned earlier in answer to one of the other questions you asked, after completing the leadership training program, I was the first and only woman of color in a mid-level management position for a long time on this campus. And although I had gone through what I consider a fairly rigorous professional leadership training program, and the only woman of color in that program at the time, I still had to prove myself as a manager and be a good leader to both my White male and female counterparts. And then after achieving the goal of completing the leadership program, I would sometimes be the only person of color at campus management

> meetings, and I can't tell you how many times I sat around the table in meetings, feeling like I was invisible. No one asked for my opinions on anything. It wasn't until I decided to speak out and express my opinions and thoughts on agenda items and discussions that I was finally recognized as someone who had a lot to offer in my position.

During my interview with Participant-3, she expressed how she began to wonder why she was invited into certain spaces; and whether her invitation was a part of tokenism or not.

> Sometimes I questioned why I have been invited into certain spaces. As a woman of color, I find myself being the only one . . . woman of color . . . in these spaces and wonder if I am really going to be listened to and heard or am I going to be just a token. Being a woman of color and not a faculty person, it has taken longer for me to be in certain spaces and accepted, than it would have, had I been a White male or even a White female. Couple that with being a person of color, I had to spend a longer amount of time proving myself for the access that I think comes easier for non-people of color.

For these women, and especially as they were very much relational in their leadership approaches, making and maintaining previous professional and personal connections was somewhat challenging. For example, during the interview, Participant-6 boasted about the really good mentor she had in the first department she worked in on campus and who helped her move upward in her professional career, and finally out of the mentor's department to another department.

> My mentor provided me with valuable advice and knowledge, constructive criticism, friendship and connections to other people and resources that helped me reach my goals. But once I moved to a mid-level management position in another department, I

> just didn't have the time to continue our weekly teatime or occasional lunches as we did when I was her subordinate. I kind of let the relationship fall by the wayside over time. Once I moved into a higher-level position and became responsible for those working under me; and a mentor myself, for some reason it was significantly harder to maintain the connections I had developed with my previous mentor and supervisor.

The issues of being the "only one" pose additional stressors in the lives of these women sometimes, as they are called upon by their institutions when situations or programs involve race. During my interview with Participant-6, she recounted an instance where she had been asked to be a representative for her race in helping other women of color deal with problems, they might have on campus that would keep the university out of any unpleasant situations.

> At one time, I was told by a White administrator that it would be good if I could talk to other women of color on campus when they encounter a problem that they perceive cannot be solved without going to human resources and filing a grievance. My first thought was, "as if it is my job to control other people of color on campus in order to protect the institution from embarrassment or disruption." This was clearly an instance where I, as a woman of color, was being asked to intervene and be a representative for the race. It was perceived by the White administrator that a woman of color in a managerial position could control or had influence over other members of my race. In order to overcome the challenges of serving as a token, I sought out other women of color to help as mentors to younger and upcoming professional women of color whom they can and might be able to relate to on a professional level.

In the interview, Participant-1 shared about the time when she had been called upon from a White faculty member to help with what he perceived might be an ongoing problem with a student of color.

> I felt like I was being asked to give insight into the thought process of all students of color. I am not a psychologist, so I suggested to the faculty member to try having a sit-down, one-on-one conversation with the student that the faculty member thought was going to become a problem. I told him that it might be helpful to both him and the student. But I knew exactly why he sought me out first.

Participant-7 remembered how alone she felt most of the time being the only woman of color in the previous academic department where she first worked.

> Being the "only" one means you stand out all the time. When I was the only African American staff member of color in my former department, I remember feeling alone. This was especially true when it came down to my White female direct supervisor, who tried to make sure I recognized what my place was in the department. As I mentioned earlier, the dean always came to my rescue and helped me to move up in my professional career before I finally moved out of the department, but even then, I still had a stark reminder that I was the "only one" in this White space.

Participant-8 stated,

> Sometimes you're not just the "only one" in the room at work, you're also the only one in your family to work in an academic administrative position. When you're the first one in your family, you could find yourself with more financial responsibilities than your coworkers, but often it just means you have to navigate more on your own. You don't have a long list of people you can go to that can help you develop your career path and you figure out what is and isn't wrong.

Participant-9 felt that even though you might be the "only one" in a white space, you should still look for some similarities that you might share with some of your co-workers.

> Being the "only" one means you stand out all the time, but when I was the only Latina director at a previous job, instead of focusing on being the "only" one, I decided to find the similarities that might exist with my colleagues. Do you need to be BFFs with your co-workers? No, but you should enjoy where you work.

Participant-10 said she is always on guard being the "only one" in her department.

> Being the only one of a different culture in my workplace, I'm constantly on guard. Particularly when racist jokes come up or when talk about the 2016 presidential election use to come up, I was always on guard. So I sometimes would take a walk outside of the building for a breather in order to mentally take myself out of certain situations and think about positive things. I have had to learn to ignore things I cannot change. And I certainly cannot change people or their thought processes about who I am as the only Latina here in this white space.

Participant-11 said being a woman of color administrator in any of the science departments usually means you are the "only one" attending department faculty meetings.

> If you are a woman of color working in one of the sciences departments, then you know there is no singular, defining experience. Even though the department chair always reminded the faculty and staff that being a part of the department was being a part of a team. He always stressed that everyone—faculty, staff, and even student workers were part of a team. But being the "only one" on the team can play out in a lot of different ways. Often women of color are also the only woman on the team, as there were no female faculty in the department other than adjuncts who only taught courses once or twice a year. In my entire time in the department, which is now nine

> years int the department, I have always been the "only one" in the room. I am virtually invisible at the department meetings unless the chair asks me a question or needs clarification about something discussed in a previous meeting.

Participant-12, a mid-level department manager, stated that being the "only one" in the room at meetings can be uneasy, but that should not stop you for letting your voice be heard—to remind everyone that she is not invisible—she is very much present at the meeting table.

> I am quite familiar with being the only woman of color at the table in meetings. But to me, sometimes being the only woman of color in the room isn't all bad. Finding myself in all white spaces most of the time, has helped me learn how to speak up for myself instead of letting problematic situations fester. It's been the key to my maintaining good working relationships, and I have also grown into a resource on "how to handle tough conversations" for fellow women of color in other departments. Of course, it can also be extremely difficult at times. I am not glossing over the fact that I have experienced everything from finding private email conversations where I have been labeled as aggressive, to being pushed out of some management roles. In the past, I have also noticed men getting promoted on potential where I have had to get promoted on proof. Some of my past supervisors have even discouraged me from applying for senior-level positions in other departments. Instead, they encourage me to transfer to internal HR positions because of my "good communication skills" as they put it.

Zarya (2017) posited that diversity and inclusion are more than clever HR recruiting buzzwords at some organizations; and that there are companies that have a genuine interest in not only recruiting candidates of color, but also creating work environments where people of

different backgrounds actually feel wanted and included at their place of work. But she added that Black women are not just underrepresented in the highest levels of leadership, they are all but *un*represented. And that African American women and other women of color need to thrive, and not just survive in academic or other predominantly white spaces.

Although being the "only one" in their departments, the women in this study found ways to cope. A few of the participants even felt that sometimes it is not a bad thing to be the only person of color in a predominantly white space.

Tokenism

Tokenism might be considered a subset of the theme of Being the Only one, and some of the participants did recognize themselves as being a token or perceived that they were tokens and used the exact term accordingly. Kanter (1977) defined tokens to be individuals who constitute less than 15% of their group. Kanter (1977) confirms that anyone can be a token at work when they are part of an organization, department, or team that has 15% or fewer people like themselves and that being a token dramatically shapes that person's experiences within a workgroup or organization, and this tends to be negative. Kirgios et al. (2020) conducted a study exploring how people choose between groups or teams based on their anticipated coworkers. Specifically, they examined how members of historically underrepresented populations choose between work groups based on both organizational context and work group composition, and they further offered a theory challenging the idea that underrepresented group members are universally opposed to being tokens. Kirgios et al. (2020), revealed that there is particularly strong evidence of homophily (the tendency for people to seek out or be attracted to those who are similar to themselves or the tendency for people to have non-negative ties with people who are similar to themselves in socially significant ways) among members of underrepresented populations in part due to the aversive

consequences that women and racial minorities face when they are tokens. However, Chang et al. (2019) argued that if women and racial minorities expect their managers' decisions to be influenced by implicit quotas, they may strategically choose to be tokens in order to increase their chances of success when facing intra-group competition. Participant-9 and Participant-11 confirms what Chang et al. (2019) posited.

Participant-9 stated, "I believe that, by virtue of being a demographic minority, my performance and point of view will stand out relative to someone else's, then I don't mind being the token member of my group at all."

Participant-11's viewpoint was also in line with Chang et al. (2019).

> Let's be real. Organizations have implicit quotas for demographic minorities, not to mention that sometimes government funding may play a major role, so I feel I and other minorities can benefit from government and organizational quotas. So being a token is not always a bad thing.

In contrast, Nieman and Dovidio (1998) suggest that the experience of being a token in a group can be particularly unpleasant and taxing for historically underrepresented minorities, as Participant-8 confirmed during the interview.

> It's hard being the only one, or one of a few. It tends to be even more difficult for me as a woman of color to be a token, compared to my White female counterpart and other White workers. I have had discussions with other women of color about tokenism, because just being aware that I am a token has created a higher level of depression and stress at times for me. And to be perfectly honest, at times I feel less satisfied and less committed to my job here in this department than I did in other departments on campus.

When the subject of tokenism or being a token arises, it is always based on the fact that a person of color is in a predominantly White space in order to satisfy some rule, policy, etc. The issue of being a token cannot be dressed down when one looks around to see that they are in a space where the majority of the faces they see are White. A token does not always mean that it is only one person in a White space. For example, sometimes a department or company may have total of fifty employees and two of the fifty people are people of color. These two people are then considered by many to be "tokens" in the department or company. Most of the women I interviewed for this study can be considered tokens in the places where they are employed, although they were not the only person(s) of color.

Imposter Syndrome

Another second theme identified in the interviews with the twelve participants was the imposter syndrome (previously introduced), which some of the participants stated they had either experienced in the past or still occasionally experience. In the February 5, 2014 blog post, "The Conversation" on *The Chronicle of Education* webpage, David Leonard discussed the negative impact of culture with regard to Imposter Syndrome stating, "It is crucial to note that Impostor Syndrome stems not just from the mismatch between the representation of an academic and one's identity, but also from the daily experiences in which faculty, students, and administrators convey that you don't belong, or that you don't have what it takes." (p. 3).

Intersectionality is applicable to imposter syndrome in that the experiences in this theme are often directly shaped by the race and gender of the respondents impacting their viewpoints and aspirations. When asked if they had ever experienced imposter syndrome, several of the study participants stated they had and offered examples as to how it manifested

for them. Participant-3's response was "I use to overprepare for meetings, especially if I knew I was going to be the only person of color in attendance. I try to make sure I have three points I want to make; I would arrive early, and I watch what I say." She noted that this routine leads to a lot of anxiety and wasted time. Participant-6 indicated that she still feels pressured to be the best, resulting in exhaustion as she constantly chases an unattainable goal of perfection.

Participant-7, who has been in her current position (and it higher education) the least amount of years stated,

> Even though I am told that I am doing an excellent job considering how I am treated at times, there are still times that I question my abilities, and feelings that maybe I really don't belong in the position creep in. I am a nervous wreck when it comes time for my yearly evaluations."

