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Counter-Stories of Women of Color Navigating the Trusteeship: A Critical Race Feminism Analysis of the Organizational Culture of Higher Education Boards in the U.S.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Counter-Stories of Women of Color Navigating the Trusteeship: A Critical Race Feminism Analysis of the Organizational Culture of Higher Education Boards in the U.S.

by

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Dr. Raquel M. Rall, Chairperson

This dissertation explores the internal cultures of (14) United States higher education boards from the perspectives of (18) Women of Color trustees. Guided by Critical Race Feminism, Intersectionality, and Organizational Culture Theory, the author develops a framework to study the impact of race *and* gender on historically underrepresented Women of Color Trustees. The counter-stories presented in this analysis inform how internalized behaviors, norms, and interactions of trustees reinforce racial and gender inequity on higher education boards. Moreover, the study poses the unique contributions of Women of Color trustees as leaders in higher education. This dissertation's novelty comes from the lack of governance scholarship informed through the lens of Women of Color. The findings of the study contribute to the empirical and theoretical work in governance research and provide guidance for any Women of Color interested in the trusteeship.

Key words: Women of color, higher education governance, boards of trustees, organizational culture

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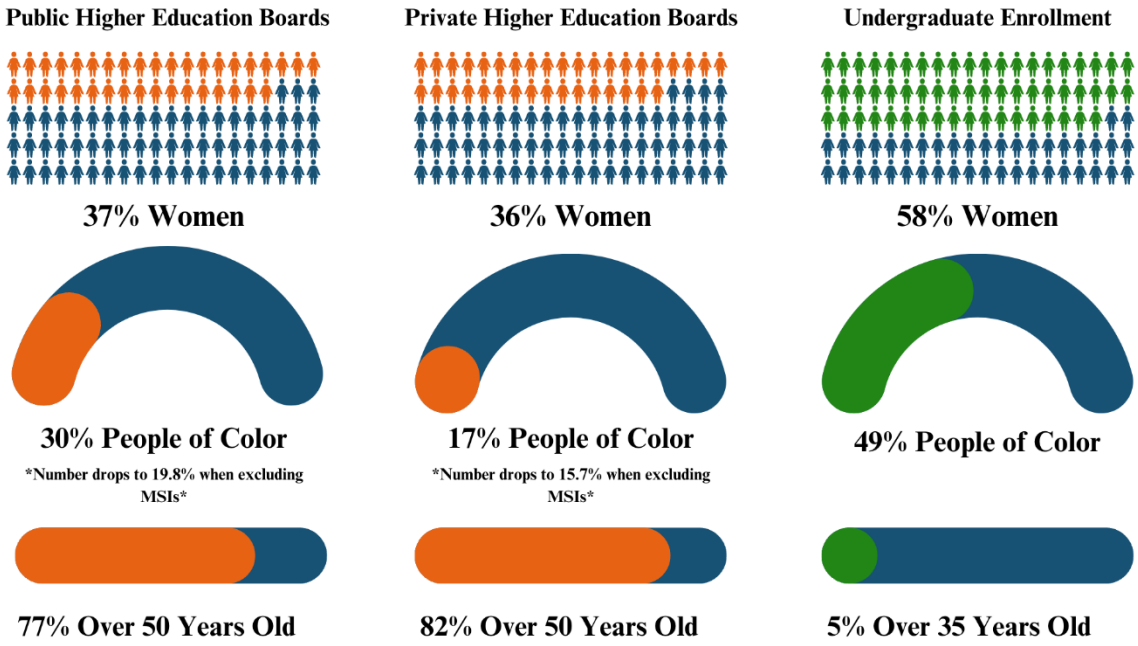
Chapter 1: Introduction

United States (U.S.) governing boards are potent actors that affect the life, culture, and sustainability of higher education (Rall et al., 2018). Boards play a significant fiduciary role in institutions of higher education (Hermalin, 2004) such as the responsibility for the welfare and financial well-being of the college or university (Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). However, their most critical role is their ability to influence leadership structure through their selection of campus chancellors and presidents (Dika & Janosik, 2003). Boards appoint presidents who hire deans and faculty, faculty then recruit graduate and undergraduate students, and together, these processes cause an inexorable domino effect that impacts an institution's demographic (Birnbaum, 1990; Kaplan, 2006). As such, boards hold power as gatekeepers to influence diversity on college campuses (Rall et al., 2018, 2020). Nevertheless, despite their political power, boards are among the least understood stakeholders in U.S. higher education (Minor, 2008; Tierney, 2020).