Participant-8 said,

> You know, as an undergraduate, I used to always hear some of my classmates talking about the imposter syndrome and whether or not they were victims of such. They described it as chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or proven skills and capabilities, but I kind of brushed it off. But once I was hired into this administrative role, there have been times that I felt like an imposter; wondering if I really knew what I was doing; wondering if I was going to be found out – maybe there was a mistake in hiring me in an administrative position like this. Believe me, for women of color, imposter syndrome is real.

As Kets de Vries (2005) pointed out, "To some extent, of course, we are all imposters. We play roles on the stage of life, presenting a public self that differs from the

private self we share with intimates and morphing both selves as circumstances demand. Displaying a façade is part and parcel of the human condition" (p. 110).

A few of the women in this study acknowledged that self-doubt and imposter syndrome permeate their workplaces, but especially for them as women of color, are particularly likely to experience it. During the interviews one of the women talked about how she even over-prepared for meetings because she knew that she was going to be the only woman of color in attendance and that all eyes would be on her. Another woman shared that even though she is constantly told by her direct supervisor that she is doing a wonderful job in her position, she still feels like an imposter and allows self-doubt to creep in occasionally. Other women mentioned that even though they knew they were capable of doing their work, they were still riddled with doubt.

Being Authentic or "Code Switching"?

Another version of imposter syndrome is that some women of color in administrative roles are hesitant to present what they consider to be their authentic selves at work. Some of the participants have had and continued to have concerns about how they show up in and how they perceived in their professional spaces. Some of the participants in this study said they often faced questions and concerns about their speech, attire, and behavior in general. Participant-3 spoke about not feeling comfortable wearing hoop earrings out of a concern she might be perceived as coming straight out of "the hood" and would not be taken seriously. She also began wearing a dressy blazer whenever she had to attend meetings where the majority of those in attendance were White.

> I realized that I was more or less code-switching when I found myself dressing more professionally when I have to attend meeting where the majority of those present are

white males, than when I attend a meeting where there are more women, and it is a diverse group of women. I think a lot of people of color code switch more than they even realize. It is a survival technique, a tool to help someone seamlessly blend into different social and professional situations – particularly where you are a minority. It can be used consciously, or it can happen without even noticing that you're doing it.

When asking about authenticity, "code-switching", a practice of changing one's vernacular when interacting with those of different ethnic and/or racial backgrounds was fairly consistent among the interviewees. Dunn (2019) found that 48% of Black college graduates felt the need to code-switch. Although code-switching was and is a common practice, some of the women in this study found themselves engaging in this practice less frequently after they had been in their positions for a number of years. Several of these women felt more comfortable being their authentic selves with other women of color colleagues. When asked to elaborate, Participant-5 said, "When I'm attending meetings where there are a diverse group of women, they get a pretty raw version of me (she laughs). I am not concerned about tone, or vernacular in the same way I am during meetings where there are more White males and females present."

Similarly, Participant-8 added that she does not present her authentic self because she does not trust that others do either. She believed people bring representatives of themselves to work and know what is acceptable or not; therefore, her White and or male colleagues may not share their thoughts of racism and or discrimination though it may be clear in their behavior. "Code-switching has long been a strategy for black people to successfully navigate interracial interactions and has large implications for their well-being, economic advancement, and even physical survival." Participant-11 said code-switching can be more or less a headache for people of color. "Code-switching can be mentally taxing. It can be

exhausting and demoralizing to feel as though you have to hide or adjust parts of who you are. I try to refrain from the act when I catch myself doing so."

These participants felt that at times they have to dress, speak and behave in a way that is acceptable to their superiors, colleagues and even students. This self-censorship results in exhaustion while reinforcing their challenges with imposter syndrome, also.

People of color feel the need to code-switch in more situations than white people because the unwritten rules of many social situations are dictated by white experiences. For example, you would speak to a potential employer differently than you would to your best friend, you would shake their hand rather than give them a high five, you might wear different clothes in their presence – there are different sets of social rules orchestrating these interactions. Some of the participants in this study admitted that they code switch when they felt the need to hide parts of who they really were in certain social situations.

Stereotypes and Misperceptions

Stereotypes can affect women and WOC in leadership roles because of their detrimental influence on perceptions and their elicitation of stereotype threat (Steele and Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threats occur when one cares about a domain (e.g., one wishes to be an effective leader), when one knows that a stereotype about the group of which one is a member can provide an explanation for poor performance in this domain (e.g., women are expected by others to be less effective as leaders), and when a stereotype is made salient in a situation requiring performance (Steele and Aronson, 1995, p. 174).

While some things have changed, barriers still exist for African American and other women of color, and stereotypes impact their performance ascending to executive-level positions despite their educational advancements according to Beckwith et al. (2016) and Davis & Maldonado (2015).

During the interviews, when questioned about the perceptions of others related to race and gender, the paricipants in this study had very perceptive responses related to the issues and challenges they faced about stereotypes and misperceptions of them as women of color, and the mislabeling attached to unrealistic images of them as leaders. For example, Participant-5 recalled how she had been advised by another woman of color at another HWI to never appear to be threatening, because the dominant culture already have the misperceptions that WOC, particularly African American women, can appear to be very threatening at times—even when they are not. "That has been my experience, but I think that in order to be successful, politically, you have to be very careful not to be threatening, not to let someone feel less than, to be humble, to be collegial and always gracious so that everybody can always say, *"Boy, she's a really nice person."* Nobody wants to be labeled as being a bitch and not very approachable.""

Participant-8 remembered that being a woman of color who did not mind speaking out and about any kind of injustice she witnessed as it related to faculty, staff or students of color, was later used against her in in obtaining a promotion in her department.

> When the department decided to add a new administrative position in the department, I decided to (and was urged to) apply for the position. It was going to be a higher salary than where I was at currently and left room for further promotions salary-wise. I spoke to my department chair first about it and he said that I had as good a chance as anyone to get the position but cautioned that certain faculty (and some students) had thought I was a little too "rough around the edges" as he put it. I had heard many of the women talk about having to code-switch or embrace the dominant culture at work. Another pattern was what one of the women called "dimming my light," or dampening aspects of my personality to avoid making colleagues uncomfortable.

> So here I was being asked in a subtle way to change who I was in order to conform to the dominant culture. When I questioned what he meant by that term, he stated that sometimes people feel threatened when I speak out about certain issues. I knew exactly what he was referring to. He did, however, strongly encourage me to apply, because I was very good in my current position and would certainly not fail in a higher administrative role. What I did not expect was that the hiring committee chair was not going to be my department's chair, but the hiring manager from HR, a white female. A week later after my interview, I was turned down for the promotional position claiming that the department needed someone with at least three years of experience in this type of higher administrative role or at a previous job. They ended up hiring a white man who didn't have the required experience, who had only a year and a half performing the duties that the position required. I was really crushed, because even though I didn't have the job title, I had performed the duties off record many times. So, I learned from that experience that as a woman of color, if you speak out too much you are going to be mislabeled as a troublemaker or worse (the "angry Black woman" stereotype).

Kennerly (1999) argued that Black women often face restricted opportunities for upward mobility, and when they do secure positions of authority in the workplace, they most often hold positions in which they supervise only other black women or women of color.

It is with great intention that the women in my study acknowledged the misperceptions that others hold of them or have held about them in the past, and their deliberate actions to offset the negative labeling and pressure of living up to and beyond expectations as women of color administrators at a historically White institution. Participant-6 felt that for the contemporary woman of color administrator, the fight against preconceived

social perceptions regarding their race and gender is constantly at odds with individual identity.

It is no secret that women of color often stand at the intersection of multiple barriers, experiencing the combined effects of racial, gender, ethnic, and other forms of bias while navigating systems and institutional structures in which entrenched disparities remain the status quo. Many women of color must grapple with negative stereotypes and attitudes that affect how they are treated at work.

Some of the most common stereotypes related to Latinas are as being "lazy" or "unintelligent" people because of the stereotypes of Latinos/Latinas strictly occupying blue-collar jobs such as construction workers or housekeepers/maids and babysitters who are unable to speak enough English to work in an office. Along with the lazy and unintelligent stereotype, is also the “job stealing” stereotype ascribed to Hispanic people. Participant-7 spoke about one of these stereotypes during the interview.

> I always feel a need to protect myself from unfair treatment and negative attention inside and outside the department. Sometimes I even hate going into the office. I devote my time and energy consciously preparing to face each day, which you know comes with the potential for large and small acts of bias, exclusion, or discrimination, even from faculty or administrators both inside and outside of the department who I admire in many ways. But sometimes I am not up to listening to a joke about I’m probably taking a siesta when I go to the ladies’ room. This joke of course, is based on the stereotypes about Hispanics being lazy, etc. It does get old, even though I laugh along with those joking. This requires daily, not occasional, vigilance. At work, I feel a constant need to protect against what others might say or do, whether they intend to exclude me or not. Throughout the day, I just often find myself bracing

for insults sometimes disguised as jokes, avoiding social interactions and places, or adjusting my appearance to protect against hurtful situations. Put simply, I kind of live each day in a constant state of being "on guard."

The women in this study were very aware of the need to work hard in their positions as mid-level, senior- and executive-level administrators, but even more so, the necessity to do more than their White or male counterparts because they are women of color. Participant-3 felt that the lack of equal respect toward and for the educational background, credentials, experiences, and expertise of women of color, especially in the academy, is woven in the psyche of U. S. citizens and some educators; rational thinking inside and outside of the academy continues to be trumped by long-standing views, misperceptions, and values of who they are as educated, professional women of color.

The women in this study all recognized they had to always be aware of how they are perceived at work or at social gatherings for fear of being mislabeled or becoming a victim of an unrealistic stereotype. Some of the African American participants had to be cognizant of their behavior at all times for fear of being labeled as argumentative or succumbing to the stereotype of the "angry Black woman". One Latina participant recalls how she had been the subject of a joke that she must have taken a siesta when she had spent a little extra time in the ladies' room. As noted, the joke is based on the stereotype that Hispanics are often seen as lazy.

Wearing Too Many Hats (Myth of the "Superwoman" Stereotype)

> "Usually when people talk about the 'strength' of a black woman … they ignore the reality that to be strong in the face of oppression is not the same as overcoming oppression, that endurance is not to be confused with transformation."
>
> ----- hooks (1981:6)

As women of color work hard to achieve excellence in the face of negative stereotypes stemming from sexism, racism and xenophobia, there is a tendency among some to engage in perfectionism. This can lead to the Superwoman Syndrome, when a woman feels she has to go overboard to do everything at the highest level—as a career professional, a wife, a mother, a friend, a volunteer. Setting unrealistically high expectations is a type of idealism which makes no room for missteps or bumps in the road. This places excessive pressure on women of color and has a negative impact on mental health and emotional well-being.

The SBW (Super Black Woman) schema "is a race-gender schema that prescribes culturally specific feminine expectations from [Black] women, including unyielding strength, assumption of multiple roles, and caring for other" (Liao et al., 2020, p. 84). However, Chance (2021) noted that to the women who live it, it is just the norm, as indicated by her study's results. Each participant in Chance's study mentioned their strength and resilience in overcoming adversity at least once (Chance, 2021, pp. 22-23).

Referred to as "superwomen," Black women are resilient and strong; using adversity as fuel, thus helping them develop the necessary skills to prepare them for leadership. Their strength through adversity is driven by the resilience that has manifested as motivation factors such as family and relationships, mentorship and sponsorship, as well as the support

of cultural identity and diversity (Chance, 2021). The findings in Chance's study support the notion that adversity shapes Black women into leaders with an emphasis on higher education leadership.