Just as boards have remained under-researched, higher education board diversity also remains an underdeveloped area of study (Rall et al., 2020). Board diversity research is crucial, however, given that governing boards are physical representations of an institution's goals, values, mission, and culture (Chait et al., 1996). Today, higher education institutions are home to one of the most diverse student populations in U.S. history (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023); conversely, governing boards are not keeping up with the same diversification (Rall & Orué, 2020; Siqueiros et al., 2022) (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Demographic Comparison of Higher Education Boards to Undergraduate Student Enrollment in U.S. Postsecondary Institutions in 2020



Note. Adapted from *Policies, Practices, and Composition* by the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. 2021 and from *Undergraduate Enrollment: Condition of Education* by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. 2023

In a recent attempt to measure board demographics, The Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (AGB) reported that women's representation on both public and private boards in the U.S. is only 30%, while men hold 70% of all board seats (AGB, 2021). In comparison, the NCES reported that in the Fall of 2020, women made up 58% (9.2 million) of total undergraduate enrollment, while men made up 42% (6.7 million) of total undergraduate enrollment in U.S. postsecondary institutions (NCES Fast Facts, 2023). When AGB's data on board composition is broken down into racial and ethnic diversity, People of Color make up 17% of public board

memberships and 11% of private boards (AGB, 2021). For reference, of the 15.9 million undergraduate students enrolled in fall 2020, 51% (8.1 million) were White, and 49% (7.8 million) were Students of Color (NCES, 2023).

These statistics are troublesome from a practical and theoretical perspective as they indicate not only an apparent problem within higher education representation but also fixate on the dichotomy of race and gender instead of its intersectionality (Hill Collins, 1986, 1989). Board members who identify as both women and People of Color are thus excluded from reports and rendered invisible. As a result, this selective reporting erases both the perceived existence and actual existence of Women of Color board members and limits the scope of knowledge in the field of higher education (Rall & Orué, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Governing boards are agents responsible for enacting institutional policies that have the power to hinder or help historically underrepresented and vulnerable populations in higher education (AGB, 2020). They are accountable for ensuring that institutions adhere to the principles of Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (JDE&I), the mission of the college or university, and policy implementation that advance the strategic goals of social and justice issues (AGB, 2020). However, conversations about JDE&I have yet to gain traction in the boardroom, mainly due to the negligent diversification of boards across the U.S. (Rall et al., 2019, 2020; Rall & Orué, 2020).

In recent years, a drive to question the diversity of the individuals entrusted with the highest decision-making power has invigorated higher education scholars to question

whether board members should represent an increasing student diversity—and the diversity of the U.S. population (Cottrol et al., 2003; Leonard, 2009; Rall et al., 2019, 2020; Siqueiros et al., 2020). Like these scholars, I share concern over the lack of diversity among members entrusted with the highest decision-making power for colleges and universities (Rall & Orué, 2020). Trustees represent only a tiny fraction of the general public (traditionally upper-class, white, and men in composition) (AGB, 2020; Johnson, 2016; Siqueiros et al., 2020), which is problematic, given that historically underrepresented populations need leadership that represent their interests, experiences, and benefits—especially when these leaders influence policies that directly impact student success, retention, and graduation (Rall & Orué, 2020; Siqueiros et al., 2020)

The problem of board diversification is intensified by the lack of research on the intersectional characteristics of board membership (Rall & Orué, 2020). Quantitative data reporting lacks statistics arranged by race and gender (AGB, 2020), while qualitative studies on the impact of gender in the study of boards have left out the role of race (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b; Kramer & Adams, 2020; Inez & Scott, 2018; Martin, 2010). Trusteeship studies have thus contributed to the erasure of those who identify as double minorities (Crenshaw, 1989), such as Women of Color, who share identities that marginalize them as women, as People of Color, and as Women of Color. By excluding Women of Color in governance scholarship, researchers perceive this identity as unimportant and, in turn, privilege the leadership behavior of the dominant group in the organizations under observation (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). This practice

perpetuates the exclusionary organizational structure of higher education boards and maintains their homogeneity.