Woods-Giscombé (2010) suggested in her study of the superwoman schema, that health disparities in African American women, including adverse birth outcomes, lupus, obesity, and untreated depression, can be explained by stress and coping. The Strong Black Woman/Superwoman role has been highlighted as a phenomenon influencing African American women's experiences and reports of stress. Woods-Giscombé's (2010) study looked further into the Superwoman Schema (SWS) by exploring women's descriptions of the Superwoman role; perceptions of contextual factors, benefits, and liabilities; and beliefs regarding how it influences health. Some of the participants in her study reported that the Superwoman role had some benefits (preservation of self and family or community) but also some liabilities (relationship strain, stress-related health behaviors, and stress embodiment). According to the results of Woods-Giscombé's study, the Strong Black Woman narrative can hurt Black women's mental and physical health.

I surmise that women of color develop the superwoman syndrome by their obligation to manifest strength, feeling obligated to suppress emotion, resistance to being vulnerable or dependent, their determination to succeed despite the sometimes-limited resources, and their overall obligation to help others over an initial sense to help themselves.

In my study, the women who complained about being overworked in a department position where the duties had been performed by more than one person, were not only African American women. As Participant-7 (who is not African American) shared during the interview, she felt overwhelmed, because the two women administrators working in the department (at two different times) prior to her being hired, both had an assistant to help with

the department duties. But she had no help; performing the job of two people but being paid at a much lower salary than her two predecessors. As she spoke about what she considered to be unfair, she burst into tears and revealed that she would not have been able to continue in her position if it were not for her therapist.

> Yes, I had to seek psychological counseling, because I do so much more work and have many more duties than the person I replaced. Not only that, but I am doing the job of two people and am the lowest paid in my classification. So, yeah, I speak with a therapist on a regular basis. I wouldn't be able to continue here in this department if I didn't have regular therapy sessions. It hurts to know that my department head acts like he doesn't care that I am doing the job of two people and paid less than my White female counterpart that I replaced. He just wants the job done; and doesn't want to hear my concerns about the low wages.

Participant-12 stated that the intersection of race and gender (being of mixed heritage; African American and Hispanic) plays out differently in white spaces. She felt she had to live up to both the hardworking Latina stereotype and the super Black woman stereotype.

> Being an Afro-Latina has taught me a valuable lesson about persistence and persevering—the power of having a superwoman mentality. To me, a superwoman mentality means having everything under control despite the accompanying emotional and physical turbulences. It means taking it upon yourself to make sure you are always 100% ready each day, successfully filling multiple roles, and victoriously juggling every aspect of your life. This framework of thinking has led me to continuously exceed in my roles and expectations as an administrator. As a Latina worker, I have always felt inclined to go the extra mile for every task assigned to prove that I can handle any challenge. I feel as if it is my duty to positively represent

the Latinx and Hispanic communities, especially the immigrant community, during these challenging times. Despite the bias and other emotional stress, we face on a regular basis, I want everyone to know that anything is possible, despite the pushbacks and barriers this is so often placed in our path as women of color trying to succeed.

As mentioned in the Literature Review, there have always been unfair expectations placed on African American because of how hard they worked during the period of enslavement.

In my own past and present research on rebellious enslaved women, I discovered that chattel slavery is one of the origins of the unrealistic expectations put on African American women. It is important to know the history of chattel slavery, because it is one of the main reasons that the pressure on Black women to be everything to everyone at any given time; and to always be okay regardless. We can recognize this as a cultural experience between Black women and the societies they live in rather than an individual character trait in one Black woman. It is also another reason that African American women are expected to never complain or to pretend to be strong even when they don't feel up to it.

So, what is a strong black woman or a superwoman? Wallace (1999) answers this question in her book, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, providing the most useful definition of the Strong Black Woman--one that recognizes the super-strong Black woman's origins in slavery while also acknowledging her physical, gender, and sexual characteristics. Wallace explained:

> From the intricate web of mythology which surrounds the black woman, a fundamental image emerges. It is of a woman of inordinate strength, with an ability for tolerating an unusual amount of misery and heavy,

> distasteful work. This woman does not have the same fears, weaknesses, and insecurities, as other women, but believes herself to be and is, in fact, stronger emotionally than most men. Less of a woman in that she is less "feminine" and helpless, she is really more of a woman in that she is the embodiment of Mother Earth, the quintessential mother with infinite sexual, life-giving, and nurturing reserves. In other words, she is a superwoman. (p. 107)

According to Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2003) and Harris-Lacewel (2001**)**, the concept of Superwoman developed partially as a result of African American women's efforts to counteract negative societal characterizations (such as *Mammy*, *Jezebel*, and *Welfare Queen*) of African American womanhood, and to highlight unsung attributes that developed and continue to exist despite oppression and adversity. In this concept, the sociopolitical context of African American women's lives, specifically the climate of racism, race- and gender-based oppression, disenfranchisement, and limited resources—during and after legalized slavery in the United States—forced African American women to take on the roles of mother, nurturer, and breadwinner out of economic and social necessity. Mullings (2006) posited that being a Superwoman has been a necessity for survival.

Existing literature suggests that the concept of strength is relevant to women from diverse backgrounds (Hayes, 1986; Herrera and DelCampo, 1995; Lim, 1997; Mensinger, Bonifazi, and LaRosa, 2007; Whitty, 2001), and that future researchers might examine super woman syndrome other ethnic groups (e.g., Latinas, Asian Americans, or Native Americans) to determine how ethnicity and cultural experiences influence links between the Superwoman role and health outcomes.

Some of the participants in the study felt they had to live up to the stereotype that women of color have to work harder than their White female and male counterparts because

they are scrutinized more in their positions. Sometimes living up to the stereotype of the "super woman" can bring on health issues and a higher level of stress on the job than what is already present in the positions they hold. The issues of feeling like an imposter, of being mislabeled as argumentative, angry or lazy are all things that make women of color feel they have to work harder to remain in their positions.

Visibility/Invisibility

The invisibility syndrome is a model that has been present within African Americans for decades. The invisibility syndrome is defined as when your feelings and beliefs that your personal talents, abilities, and character are not acknowledged or valued by the larger society due to racial prejudice (Franklin et al. 2000).

Mosley (1980) posited that Black female administrators have for many years held positions of leadership in Black academic institutions as founders, presidents, deans, and department chairpersons. But in white academia, however, Black women administrators are, for the most part, invisible beings. Their status, Mosley (1980) continued, in higher education is a reflection of their status on the national scene- at the bottom. They are isolated, and their academic opportunities are limited by barriers that have nothing to do with their preparation, qualifications, or competency. They have few models, few mentors, and little psychological support. There is no one with whom to share experiences or with whom to identify. The Black female administrator must create herself without model or precedent. She is an alien in a promised land, obscure, unwelcome, and unwanted.

Franklin (1999) argued that it is imperative that readers understand that this struggle, or dilemma if you will, is not new and certainly did not begin in contemporary America. Franklin (1999) went on to say that it is similar to the analysis advanced by W.E.B. Du Bois in his classic work entitled *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903). Where DuBois highlights the

psychic dissonance most people of African descent feel in struggling to live in two societies: one being White America and the other being the African American reality in the context of a racist and oppressive society. What makes this struggle so pronounced for some is the degree to which Black people are socialized to seek approval and validation from the larger White society and/or their White counterparts. Concurrently, Franklin (1999) continues, a Black person understands at a deeper level that even superficial validation will not be achieved absent the adoption of specific modes of thinking and feeling, language use, and behaviors that conform to a Eurocentric standard. And so, whether the conflict felt is in response to rejection by Whites of one's "Black" behavior or in response to personal decisions to deny and/or otherwise disguise one's Blackness, the result can lead to invisibility.

Franklin (1999) also asserted that the subtle and more blatant forms of racism, prejudice, and so on serve as components of the invisibility process as well as encountered experiences of microaggressions.

During the interview, Participant-3 mentioned more than once that she had been in many meetings where she felt virtually invisible because she was the only woman of color in those white spaces at the time.

> You know, I am well aware that as an African American woman at a predominantly White institution I am often viewed as a charcoal caricature incapable of making a serious contribution--am inaudible, voiceless, silent, invisible. The White males at the meetings I have attended are usually the ones who are in authority and facilitating the meetings. Even though I might be sitting across from one or more of them, they don't see me. Many will try to avoid all eye contact with me until I speak up by making a comment or asking a question. They even often discount the service and

contributions of people of color as a whole and view us as less competent than other members in meetings and in the academy.

Participant-7 remembered the time she took a White female graduate student to lunch at the faculty club on campus and was quickly reminded of the space she was in.

> I still remember my first encounter with being treated as if I was invisible and not even in existence by one of the waiters at the faculty club. We had a new white female graduate student enter our program, and being an older nontraditional student, she sought me out a lot to explain the ins and outs of our graduate program and other expectations related to the area of research she wanted to focus on. So, one day, she came in to talk and I was just five minutes away from leaving for lunch. I could have told her to stop in at my office after lunch, but instead I decided to invite her to lunch to chat and I was picking up the tab. She was not the first student I had invited to lunch, but most of the students are students of color. As it always had been since she entered the program, we had a pleasant chat, and she was very thankful for my advice and recommendations. As we were just finishing up our meal, a white male waiter stopped by our table to see if we needed anything else, and if not, he would bring the check. When he brought the check, he completely ignored me as if I weren't even at the table (although he had waited on the both of us) and handed the check directly to the student and walked away. I took the check, took out my credit card and placed it on the table beside my glass of water. The waiter returned, picked up the check and credit card—still without even glancing at me—then walked away. You are going to love this. When he returned, he handed the credit card and receipt to the student as if she was the only one at the table who had eaten lunch and thanked her. The student was embarrassed but I assured her that it was okay. I don't have to tell you that I did

not leave that clown a tip. (She laughs). It does not matter who you are or what position you hold, there are some people who are not going to acknowledge you as a person, even when you are directly in front of their face.

Franklin (2004) argued that when people feel invisible, they can interpret actions such as racist slights, which can create a palpable feeling that their integrity is under assault. These slights, or microaggressions can build over time and ultimately explode. Franklin (2004) went on to say that people's presumptions are filled with all types of stereotypes, leaving the real person invisible from those holding prejudiced attitudes.

The invisibility syndrome can result when persons of color are the minority in predominantly white spaces, and no one from the dominant culture seem to recognize or acknowledge their presence in the space. One of the participants outlined how she felt totally invisible at meetings where she was the only woman of color, and her presence was not recognized until she finally spoke up in the meetings.

The "Glass Cliff"

In their book, *"Women Leading Change: Breaking the Glass Ceiling, Cliff, and Slipper*, Rennison and Bonomi (2020) examined the perspectives of 23 female leaders on issues of leadership and the challenges of confronting structural racism, bias and discrimination at colleges and universities. They posited that higher education can be hostile toward the women of color who serve as college and university leaders.

One of the subjects that Rennison and Bonomi (2020) addressed in the book is about women of color being put on a 'glass cliff'. They argue that when women of color do occupy leadership positions in higher education, too often they face "glass cliff" scenarios. That is, they are elevated to leadership roles when the organization is in crisis and their risk of failure is high. They give an example of one of their participants in the book and how she

was handed a memo on her first day as dean at the university where she had recently been hired, to cut spending by $2 million dollars. This happened despite the participant having asked for – but not being given – specific information about the budget status during her interviews. The department was in a financial crisis and on a downward spiral and the participant was hired to absorb the financial blow and ultimately be blamed for the financial failure.

In my study, Participant-10 related somewhat of the same kind of scenario as the participant talked about in Rennison and Bonomi's (2020) book.