To try and remedy board demographics by simply appointing Women of Color to boards is not enough, given that representation does not equate to inclusion (Rall & Orué, 2020; Tienda, 2013). We know that Women of Color experience racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression in social, political, educational, economic, and professional settings (Bernal, 2002; K. Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality also suggests that the experience of one Woman of Color board member may not be the same as another Woman of Color on the board since there is no universal "Black experience," "Chicano experience," or "women's experience" (Harris, 1990). Moreover, board members can wield formal and informal power structured through their practices, bylaws, and rituals (Hermalin, 1989; Inez & Scott, 2018; Pierce, 2014; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974), with no two boards of higher education functioning the same. While some boards may share similar practices, there are nuances in the training of new board members (AGB, 1999; Davis, 1997; Dika & Janosik, 2003; Rall et al., 2021) and cultures unique to institutions and organizations that can impact the behaviors of leaders and the experiences of members (Tierney, 1988).

If we try to "check off boxes" through diverse appointments without acknowledging the experiences of Women of Color in governance in research, we are only solving the issue of board representation. Research has proven that the lack of Women of Color in higher education leadership is not a "pipeline" issue (Johnson, 2016; Women's Power Gap, Report, 2022), meaning that there are more than enough qualified

Women of Color to fill leadership roles. Instead, researchers contend that social, political, and structural barriers inhibit Women of Color from reaching leadership roles (Siqueiros, 2020; Women's Power Gap, Report, 2022). These internal and external barriers are what need additional attention. The underlying problem, beyond board diversity, is that the challenges that Women of Color encounter on their path to the trusteeship, and those that follow once they reach their positions, have been ignored in higher education governance scholarship–and their stories matter.

Scholars have yet to document the impact of intersectionality on the leadership practices, behaviors, strengths, and challenges of this group. Most importantly, governance scholarship has yet to give a platform to Women of Color as contributors of knowledge and tell their stories. Without a qualitative analysis centering the voices of these marginalized members, problematic board practices remain unidentified and unchallenged. Consequently, traditional lay members may not identify issues of race, gender, class, or other marginalized identities within their organizations (Chesler & Crowfoot, 1989), and, in turn, exclusionary behaviors live on through institutional socialization and culture (Tierney, 1988). Suppose board members are not aware of how their own behaviors and actions may inculcate covert discriminatory practices. How can we expect them to be institutional champions of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion? More importantly, why should Women of Color be subject to any discriminatory challenges in their roles as trustees?

Purpose of the Study

I wanted to disrupt the pattern of higher education governance scholarship that has overlooked Women of Color in research and shed light on three issues that extend beyond mere representation. The purpose of this study was to (1) create a platform for the voices and stories of Women of Color trustees long excluded in higher education governance scholarship, (2) analyze the stories told by participants to understand how identity impacts this group in governance, and (3) identify both the external and internal barriers Women of Color faced in the boardroom. I answered these research gaps by combining Critical Race Feminism (CRF), Intersectionality, and Organizational Culture Theory as frameworks to collect, analyze, and document the experiences of Women of Color who serve or have served on U.S. public and private four-year boards of higher education. The stories of Women of Color were used in this study to identify how racism, sexism, or other exclusionary behaviors were present within boards of higher education, explicitly or implicitly, through a CRF and intersectionality lens I then used Organizational Culture Theory to examine exclusionary conditions and explain how boards inculcated these practices via beliefs, policies, and formal and informal practices to uphold homogenous compositions and power structures.