> The person I replaced had totally messed up the budget and the department chair had no inkling of how the department had gotten into the financial crisis it was in. One of the problems is that the chair did not attend a lot of the budget meetings with the dean of the college, which left the office manager with the task. When she resigned from the department and the university, she did not reveal to the chair or faculty about how over-budget the department was, and the many cuts that the dean had planned on implementing until the department could straighten out its budget woes. When I was hired, one of the first things the department chair wanted to be clear about—that I had a good handle on how department budgets worked. He did not reveal to me at the time of our first sit-down meeting on the morning I reported to work, that he was not on top of the department budget matters and things were out of hand. It wasn't until I started going through the records in the office that I was now occupying, and the first meeting the chair and I attended with the dean, that I realized what a mess I was going to have to help straighten out. You might say that I was completely blindsided.

Thus, some of the participants in the study felt they had been victims of what Rennison and Bonomi (2020) term the "glass cliff". Another participant recalled how she

had been hired in a position where the budget was a huge mess as well and during the interview for the position that she was eventually hired into, she asked for information about the budget, her request was completely ignored and the budget matter was hidden from her until she started work. She was then left to figure out how to solve the department's big budget problem and get things back on track.

The "Concrete Ceiling"

According to Tan (2016), the shared experience of women of color and their white counterparts are drastically different, as evidenced by their disparity in pay, top corporate representation, and the lack of opportunities for them. In fact, Tan (2016) posited that these inequities for women of color are so significant that they have been described as a concrete wall or concrete ceiling rather than a glass ceiling.

As the glass ceiling encompasses the barriers and challenges of women, new studies have characterized the obstacles black women face in their career advancement as being in a category of their own (Tan, 2016). While glass is easier to break, a concrete wall signifies the impenetrable barriers black women experience. The solid structure of the concrete wall allows very few women of color to break through it. Tan (2016) went on to say that although scholars are unclear of its exact origin, the term was brought to public attention within the last ten years. Major media and news outlets, as well as scholarly writings have introduced the term and placed it on the agenda for discussion. In addition to the concrete wall, this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as a "concrete ceiling" (Catalyst, 1999). In either case, Tan (2016) argues, the discrimination surrounding both gender and race identities that black women hold, creates an obstacle greater than a glass ceiling.

Babers (2016) suggested that the metaphor of a 'concrete ceiling' stands in sharp contrast to that of the 'glass ceiling'. Glass ceiling and concrete ceiling refer to the barrier that

limits upward mobility of qualified people, especially women. However, when compared with a glass ceiling, a concrete ceiling is harder to break through. Babers (2016) went on to say that women of color do not face a glass ceiling - they face a concrete ceiling, meaning that they face even tougher obstacles than their white counterparts.

In response to the question of why the need for a new term, Babers (2016) explained that a concrete wall reflects the barriers that women of color face more accurately, and that you start by looking at the difference between the materials. While glass is tough, you can shatter it. You can see through it to the level above - and you know that there is something to aspire to. If you can see it, you can achieve it. Babers (2016) argued that concrete, on the other hand, is practically impossible to break through by yourself. It is definitely impossible to see through. There is no visible destination, just what seems like a dead end, and this is what women of color face in the workforce: an often-impenetrable barrier, with no vision of how to get to the next level. Babers (2016) summed it by saying that the new term had to be created, simply because the experiences of white women and women of color are extremely different, but too often ignored. 'My suggestion is that we break through barriers together: the glass ceiling, and any other ceiling that gets in our way' (p. 3).

Had it not been for the dean in the department where Participant-5 first worked, she would not have been able to begin and complete the professional management training program. Her direct supervisor wanted to keep her in an "almost internship" position in the department, and not be able to move into any kind mid-level or senior-level position. Participant-7 remembered that when she asked her department head, a White male, for his recommendation to begin a professional development training program that would help her in the request for reclassification to a higher administrative level in the department, he kept

putting her off. Participant-7 noted that the reclassification would also result in a higher salary.

> I was denied the request to begin the professional development training program, which would give me an improved job title and appropriately reflect what my true role and duties are in the department. My department chair keeps putting me off by saying he would look into it or that he needed to meet with someone in HR to see just how my attending professional development training would actually benefit the department.
>
> So, basically, I have been forced to remain in what I consider an entry-level position. However, the opportunity I requested was given to a less qualified and inexperienced white woman that I replaced when I was hired in the department. I feel if I remain in this department for even two or three more years, I will still be at the same level – with the same entry-level salary but performing the duties the same as my White female counterparts in other departments, who have been able to complete the professional development training program and receiving a higher salary in line with their duties and job title.

Holmes (2003) posited that while African American men have gained status in administrative positions within higher education, they have joined forces with their White male counterparts by increasing the roadblocks for entry and access into the academy by African American women. And hegemony in institutions of higher education decreases the advancement opportunities for women of color administrators, thus, creating a 'concrete ceiling'. Holmes (2003) indicated that several participants in her study found that "ALL men, Black and [W]hite sometimes have difficulty taking direction from female supervisors as well as seeking women as competent and equal to them in the workplace" (p. 59). And

though African American women administrators, in particular, are contrived and feel the indifference most from their African American and White male colleagues, so do their White female counterparts and other women of color (Holmes, 2003).

Carpenter (2018) explained that the term 'glass ceiling' originated because you could look through it and see what was possible, but you hit against a barrier as you pushed up, so the aspiration was there, and the expectation was there. She went on to say that if you think about a concrete ceiling - if you are in a bunker, you do not even know there is a sky out there. Carpenter (2018) suggested that progress has stalled for women of color in the workplace, particularly in promoting them from mid-level jobs to senior and executive-level positions with sometimes coveted corner offices. Carpenter (2018) explained that when a woman gets to the more senior levels, that is where the ceilings still exist; whether they are glass ceilings or concrete ceilings, the problem is the thick layers of men.

One of the participants in the study discussed the fact that she should technically be reclassified into a higher-level position in the same job category, which would mean not only more important job responsibilities but a nice increase in her salary as well; but her department head has put off talking to her about the matter and thus, at present she feels that she has hit what is termed the “concrete ceiling”. The “concrete ceiling” can also be seen as a roadblock for women of color trying to advance professionally in their careers. Sometimes these roadblocks are at the hands of their supervisors, who are usually a White male or female.

Support and Sponsorship

Almost every woman I interviewed touched on the idea of needing to find sponsorship in the workplace — the idea of finding someone in one’s department who can advocate for raises and/or promotions on one’s behalf. Participant-2 put it like this: “Having

an advocate and sponsorship is very important." Participant-5 recalled when she first learned that she was receiving so much less pay than her white female counterparts, yet had more seniority and administrative responsibilities in the exact same position as they did, but found out that she was receiving twenty-one percent less pay.

> I was like . . . how come . . .? Because you know, they weren't giving us raises and we're not in a union. And so finally I was just like, I'm going to leave. But when I talked to my department chair about it, he did his own investigation and found that I was indeed, receiving twenty-one percent less pay. So, because he said I had helped make his life so easy as department chair, he did not want me to leave and went to bat for me. I did receive a pay increase but was still five percent below what my white counterparts were being paid. I am just so grateful to have moved to a department where I have someone like the department chair wanting to see me being treated fairly and equitably.

Some women of color might find sponsorship challenging in their organizations if they have trouble relating to those whom they work with. Because of this, they may often attribute their lack of advancement in the company to a lack of sponsorship. All of the participants in this study had at least one or more persons who advocated on their behalf. For women of color, it is not just a pipeline issue. Once they are in the door on the move upward, they need to feel supported in ways that are specific to being a woman of color. So that even if they are alone on their team, they will realize they are not alone at all.

Participant-7 said that her professional source of support was two previous employers. She met with one of her previous supervisors for coffee often to discuss strategies for maintaining balance in a department where she was not being treated fairly at all. Another one of her previous supervisors strongly advised her to take some kind of

professional development management training in order to give her more future career options and choices.

> Other than my two previous supervisors, I have very strong family support. Although I live by myself and have no children to support, I still help support some of my family members who are struggling a lot more due to having children. They are always there for me, so I never worry about a shoulder to cry on or have to worry about being scolded when I share about what I am going through at work.

For Participant-10, her support did not come from anyone within her department; even though there were both male and female faculty of color in the department, they did not really interact with her on a regular basis. Her support system was from other faculty and staff in other academic and administrative departments who had been on campus for a number of years—two of whom were preparing to retire soon.

Participant-12 recalled that when she was first hired, both the men and women of color faculty members looked at her just as a woman of color administrator only. They preferred to seek assistance from one of her white subordinates.

> Basically, they didn't think I had any real power, even though my responsibilities did not deal specifically with or extend beyond the area of Black or Hispanic problems, when compared with either white male or white female peers. Some of them still think and feel that way. The first thing I noticed during the first full week I began work, is that the Black males and Black female faculty here in the department tend to go to the white man or one of my white female subordinates when they needed something in my area of responsibility, even though I'm the one in charge. So, I have found that organizations of faculty and administrators of color here on campus have proven to be a good means of support for me and other women of color staff and

administrators. I also reach back to a former supervisor (a White male) who has been an invaluable comrade. Even though he is white, he has always treated me and other people of color with the utmost respect. Being in the position he is in on campus as a white male, he still guides me in ways to overcome obstacles that guarantee my success, where other women would probably just give up. I will always remember his kindness and support of who I am.

All of the participants had or had had a least one unrelated person that was a good source of support, including current and former employers, relatives, and women of color in other departments. Some of their sources were not only other women of color but White females as well. One participant's main source of support was a White male who had been her former employer and still was a mentor to her.

Establishing Your Village

> *"Far too often, people think of themselves as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."*
>
> -- Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

Participant-4 stated that while some women of color administrators can be successful in their struggle to overlook the bias and subtle macroaggressions, while others may experience a futile sense of failure.

That is one of the main reasons some of us women of color have vowed to meet on a regular basis outside of our respective departments and the campus to share and unwind—help and support each other to get past the unfair treatment that we witness

> happening not only to us, but students of color as well. We all achieve a certain amount of validation in our positions by faculty members, other staff and students we supervise, the reminder of the white spaces we are in is constant, unless of course, you are working in an Ethnic Studies department. We as women of color bring unique and varied experiences to the campus and our respective departments but even so, the support given for the work of non-White women only portrays a form of 'tokenism" in university settings.

Tokenism operates in "an intergroup context in which the boundaries between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups are not entirely closed, but where there are severe restrictions on access to advantaged positions on the basis of group membership" **(**Wright, 2001, p. 224).

Participant-5 said she finds herself as the person that other women of color come to for advice when things are not going well in their departments.

> Since I have been here on campus almost twenty years, I have learned (sometimes through trial and error; heartbreak at times) what my rights are as an administrative staff member here on campus. Some of the new women of color from other departments seek me out when they have questions or concerns about what their role is supposed to actually be in their department. This is especially true when there's a question of what their official duties are comprised of according to HR rules and regulations, as opposed to a lot of extra work that have been put upon them by the department chair, faculty, or others. Another reason other women of color seek my advice is determining if their salary is comparable to what other women's salaries are who are in the same job classification. But like I found out a long time ago, many have found that they are doing the same jobs, and even more duties beyond their

> prescribed job duties as their White female counterparts but are receiving less pay. This really needs to stop but it is something that we have learned to live with. We have to stick together and support each other; keep each other informed and motivated.

Participant-8 indicated that the struggle is real sometimes when you know you are putting more than one hundred percent into your job but you are hardly ever recognized for it by the administration.

> I am just thankful that most of the faculty and students appreciate what I do in the department to ensure that it runs smoothly for everyone. And while the higher-ups on campus don't truly recognize the roles I, other women of color and women in general play in making sure our departments are run well, keeping our department chairs on top of things and ensuring that our students are receiving all the assistance they need in order to complete their academic programs, we persist and survive by leaning on one another, especially in times of a department crisis, no matter what it happens to be. We as women of color wear many hats but simply are not recognized for it. We have established our own little village or support group, so that we can keep our sanity when things seem to fall apart from time to time.

Participant-11 reminded me that her background and heritage had always been based on the "village" concept.

> I have always been a part of one village or another—my family, childhood and college friends, and some close friends on campus. We as women of color have to recognize that race is almost always present and continually contributes to how our academic and administrative experiences are shaped. Social class issues occur in our roles as administrators of color in two very distinct ways. First, it is evident in the

> perceptions held by our White colleagues or people we need to interact with in performing our administrative jobs. Second, I and most of the women in my village or support group feel that our colleagues treat us as though we are less qualified and/or inferior to our White female counterparts simply because we happen to be women of color -- African American, Latina, Native American or whatever. But we do not let what they perceive us to be hinder us in any way from always performing our job duties in the highest and most efficient manner possible. We do not subscribe to what their limited knowledge about who we really are as professional women or color.

One theme that stood out among the participants in this study related to a village was resilience. Resilience is a very important tool for women to have, especially women of color, when working in predominantly White spaces. Resilience takes a village and women of color utilize support from their community to foster resilience against multiple adversities. Promoting resilience among women of color requires an understanding of the most adaptive strategies utilized to "bounce back" following or in the face of adversities, and the women in this study used the social support from their "village" as an importance resilience resource.

Mentoring Strategies

Mentoring is a very important element when it comes to WOC accessing social mobility within their professional careers. Lou (2012) wrote "Mentoring relationships formed between womyn of Color and other leaders with non-dominant identities and dominant identities can be positive in increasing retention and promotion" (p.92).

As the number of WOC in administrative leadership roles is relatively low, the women in this study have found it particularly helpful to recognize the importance of having

mentors to assist in developing their careers, as well as having someone recognize and support their efforts to grow professionally. And as Participant-2 noted,

> Having at least one mentor is necessary. You need a support system, specifically someone who can share their experiences with you so that you can make informed decisions. Mentors are meant to prepare you for the craziness that you will face when attempting to break the glass ceiling."

Participant-1 also stated during a separate interview, "It's nice to have someone there to bounce ideas off of. A mentor can help you assess a situation and tell you the right path to take that will work to your advantage. Although I do not have a mentor in my department per se, I do have mentoring from others in other departments on campus.

Having supervisors and senior administrators, who were typically White male or female as the women in this study reported, they were very much empowered by the opportunity to have someone that might recognize and show interest in their potential, to ask questions, and to identify mentors who would show them the ropes and assist the women in the study to advance professionally. This was the case with Participant-5 when remembering how she was urged by the Dean of the department (a White female) to participate in a leadership training program in order to move into higher-levels positions on campus, but not by her White immediate supervisor.

> When I wanted to go into the leadership training program, I applied; and your supervisor has to be willing to believe in you, release you for the time to go attend, and write a letter of support. I had the support of the Dean who was over the entire department, but little did I know that my direct supervisor (who was also White) had written some very negative comments in her letter to the leadership training

committee about me, and I was turned down to participate in the program. I was devastated, so I spoke with the supervisor over the whole department who had initially urged me to apply to the leadership training program; and informed her about what the leadership training committee had shared with me for the reasons I was turned down. She immediately wrote a letter of support for me and I was accepted into the program and moved upward from then on. My direct supervisor didn't think I, being a woman of color should be allowed to participate in the leadership training program , because that would mean that I would eventually be moving up to a professional level. So the Dean was actually the very first mentor I had after being hired on campus.

Participant-6 had just moved into a new position but was thrilled to talk to me about the woman who had been her mentor and friend for six years in the previous department.

Sometimes people of color can be very territorial and out for themselves; tending to forget they are people of color just as I am. My previous supervisor, an African American woman, was a wonderful mentor. When I decided that I was ready to move on to another job where I would have more responsibilities, she not only wrote a dynamite letter of recommendation for me, but she also gave me tips on interviewing, how I should dress, how I should respond to interview questions and how to always exhibit an aura of confidence. When I finally did get a new position with more responsibilities, we were both in tears during my last day in the department. I still call her now for advice and she graciously gives it. I couldn't have asked for a better person to mentor me those six years I spent in the department. And it is so nice to know that I can still call upon her for help.

Mentoring is paramount to the success women of color staff and administrators at historically White institutions. Unfortunately, mentors at historically White (or predominantly White) institutions who provide formal mentoring for women of color staff and administrators are few and far between, according to what the women in this study shared during the interviews. However, there were several who do have people (both male and female) who have proven to be invaluable mentors to them.

Some women of color find themselves turning to informal mentors such as peers in different colleges, their own mothers, and other family members for the support and guidance they require as Participant-8 did.

> Mentoring relationships are beneficial; yet, sometimes challenging for newly hired female administrators of color. You spend the first year or two in your department position trying to figure out who the good guys are--wearing white hats and who the bad guys are. I know that was the case for me. As a woman of color, I also had to concentrate on making sure I knew every detail of my job well beyond the scope of what it was. So, for a long time the only mentors I had were my old friends from a previous job where I worked and family members who had either worked in an academic environment or attended a four-year institution. When I started attending staff meetings (and I attended as many as I could), I finally connected with two or three women of color who were either in the exact same administrative position as I was or higher. And to be honest, I also connected with a white female who had mentored other women of color on campus. But connecting with a Black woman mentor who has been on the campus and in her position a long time, has already navigated the campus environment well, can guide and assist a woman of color on departmental policies and politics, how to navigate the political landscape where

people of color are really welcomed, and how to deal with stereotypes and micro-aggressions was critical. Additionally, I personally feel that Black women mentors often offer more emotional support through friendship and sisterhood. In socializing after work with other women of color, the general feelings are that they have a higher level of trust with a Black woman or other woman of color mentor. Even some of my white female counterparts and fellow mentees have said that Black women mentors are more relatable, trustworthy, and understanding than White mentors, male or female. I already mentioned though, that I have a very good White male mentor who is a former supervisor and is still a very reliable mentor and source of support. I guess it just comes down to whomever you feel most comfortable with talking to, sharing, and accepting advice from—no matter what color—male or female. Participant-10 stated that the mentor and mentee have to be a good fit for each other. You need to have a clear understanding of what you really want in a mentor, whether it is a male of female—White or person of color. If the understanding isn't there for either you or your mentor, the mentoring relationship is simply not going to work. I recall that when I was in my Master's degree program, I became a peer mentor to an undergraduate through the EOP program. She was smart, driven, etc., but she just would not follow through on the advice I would give her. In the end, I realized that we were just not a good fit, so we both decided that she might be a better fit with another peer mentor/advisor. As it turned out, she wasn't a good fit with that person either. Some people will ask for advice, listen to what you have to say, but then go about their own way of doing things. That is not okay if you are a freshman or sophomore or a new transfer student from a community college. My mentor and I have the greatest relationship. It doesn't hurt that we both like crocheting. She is my

go to person for everything, from questions about performance evaluations, raises, job duties and any other questions that I might have. She's been on campus a long time, so she knows what's going on. I trust her implicitly.

Participant-12 just wanted a mentor she could truly express herself with.

When I first got hired in my current department, there was no one there who I felt could really understand me as a woman of color and what my fears, ambitions and needs were to do my job effectively and efficiently. So, I reached out to a female woman of color faculty member in my old department for guidance. She knew the terrain well as she had been both a graduate student and senior-level administrator before returning to school to obtain a doctoral degree. She was a pretend sister, other-mother and pretend auntie all rolled into one person. She always offers friendship and emotional support and goes above and beyond in mentoring me as well as other women and men of color. She is one of a kind and I am always able to express my feelings, whether good or bad to her. We will always be friends.

Mentoring relationships are beneficial, some would say essential, to the professional development of successful job performances for women of color in administrative positions at HWIs, but they do not naturally occur for all. Where geographic, cultural, economic, and other differences create barriers to identification of those commonalities, mentoring relationships are less likely to form. Women and people of color may less often be engaged in naturally occurring mentoring relationships and less frequently have access to mentoring networks. What's more, it is the particular attention paid by the mentor to the situation and needs of the protégé that seems to be the universal determinant for the success of the relationship. The participants in this study who were fortunate enough to have a mentor or have had a good mentors in the past noted that recognizing the learning and power dynamics

underlying interactions, and visibility into each other's specific backgrounds was essential to building the trust that constitutes the foundation of their mentor/mentee relationships.

Imitating and Mirroring Others

Peterson and Limbu (2009) posited that imitating or mirroring others is seen at work, in networking sessions, meetings and conversations with colleagues. The whole point of mirroring is that it's a way to better understand others and connect with them. Being able to mirror someone is the same as being able to listen to someone.

Participant-3 shared with me the strategy of success she used in mirroring other successful individuals she knew personally or met at meetings, conferences, or public venues. She indicated that she first makes a list of the people she meets or has met and admires greatly. She then noted the reasons she admired each of the people on her list and then after taking a closer look at her, she decided if each person is someone she truly wanted to mirror and emulate. To her, mirroring successful women of color in key senior-level administrative positions at the historically White institution she works at has a lot of value in successfully advancing in her career. "I have successfully imitated so many successful people that have come into my life either at a personal level or a professional level. I have much respect for those people. Watching, learning from and mirroring those individuals have helped me be the success that I am today."

For the twelve women in this study, it was especially important to identify successful people to serve as their mentors and to model those indviduals' behaviorial patterns for success. In response to the interview question about the personal factors in her life's journey that led her to pursue a career in a position as an administrator, Participant-2 reflected on

how she ended up in the position with the person she replaced, one of the best mentors she'd ever met.

> It's kind of a funny story, but I happened onto my first professional administrative job by accident. I always knew I wanted to work in higher education, but I just didn't know what. I initially thought I was going to go down the faculty line. But I got married, didn't finish my degree because my husband was stationed overseas, and I went along. When we returned, we decided to find a jobs at the same location. He got a position in the athletic department, and I got a job as a records clerk at this small liberal arts college. The senior administrator in the records office was just amazing. I mean, she was a great mentor. Yeah. If it hadn't been for her, I don't know if I would have even been in or stayed in my current profession. She really taught me a lot and introduced me to a lot of people at surrounding colleges and universities. And I started going to the professional conferences with her, and it just where I needed to be. Well, my mentor passed away, and so the next person in the executive position under my prior mentor, took her position, and then he asked me if I would be willing to take his position as the associate registrar. So that senior level position just sort of fell into my lap.

Thus, one of the things that many of the women in this study identified, was that mirroring and mentoring was a critical component to professional success.

Participant-9 stated that she wanted to exhibit exemplary leadership for others to follow as she has followed her mentors. She believes in what she termed mirror mentoring.

> I have had some very good mentors in my life and I want to be a good mentor myself, so I model the way my mentors have been towards me, by acting with integrity and understanding of who those I will mentor are. I truly want to be the mirror and model

> of the behavior that I expect from others. I must be an example. One of the things I am training myself to do in order to effectively model the behavior of my mentors, is find my own voice and clarify my values, then I can mentor others to do the same. I want to inspire a shared vision my mentees, because they will see that my passion is making a difference. I want to be a visionary and create an ideal and unique image of what others can become.

Sometimes you have a good idea of what kind of leader you want to be but not always sure on how to achieve that goal. Participant-11 looked at one of the most successful women of our times for inspiration.