The narratives collected and analyzed in this study helped me frame race, gender, class, and intersectional identities in conversation with one another. The conversations then helped to 1) understand how various intersections of power may privilege, disadvantage, or otherwise impact Women of Color as they navigate their service on a board, 2) demonstrate the value of having more Women of Color in higher education

leadership, 3) disrupt covert discriminatory practices within governance spaces, and 4) suggest policy recommendations that impact the structure of public and private higher education by influencing the appointment of more Women of Color to governing boards, while also suggesting recommendations for improving the culture of boardrooms to foster welcoming spaces for Women of Color. This study aimed to extend beyond diversity and inclusion efforts to address equity issues and advocate for social justice by questioning the internalized behaviors of boards of trustees. By filling in the existing literature gaps on the experiences of Women of Color trustees, this study also helps inform Women of Color about the pathways, challenges, and survival strategies that participants shared and employed throughout their tenure.

Research Questions

This project had three main research foci. In my work, I proposed the following questions:

1. How do intersections of gender, class, race, and other identities of Women of Color's influence their experiences on higher education governing boards?
2. How do Women of Color contribute to higher education governance?
3. What, if any, are the challenges Women of Color face as board members?

Significance of the Study

While board diversity has received little concern among education scholars (Morgan et al., 2020; Pusser et al., 2006; Rall et al., 2019), scholarship that highlights the importance of diversity in leadership is abundant (Airini et al., 2011; Ayman & Korabik,

2010; Ballenger, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Brower et al., 2019; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Madsen, 2015; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Shepherd, 2017; Walker, 2013). Higher education leadership studies have proven variances in leadership based on race, gender, and the positive effect that women and People of Color have on their organization's environment (Kezar, 2017). The importance of diverse leadership, coupled with an increasingly diverse higher education landscape, has created a demand for more diverse higher education board appointments in the United States (AGB, 2022; Johnson, 2016; Siqueiros, 2020; Women's Power Gap, Report, 2022). This study adds to the pressure of increasing representation on boards as an issue of diversity and equity; however, it pushes the conversation further to question the internal and external social-political structures that have created and maintained homogenous boards since their inception over 300 years ago (Duryea, 1973). By questioning the exclusionary practices through the lens of Women of Color, this study exemplifies that representation alone is not enough.

Even with more Women of Color appointed to boards, challenges await the select few who reach these leadership positions. In governance research, it has been found that women are met with behaviors, customs, practices, and policies that exclude or deter their membership and participation (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b), however prior to this work, the challenges had yet to be identified for Women of Color who face not only gender discrimination, but also share the additional weight of race, class, and other identities that can further marginalize them (Crenshaw, 1989;1991). The study of governance requires thinking about the people, structures, rules, and hierarchies that guide decision-making

(Kaplan, 2006). It also requires us to consider the "organizational context, social norms, and organizational culture" (Kaplan, 2006, p.214). Understanding board culture and behaviors from the perspectives of Women of Color helped identify instances of racism, sexism, and other discriminatory practices within board organizational behaviors, which may not be recognized by the dominant group perpetuating the behaviors (Hill Collins, 2012). Calling out the exclusionary culture of higher education boards holds significant implications since they are entrusted to create and endorse policies that service marginalized constituencies (AGB, 2020) while also influencing the structure of institutional leadership (Kaplan, 2006). This work implies that to truly adhere to inclusion equity practices must be prioritized at the board level (Rall et al., 2019).

Lastly, but most importantly, this study's significance comes from the benefits that Women of Color bring to higher education boards. This work explores the impact of identity on decision-making at the board level and how the celebration of intersectional backgrounds can help boards construct practices and policies that attend to the unique needs of today's higher education population. It also identifies ways boards of trustees can cultivate inclusive working environments and attract more diverse colleagues. This study centers Women of Color as valued contributors of knowledge (Bell, 2004) and signifies an epistemological perspective that has been rendered invisible and disenfranchised since the study of governance emerged. It breaks the pattern of exclusionary governance research and opens the door for scholars and practitioners to learn the strengths, power, and perspectives Women of Color bring to the trusteeship.