> I have a wonderful mentor, actually, I have three very good mentors. I think it is highly important to have a mentor, so when I attend staff meetings and new staff are introduced, the one thing I highly recommend to them is to seek out a good mentor—male or female. Although I did not have a true mentor besides my mother and two older sisters, when I began my career, I sought out different role models, women I could emulate and maybe one day mirror their success. For me, one of those role models was Oprah Winfrey. I may never meet her, but her actions inspire the leader in me.

If one imagines looking in a mirror once, twice, one hundred times; eventually, over time, we internalize an image of ourselves—and that image becomes part of our identity. If we look in the mirror and see ourselves as a professional person (it can be a political figure, religious figure or entertainer), someone that we admire and respect, we will want to mirror that person—become like them. Some of the participants in this study stated that mirroring and mentoring was a critical component to professional success. One reason a positive organizational culture is important is that it defines the amount and kind of positive mirroring

among its members. If work relationships mirror frustration and negativity, those will be the feelings internalized employees. If the opposite occurs, where the working environment is a more positive and harmonious one, then more than likely this will be what employees will also mirror.

WOC Circle of Support

As retention strategies for success, the women in this study relied heavily on their families, friends, and religion as a means of support in advancing their professional development and leadership goals and individual careers.

In answer to the interview question: How do you balance the demands of your position with the demands of your personal and family life? Participant-5 recalled how she makes it a habit to pray on the way into her office in the mornings, and when she leaves her office to go home.

> From my door at home to my office is one hour. And so I take that time to gather my thoughts and stuff on my way to work. I have that time to . . . my prayer time and all of that. And on my way home, I have that time to just . . .you know, de-stress myself from work until I happen to walk in the door or dealing with my kids. So, I think that it worked out better for me to not live close to where I work.

The circle of support for the women in this study was at the core of their success strategies. Participant-6 stated that her circle and sources of support are her family (for emotional and financial support) and her supervisor, who also happens to be a woman of color. "I can always count on my mother to babysit for me, and my partner is also very supportive. I am so very glad that I have a wonderful, supportive supervisor that understands me as not only an employee but as a woman of color trying to move up myself in sometimes difficult White spaces outside of the office."

Participant-8 is part of what she calls a “sister circle”. As she describes it, women of color gather informally or sometimes formally and discuss issues that may be impacting them both on and off their jobs, department-related issues, supervisory issues, as well as personal and family issues.

> As a Black woman, I sometimes find myself serving as cultural mediator. What I mean is that I am a bridge between higher education and Black culture, so that students of color can be successful in academic programs. I am not an academic advisor, but I always find myself advising a student in one way or another. Would you believe that a lot of students of color, in particular, Black and Chicano/a students come all the way across campus and ask me to help and advise them about something related to obtaining their degree? Of course, I help them, but then I joke and tell them that the university is not paying me enough to advise students from the sciences. When I discuss this in our sister circle meetings, we all agree that students of color need the extra help, because they don’t really get compassionate or even good sound advice from the advisors in their departments. We support each other in our circle, and we support other staff and students of color on campus. We are a unique group of women and we welcome anyone of any race or ethnicity into our circle.

Communal power is what drives the women in the circle of support that Participant-11 is a part of.

> This community circle of support for Black women and other women of color is dynamic, emergent, safe, and caring; demands accountability; and holds equal the concern for self and others. Black women’s professional and personal relationships with other women of color provide them the tools to survive and thrive in their departments, especially if the department head is someone other than a man or

> woman of color. I find that communicating with Black women and other women of color in small groups provides a unique support; one that is unwavering sources of strength for all of us.

The women in this study who were part of a circle of people they can trust, felt these safe spaces were the best in the world. It is through these types of bonds that these women have been able to survive so many negative situations in the departments where they were sometimes seen as tokens, and still come out with their sanity intact. Safe spaces in the presence of their sisters, is the place to heal because they know that at one time or another in their lives they have felt that much of the world seemed to be against them, rushed to judge them or disregarded their truth as capable women of color professionals.

Faith/Spirituality/Religion

According to Choudhury (2007), "Faith is the essential ingredient in the practice of life and supplies the foundation for controlling the mind. With faith all things are possible; you just have to believe" (p. 219). Two participants described how faith impacted their thoughts, allowing them to believe that (1) there is something greater than themselves guiding and supporting them, (2) there is a master plan for their lives, and (3) eventually justice will be served. Believing in a higher power allowed them to rationalize and/or ignore the situations that they encountered. Their belief that a higher power would not give them trials that they could not overcome reinforced their strength to persevere. Participant-5 described how her spirituality helped her:

> I was brought up, like many of us, in the Black church, and I love having that spiritual base. I think many of us who are African American have that. I mean if we don't formally worship in a particular place, many of us do, but even those of us who don't,

> we still have that spiritual core and to me that just helps ground me, helps center me, helps keep me from going off.

Spirituality provided Participant-5 peace of mind and solace as she determined what the best response would be to the discrimination and microaggressions she experienced, especially in her first campus department job. Participant-2 described her spirituality not as the act of following the rituals or traditions of a religion as she did as a child but how that has morphed as she has gotten older to influence her thoughts about others who may be similar or different from her and her actions towards them. "I am very spiritual. I don't officially belong to a church now, but was raised in a church. And as I got older and went to college, I sort of disconnected from the official structure. I'm not critical [or] dogmatic--just very open, forgiving, and welcoming of all beliefs and faiths."

Spirituality served as a compensatory variable for the women as their positive thoughts allowed them to choose an alternate response or reaction in situations, thereby potentially altering the outcome. Spirituality also influenced the women's outlook on life, how they treated others, and their concept of their life's purpose. Participant-1 said that having positive thoughts of self, others, and outcomes was an essential part of spirituality due in part to the idea of karma and that you get back what you put into the world not only in action but thoughts as well. Participant-1 described how positive thoughts affirmed her:

> I think positive thinking really does make a difference, you know I'm just a glass is half-full or all-the-way full person. I just refuse to embrace negativity in my life, I refuse to believe that other people come into the world to try to jack you up; and I think that as long as I feel like…as long as I know the Creator is working in my life; as long as I have a positive attitude towards my life and what the possibilities are…as I have those two things, I'm good.

Again, Participant-1 let spirituality guide her thoughts towards the positive and provided her the resilience to persevere in situations where others might crumble with negative thoughts.

And as Miles, Jenster, and Gill (2014) have quoted Margaret Thatcher as saying: "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become your character. And watch your character, for it becomes your destiny. What we think, we become" (p. 281). These women found a way to focus themselves not on what others thought of them, not on what others said about them, not on what obstacles were against, before, or behind them but what they knew to be true and knew about themselves.

Keeping her thoughts positive was a coping mechanism for Participant-5 during her move towards career advancement via the leadership training program. She did not let the negative circumstances she endured with her immediate supervisor stop her momentum. All of the participants told their stories about how they learned from their experiences and continued to move forward and ultimately up. They did what was needed of them. They stayed genuine and true to themselves and if a space was not accepting (as was in the case of Participant-5), they did not fight for too long before they found a space that was more accepting with the help, guidance, and support of their mentors.

Sister circles and women groups alike often have their roots grounded in the Black church and in Black women clubs a lot of times according to Participant-8.

> Meeting in our support circle is almost like meeting and worshipping at church in a way. In our supportive space of the circle, we women gather authentically without worrying about translating or downplaying our experiences across race (or gender), particularly in the White, masculinist academy. Our language is not policed, neither is

> our behavior. Rather, we are all encouraged and allowed to communicate in culturally aligned ways, which can include challenging respectability politics and being oneself. We say a prayer right before we begin our meeting and after the meeting has ended, we say another prayer for everyone to have safe travels back home to their families. Sometimes I wish we could have our circle of support meetings in our respective departments when something comes up and the ugly ogre raises its head to put a damper on the peace that we have in our circle meetings.

Musgrave et al. (2002) posited that Spirituality among African American and Hispanic woman have been associated with a variety of positive health outcomes. The authors pointed out that spirituality is difficult to define. On one hand, it may mean an inner quality that facilitates connectedness with the self, other people, and nature—a relative quality that each person defines uniquely. On the other hand, the traditional definition involves one's acknowledgement of and relationship with a Supreme Being. Traditionally, "spirituality is often defined as a basic or inherent quality in all humans that involves a belief in something greater than the self and a faith that positively affirms life" (p. 257). Musgrave et al. (2002) conclude that for many women of color, it appears that the traditional definition is more apt.

Participant-12 stated during the interview that it if were not for her religious upbringing and attending church every Sunday, she probably would not have been able to remain in her current department position for so long.

> You get to a point where you just want to throw your hands up and say, "Forget it. I'm out." But then I think about how if I were to do that, then the evil will have won. I am very religious, and I don't think God would have allowed me to be in this job if it were not meant for me to be here. I fully believe that God puts exactly where he

> wants us and where we should be. It's all about serving your fellow man and woman, even if they are not worthy of it. So, instead of throwing up my hands when I am slighted or witness subtle macroaggressions playing out, I sit at my desk and silently say a prayer and ask God to just give me the strength to make it through the remainder of the day. At other times, I will take a break and go to the ladies' room and pray for patience. Sometimes patience is hard to garner when your abilities are questioned.

Musgrave et al. (2002) indicated that their work with African American and Hispanic women led them to conclude that many in these groups, even if they do not hold formal membership in a religious body, describe themselves as Christians and generally embrace Christian notions of spirituality. And that many of these women tended to equate spirituality with religious practice is borne out in qualitative studies in which women identify church attendance, Bible study, and prayer as examples of spirituality.

When it comes to faith, prayer, and spirituality, some of the women in this study described these things as major forces in their lives that have helped them overcome obstacles, and that only prayer and attending church services would help them to maintain some balance in their lives. One participant stated that she lives about an hour away from her job. From the moment she leaves her home in the mornings and enters the freeway driving to work until she reaches the campus parking lot, she prays. Another participant (previously described) stated that sometimes when she wants to just throw up her hands in disgust because of microaggressions, her abilities are being questioned or her being slighted in some way, she takes a break and goes to the ladies' room to pray for patience and guidance very much in the same way as Participant-12 indicated that she did.

Through all of the challenges of the women faced as administrative leaders at these historically White institutions, the women in this study showed incredible fortitude and commitment to survive through the challenges and struggles, yet remain positive in understanding that challenges only lead to better outcomes in the future and to those that are important to them.

The women in this study are motivated to persist and grow in their positions, as they have a commitment to students, a strong desire to have an impact within higher education, utilize professional experience and growth through mentoring and modeling, and the greatest, the support of family, friends, and a reliance on faith to thrive and survive.

Comparison of two Universities

This study looks at some of the predominant themes of the narratives shared by these women of color at two different historically white institutions (HWIs). While many of the informants' narratives at both HWIs were basically the same, there were some that were much different. For example, during the interviews of the six women at HWI-1, none of the participants revealed that the environment in which they worked or their immediate supervisors (deans, department chairs) they worked with were so toxic that they met regularly with a therapist. This is not to say that it does not happen, only that none of the six participants shared whether or not this was a means of support in order to cope in the predominantly White spaces where they work. On the other hand, two of the six women from HWI-2 shared that professional therapy is how they have been able to remain in their positions without just throwing in the towel and walking out of their departments. One of these two participants broke down and started crying uncontrollably as she shared with me how she is being treated by the department head.

All of the participants have someone either on campus or off campus (sometimes former employees or friends at other universities) that they can rely on for guidance and mentorship. One of the twelve participants at HWI-1 revealed that it was an African American male who had been and remains her mentor and guided her in how to move up the ladder in the professional levels of administration and student affairs. Another participant from HWI-1 said she owes all the gratitude to a White female dean who helped her get into a professional development training program so that she could move up to a professional supervisory position in another department. Two of the twelve participants at HWI-2 stated that they both have had White male mentors that still give them advice when the need arises.

Only one of the twelve participants acts as a mentor herself to other women of color at HWI-1. Three of the six participants at HWI-2 say they are mentors to a few students (some from other departments) who seek them out for guidance not only in their academic lives but personal lives as well.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The intent of this qualitative case study was to identify key themes that speak to the lived experiences of women of color in the workplace and to understand how African American and other women of color prepare to ascend to leadership positions at two historically white institutions (HWIs) in California and to fill a gap in the literature related to other women of color demographics represented in the study.

The study examined the experiences of African American, Latina, and Native American mid-level, senior and executive level administrators at two historically White institutions (HWIs) of higher education in California.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What is the typical career preparation of women of color mid-level, senior and executive level administrators at two different historically white universities in California?

The Journey to Leadership. Three of the participants described their career trajectory as starting from entry level and then having to work their way up the managerial ladder. The twelve women of color senior- and executive-level administrative leaders gave testimony on their path to leadership, as well as their relational leadership styles and philosophies. Most of the women (but not all) in this study entered into higher education administration by "accident" or based on an assessment by others, including supervisors or good friends that became their mentors, and who encouraged them to advance in their careers. The descriptions of leadership styles primarily focused on the power of relationships as administrative leaders, and how those relationships not only advance their careers, but are an

intricate part of who they are individually, which are very much purpose-driven, values-based, and committed professionals. The women in this study identified multiple challenges inherent in being women of color working at a historically White institution.

What I have learned from this study is that in higher education the career path to a mid-level, senior or executive level position is rarely a straight one; that was the case for most of the participants in this study. Coming from a variety of backgrounds to traditional student affairs, five of the twelve women in this study landed in their positions by happenstance or accident.

Research Question 2

RQ2: What strategies do women of color utilize to negotiate further upward career mobility?

The Power of Relationships. Some of the participants stated that it was important to form and keep good relationships, especially with individuals in key high places in the university. Having the right connections within the organization's hierarchy and beyond their departments was key to moving into higher-level or senior level positions and remaining in those positions until there is another opportunity for advancement upward to maybe an executive level. Furthermore, all of the participants agreed that mentorship was important to career development, and in its absence a career path will become stagnant.

Mirroring Success. In addition, women of color must combat institutionalized and covert racism in an institution where there is limited or no "mirroring" of other WOC senior administrators in executive level position. As women of color encounter such setbacks, the need for support and mentorship is vital to sustaining their presence in HWIs and PWIs.

Some participants in this study talked about how they "mirrored" their mentors who were successful in their fields and positions, even if the mentors were no longer a member of the institution. The women in this study who spoke about what great mentors they had, wanted to mirror those people in hope of being good mentors themselves. Mirroring their mentors' success was a strategy they essentially used to become successful administrative leaders and be the same kind of role models as their mentors were, for those who might follow in their footsteps.

Research Question 3

RQ3: What were factors that affected or shaped their choice of career paths?

The participants reported having inherited and embraced a legacy of self-determination, self-reliance, resilience, with family, community, and church preparing them for their career pathways. This empowered them to navigate barriers and challenges while taking advantage of facilitating factors into leadership.

Research Question 4

RQ4: What strategies do women of color leaders utilize in order to remain in their leadership roles and retain their positions? A sub-question asks: what strategies and sources of support do women of color at the HWIs use to overcome multiple obstacles in their personal and professional lives as higher education administrators?

Participant-1 said that she has a a number of friends and co-workers on campus that are sources of support, but the majority of her support is off-campus, especially from her community and family. After some reflection, Participant-2 stated that like Participant-1, most of her support comes from within her own community but she does consult regularly

with some co-workers. Participant-3 said that she has an enormous amount of support, especially from her former mentor and former co-workers who have retired. Participant-4's source of support comes mainly from the professional women groups she is a member of and is located off-campus. Participant-5 stated that her main source of support at the time of the interview was her former supervisor at the department that she had just transferred from but that she has strong community and family support as well. Participant-6 stated that her circle and sources of support are her family (for emotional and financial support) and her supervisor, who also happens to be a woman of color. While Participant-7 said that her professional source of support was her two previous employers that she met for coffee often to discuss strategies for maintaining balance in a department where she was not being treated fairly. Participant-8 said she is part of what she calls a "sister circle". She described her support system as women of color who gather informally or sometimes formally and discuss issues that may be impacting them both on and off their jobs, department-related issues, supervisory issues, as well as personal and family issues. Participant-9 indicated that without the support of the women in the group she meets with every two weeks, she would not be able to cope with a lot of the negativity in her department. Participant-10 said her support system was from other faculty and staff in other academic and administrative departments who had been on campus for a number of years. Participant-11 indicated that her "sisters circle" is where she obtains her main source of support but that the members of her church group are very supportive as well. And Participant-12 stated that besides two former co-workers that she chatted with often during the week which helps to keep her in a positive frame of mind, her other main source of support is two sisters, one of which works as an administrator at a HWI in another state.

Challenges Faced. Unconscious bias toward women of color leaders follows from the contrast between ideals of leadership and racial or ethnic stereotypes. Many Latinas run businesses, but they are rarely asked to serve on boards. Like Latinas, African American women face discrimination based on race and gender intertwined.

Often, women of color in administrative position at HWIs and PWIs are faced with challenges based on stereotypes such as 'emotional', 'late', 'lazy' and 'unable to separate management directions or constructive criticism from personal attacks', even when there is no evidence that women of color act in these stereotypical ways that would support such stereotypes.

Strategies and Sources of Support. Some women of color administrative leaders might join a support group on campus that will help them discuss strategies for surviving in their positions and the campus climate. Many times, the support group will be made up of women of color from different ethnic groups; and sometimes they join support groups based on their own individual ethnicity and/or heritage.

In this study, the practice of mentoring materialized into an institutional strategy for the participants to attain career promotion, retention, and success in their mid-level, senior and executive level leadership roles. Participant-3 posited that successful planning in the form of continual executive management leadership training for moving to the next level can be a strategic method for creating a seamless transition for advancement of women of color administrators. Participant-12 stated that it is important to continue learning about your position in the form of attending conferences, training workshops or webinars. She said this is very important even if you have been in the position for as long as she ha (ten years).

Need to Work Harder. Some of the participants expressed concerns about women of color having to work twice as hard and be twice as good as their Caucasian counterparts. Some of

the participants felt that they always had to prove themselves -- always having to strive harder. All participants agreed that it helps to have the credentials to match the position and go beyond the position already held.

Perspectives in Relation to the Literature

Most of the available literature related to administrators of color in historically or predominantly White institutions, focused on the experiences of African American women in these administrative positions. The results of this study might extend the literature by addressing the gap in the literature on the perceptions of women of color in mid-level, senior and executive level at two historically White universities in California and other PWIs. My study allowed women of color administrators to share their experiences, which can potentially fill a gap in the literature.

In the literature, I have learned that other than research on African American women, WOC often are not represented in the research on leadership roles in the workplace. There remains a gap in the literature and empirical research that addresses institutional experiences in higher education of women of color administrators as a whole, including community colleges, 4-year universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); (Amey et al., 2002; Harley, 2008; Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Miller & Vaughn, 1997; Moses, 1997).

The literature I reviewed has revealed the problem of using qualitative methods of individual practices to elucidate propositions derived from theories that are based on macro features of institutions. These individual practices can show both divergences and similarities to the generalized wholes attributed to institutions. The essential paradox of qualitative research shows how the lived experiences of individuals are both the on-going

accomplishment of what we call societal institutions, yet at the same time these experiences highlight divergences with macro principles eg, such as those based on demographic figures used as categories. Theorizing based on principles such as CRT provide us with broader framework of explanations that can motivate a finer, more detailed understanding and a more sufficient exploration of individual activities as ways of extending and changing the general theorizing.

According to Hagelsk and Hughes (2014), discrimination ranging from overt to covert in the way of promotions and pay distributions to interpersonal prejudices that are expressed in comments, slurs and social interaction patterns continue to plague African American women (AAW), but there is no mention in the literature as to whether these patterns plague other women of color. Two of the twelve women who were interviewed for this study further supported these findings as they each mentioned not being paid the same as their White counterparts. However, only one participant mentioned being overlooked for promotions that she was qualified for and deserved. Davis and Maldonado (2015) found that the experiences of AAW tend to be plagued with the "double barrier" which leads to being marginalized multiple times due to the dual identity of being female and African American. Some of the interviewees expressed how the "double barrier" had worked against them in the past at one time or another, and continued to work against other AAW and other WOC, especially those who aspire to hold senior and executive level positions.

Per Davis and Maldonado (2015), although there have been a few advancements toward gender and race equality, there is still a large disparity within senior level positions for AAW, but there is little research literature addressing this disparity for other WOC.

Some of the participants stated that it is still a struggle to be treated fairly in the workplace and to be given the same opportunities as their White counterparts. In addition,

the literature has suggested that WOC often are not supported by workplace supervisors, and this claim is evident within my findings, as it pertains to at least one of the participants during the interview. The participant described her experience of not being supported in her quest to attend leadership training that would enable her to move up in her administrative position and that her supervisor actually did not contribute to her ability to learn in her career, until the dean of the department stepped in and supported her quest to move up in a mid-level administrative leadership role through leadership training. Supportive and mentoring supervisors, managers, and directors contribute to the advancement of WOC.

The findings in my study provided validation and support for findings in the literature that there are both visible and invisible barriers faced by not only African American women at historically and predominantly White institutions of higher education, but faced by other women of color as well, including racism, sexism, isolation, family issues, lack of mentorship, and tokenism. The findings in my study also supported some of the key findings from the literature purporting that it is often difficult for African American women to see themselves in a profession where other African American women are not readily visible in leadership. Some of the participants in my study who were not African American women, shared the same concerns. The literature also reiterates the importance of African American women being able to connect and interact with other African American women of color to positively impact morale, job satisfaction, and retention. All of the women of color participants (and not just the African American women) in my study thought it was very important to connect with and interact with other WOC in the same kind of administrative positions as they themselves hold, as a means of moral support and to discuss strategies for survival and retention in a predominantly White university workplace.

Future Research

While conducting my research, I found certain limitations that prevented me from interviewing the original desired number of participants. The first limitation was that I did not locate the desired number of WOC leaders at the senior and executive level position. Originally, with this study, I anticipated to interview at least twenty WOC who held mid-level, senior and executive level positions. Unfortunately, I was only able to recruit and interview a total of twelve women of color participants at the two historically White universities. Another limitation to my study was that the recruitment of WOC at the subject HWI was challenging, due to there not being a large base to select from in the mid-level, senior and executive level positions, so the subject of confidentiality was of great concern to those interviewed. A future research project would address this limitation by choosing a university that has a larger minority population with more women of color in senior and executive level positions.

Although the purpose of this research study was achieved, a small number of limitations occurred. This study was limited to four African American women—two in the mid-level position, one in the senior-level position and one in the executive level position; four Latina women—two in the executive level position and two in the mid-level position; and four Native American women—one in the mid-level position, one in the senior level position and two in the executive level position. Thus, the overall sample size for this study was limited to twelve study participants.

I acknowledge that my approach could be too subjective, not value-free, because of the close and personal contact with some of the participants in the study. Qualitative researchers interpret the data based on prior knowledge, which, according to Merriam (2009), is an ontological interpretation of the information. The idea is that information from the

participants cannot be real until the researcher explores the information. Therefore, the researcher interpreted the themes of this basic qualitative design as reality after merging the information with the researcher's previous knowledge about the subject.

The implications for research evolved after careful reflection on this study, and the elements which I felt were either missing or could have been expanded on, or from my own desire to want to know more. As noted in the review of literature, there is a void in empirical research to bring voice to the unique leadership experiences of women of color other than African American women administrators at predominantly White institutions. The recommendations for future research will assist in further addressing this research gap.

There are several recommendations for future research. This research study will add to the body of literature on women of color career pathway experiences ascending to senior and executive-level leadership positions at historically White institutions (HWIs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This present study sought to yield voice to twelve women of color participants regarding their experiences with barriers and challenges (underrepresentation, being the only one, and lack of more formal training) and facilitating factors at PWIs. Some of the women in this study voiced their experiences of disempowerment career pathways, leadership challenges and barriers, and other leadership factors that participants navigated through to reach senior and executive-level leadership's positions. The literature is scarce in research conducted on how women of color employed facilitating factors to navigate successful career pathways to senior and executive-level leadership roles and concerning leadership development. Therefore, I propose the following recommendation gathered from this study's findings to be considered:

I recommend that a comparative study be performed of WOC career experiences in senior and executive-level leadership positions contrasted with European American women

career experiences in similar leadership positions at HWIs and PWIs. This study could also provide comprehensive and rich data regarding the distinctions and resemblances of both groups ascending to senior and executive leadership.

I would recommend also that a comparative study be performed at California community colleges where there is likely to be more women of color employed in administrative roles. Women of color administrators at community colleges are not exempt from obstacles related to equity in the workplace. And while female leaders of color have multiple and intersecting barriers to their success within California community colleges, the barriers are not insurmountable.

Finally, my recommendations for aspiring leaders of color and the institutions that will employ them converge at common themes related to Critical Race Theory (CRT), creating and supporting career pathways for aspiring female leaders of color, and establishing sustainable succession management strategies.

Implications for Practice

This study sought to provide evidence that women of color face unique and varied obstacles as administrators in higher education. The findings indicate that the totality of experiences shared by the WOC administrators as a collective group are not faced by any other group within the campus climate. Consequently, this study provides implications for higher education administration that can improve work environments and relationships.

Administrators who interact with women of color administrators should be reminded to disregard stereotypes and to judge all colleagues based on the content of their character regardless of race, age, gender, and/or sexual orientation. In addition, whether or not personalities mesh well together, women of administrators, like most administrators, desire to be evaluated based on their contribution in the specific role to which they are prescribed on

campus as defined by their position description. As such, if a colleague is being effective, then they should be respected, and their contribution should be valued. If the colleague is not being effective, then that ineffectiveness should be addressed directly in a professional way.

In addition, for those WOC administrators who seek to attain senior level positions, it is important to not only be aware of the stereotypes that others may hold, but to actively engage colleagues in an effort to dispel myths and create bonds. This is not a suggestion to create disingenuous relationships, but to simply participate in the types of conversations that would help colleagues be able to relate to and better understand each other.

Finally, the vast majority of participants in this study held at least one advanced degree. But the stereotypes that the participants in the study spoke about being victims of, indicated that regardless of the number of degrees they and other WOC earn or have, or the amount of diversity trainings that their supervisors may have participated in, the subject of race and gender is an area where many of them remain ignorant. As a result, it is imperative that institutions discover ways to approach the topic of diversity in truly meaningful ways so that practitioners of all races and genders truly begin to embrace the concept of inclusion (*engaging* those with different views and experiences) rather than what appear to be high levels of tolerance (*enduring* those with different views and experiences).

Recommendations

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

perform their very best in work environments. Having a mentor(s) is critical to the development and advancement of Women of Color at historically and predominantly White institutions.

Participants from the study spoke passionately about having a mentor(s) who assisted and inspired them throughout their career. Participants acknowledged the importance of having a mentor regardless of race or gender. Some participants expressed concerns over not having enough women of color administrative leadership positions available to serve as mentors. I also recommend that staff receive recognition for mentoring students of color from other campus departments in the form of a formal program recognition.

Further, higher education institutions might also develop and provide professional leadership development opportunities for administrators, specifically inclusive for women of color to attend and fully prepare for advancement to senior and executive leadership. Higher education institutes could offer financial assistance, and/or time-off to attend conferences. From a policy perspective, HWIs and PWIs could recruit top-level administrators to undertake a mentoring relationship with mid-level women of color administrators or potential administrators. In institutions with no WOC mid-level administrators, top-level administrators could identify faculty or staff members who have expressed interest in administration and mentor them. Consequently, this could help to develop a pipeline of potential women of color administrators at various institutional levels.

Finally, a well-developed and purposeful sponsorship program with off-campus or on-campus organizations could be provided to support current women of color in senior and executive-level leadership roles and for future WOC aspiring to advance to senior and executive-level leadership.

The findings of this study also suggest several practical implications for the historically White universities represented in the study as well as other historically or predominantly White institutions, which are intent on strengthening their leadership teams through the placement of women of color in senior- and executive-level administrative roles, and which are committed to issues of diversity and equity within the academy. Implications for practice are also identified for women of color mid-level administrators who aspire to senior- and executive-level leadership roles.

> The development of a state and national mentoring program to connect women of color who aspire to be administrators with other administrators could be beneficial. Dunbar and Kinnersly (2011) contended that a healthy and active mentor-mentee relationship hinges on various factors and suggest a mentoring relationship is most successful when both parties involved share similarities, such as backgrounds, values, outlooks, and experiences. However, Ragins (1997) suggested when the mentor and protégé relationship involves people of different backgrounds, diversity outcomes are more likely to be accomplished, because the mentor obtains knowledge, develops cultural competency and skills relating to interacting with persons from diverse groups.

Universities where women of color work would be richer, much more diverse, and more inclusive environments if they would align their institutional practices with strategies to enhance the development and advancement of women of color (WOC) who currently serve in mid-level, senior and executive administrative roles; and those who aspire to advancing higher within the academy. The institutions' mission that claims commitment to diversity and inclusion, need to foster the leadership of WOC. Given the lack of advanced leadership roles, there are strategic steps which institutions should adopt.

Leadership development academies

Historically and predominantly White institutions should develop leadership development academies to advance their institutional missions and strategic priorities as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and advancement of traditionally underrepresented groups, in particularly, women of color, who serve in the capacity of administrative leaders. These HWIs, like many historically or predominantly White institutions, miss the opportunity to recognize the potential of current employees, ideally women of color, who might be stuck in low-status and low-wage positions, yet possess enormous abilities and skills to advance to higher-level administrative leadership roles. Institutions can create "grow their own" programs, which have a focus aligned to their mission and strategic priorities of inclusiveness, equity, and professional development.

Institutional Context

Notable throughout the interviews, there was no mention of support for women of color. Institutional support should be offered for women of color who are also mentors themselves to students, even students from outside of their department. Without the proper institutional support for women of color in their positions, their supervisors can be considered gatekeepers and inhibit opportunities for advancement, etc.

Also notable is the salary discrepancies repeatedly mentioned by some of the participants at both HWIs. A suggestion would be for the universities to have some kind of systematic review in place and develop a provision to conduct equity studies on salaries.

Diverse recruitment strategies

There is a tremendous impact for institutions by recruiting and hiring women of color administrators to both advance the institution and support students who may see these

women as aspirational role models. There should be a focused effort by institutions to advertise for and recruit potential women of color administrators from a number of professional and social organizations, and publications that have a large followership or membership of women of color. Additionally, institutions could benefit from participating in professional conferences where a large number of mid-level and rising senior-level administrators participate and offer to WOC participants an opportunity to learn first-hand about the application and interview process.

Women of Color Administrators

There are important implications for women of color administrators, current and future, at historically and predominantly White institutions. The twelve women in this study were instrumental in providing critical implications for practice from their responses given during the interviews on their "sage wisdom" for current and up-and-coming WOC administrators. Their advice is golden, especially those in their senior- and executive-level status, and the participants' true desire to inspire and promote other women of color.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(College/University Administrators)

1). I read about your job on _____. Can you tell me more about what your job entails; and describe your role in the current position you hold?

2). Are you a first generation college graduate?

3). Tell me about the personal factors in your life journey that led you to pursue a career as an administrator?

4). What strategies do you utilize to successfully continue in your position, seek advancement to the next level, and motivate you to stay in administrative leadership roles in higher education?

a). What leadership training opportunities have you had?

b). In the article, "Black Women in Academe" (1997), Yolanda Moses states that "Despite a demonstrably chilly climate on many campuses, many black women Enjoy their jobs in academia." What do you enjoy most about your job?

5). Describe your experiences as a woman of color administrator. How do you perceive it to be different than your white woman counterparts or male counterparts?

a). How do they perceive you to be different?

6). Tell me about your biggest sources of support, professionally and personally?

7). How do you balance the demands of your position with the demands of your personal/family life?

8). What are your thoughts on mentoring? Do you have, or have you had, a mentor? If so, describe them (gender, ethnicity, position, etc.) and how have they impacted your career in higher education administration. What was the experience like?

9). The research has shown that people of color in general, are clustered in positions of low status and power.

a). What would you say is the ideal pipeline, or career path, to senior-level administrative positions in higher education? Have you ever thought you didn't have a choice?

10). What is your philosophy for leadership and are you familiar with the Bolman and Deal philosophy of leadership?

11). What do you see as some of the biggest challenges of being a woman of color senior- or executive-level administrator at this institution?

12). What sage wisdom and advice do you have for up-and-coming new women of color professionals?

APPENDIX B

PROJECT TITLE: Leadership Through the Eyes of Women of Color Administrators at Two Historically White Universities In California

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please take your time to review this consent form and discuss any questions you may have, or words you do not clearly understand, with me, the undersigned researcher for this project. You may take your time to make your decision about participating in this study and you may discuss it with your friends or family before you make your decision.

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

PURPOSE:

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Clare Washington, graduate student in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at UCSB. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about how women of color prepare to ascend to leadership positions on the campus of UCSB.

PROCEDURES:

If you decide to participate, I will interview you about your educational history and experiences at UCSB. The interview will occur one time for approximately one hour and will be audio or video recorded, according to your choice. The interview will take place at a location of your choice.

RISKS:

There is no risk involved in the study except a possible bit of discomfort in being interviewed.

BENEFITS:

There is no direct benefit to you anticipated if you participate in this study. The study may help the university to better support its women of color administrators in leadership positions.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, since research documents are not protected by subpoena. Only the researcher will use the interview data. Any recorded data such as digital or audio recordings, will be kept on my password-protected computer. The interview notes will be in a locked cabinet in my home. Any interview notes collected that has reference to a participant's name will be shredded after transcription. Any transcribed data will be on a password-protected computer with no access to other

individuals except my doctoral advisor. The audio/vido recordings of the interviews will be kept indefinitely. No individual names will be used in reporting the results of the research.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW:

You may refuse to participate and still receive any benefits from the university that you would receive if you were not in the study. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started.

QUESTIONS:

If you have any questions about this research project or if you think you may have been injured as a result of your participation, please contact:
Clare Washington at (503) 381-7490 or email: clarejwashington@umail.ucsb.edu

"If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu. Or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050."

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW WILL INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A SIGNED AND DATED COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

Signature:_____Date:_____Time:_____

APPENDIX C

Organizational Steps That Can be Taken

1). Track data – hiring, promotion, attrition.

2). Conduct equity analyses

3). Mentorship/Sponsorship programs

4). Start a allyship group (men could be included, if desired)

5). Put anonymous bias reporting systems in place.

6). Make someone accountable.

7). De-bias systems

- Search Committee and Rooney Rules
- Job position descriptions
- Third-party process monitors or ombudspersons

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