Definition of Terms

Board or Board of Trustees

In this study, "Board" or "Board of Trustees" is a broad term that refers to any public or private higher education governing board and includes Board of Curators, Board of Directors, Board of Governors, Board of Overseers, Board of Regents, Board of Supervisors, Board of Trustees, and Board of Visitors.

Ex-Officio Trustees

Any members on the "Board" or "Board of Trustees" who serve based on their concurrent positions, such as (1) the governor, (2) the president of the university (3) the president of the faculty senate, and (4) alumni association president (Rall et al., 2022)

Laymen Trustees

Any member of the "Board" or "Board of Trustees" that is a (1) lay citizen, (2) is elected or appointed to the board, and (3) has no academic ties (as faculty, student, or employee) to the institution (Hermalin, 2004).

Student Trustees

Any members on the "Board" or "Board of Trustees" who are also current students at the college or university.

Trustees

Any member of the "Board" or "Board of Trustees" responsible for the decision-making at a higher education institution (Martorana, 1963). This includes Ex-Officio, Laymen, and Student Trustees.

The Trusteeship

I define "Trusteeship" as the unique roles and responsibilities entrusted to higher education governing boards by the institution and the public. It is a reference to the relationship between the board and its stakeholders (Commodore, 2018; Henderson, 1967; Michael et al.,1997) In addition to their fiduciary duties I described at the beginning of this chapter, AGB (2023) defines nine principles of trusteeship on its website and handbook intended to orient new trustees in the U.S.

(1) Embrace the full scope of your responsibilities.

(2) Respect the difference between the board's role and the administration's role.

(3) Be an ambassador for your institution and higher education.

(4) Conduct yourself with impeccable integrity.

(5) Think independently and act collectively.

(6) Champion justice, equity, and inclusion.

(7) Learn about the mission, constituents, culture, and context of your institution.

(8) Focus on what matters most to long-term sustainability.

(9) Ask insightful questions and listen with an open mind.

Women

I chose to use the term, "women" to exemplify a non-biological approach to gender identity. I defer the use of the word "female" trustees because I do not want to reduce women to their reproductive parts and abilities, also accounting for those women who are not biologically female, as this erases gender-nonconforming people and members of the trans community (Butler, 1990; De Beauvoir, 2010).

Women of Color

An eclectic term to identify Latina, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, Black, and African American women (Wing, 2003).

Conclusion

I began this chapter by discussing the import of U.S. higher education governing boards and problematizing why their homogeneity is a growing concern amongst governance scholars. In my analysis, I signified the need for more research on the intersectional identities of board members and how one group in particular, Women of Color, has been erased in governance literature. Next, I explained why the absence of research on Women of Color was an issue that required scholarly attention and presented the aims and scope of this study. Lastly, I concluded with the significance of providing a research platform for a new epistemological perspective and the role of research in calling out exclusionary practices embedded in the culture of boards.

In the following chapters, I discuss the main content of the study. I commence with a review of the literature on boards of higher education. Due to the limited research on the experiences of Women of Color in the trusteeship, I discuss a review of the literature on race and gender in educational leadership (college chancellors, presidents, and deans). In Chapter Three, I introduce my primary, secondary, and tertiary theoretical frameworks, and I present the methods for data collection and analysis. In Chapter Four, I present the stories of Women of Color trustees as they describe the organizational culture of their boards and the challenges that came with being marginalized members of the group. I also present how they engaged in survival strategies and their extensive

contributions to the board and institution. I end Chapter Four by highlighting the impact of diverse boards on the experiences of Women of Color and the function of the board. Lastly, I conclude with a discussion of the findings, significance, and implications for future research in Chapter Five.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The literature that follows begins with the historical context of four-year public and private college and university governing boards. I then synthesize the various type, compositions, functions, and imports of boards. Next, I review the literature on studies associated with gender, race, and their interlock in the area of higher education leadership. In this review, I draw primarily from studies on college and university presidents, deans, and administrators since there is scant literature on gender in governance. Throughout the literature review, I include the gaps in the literature on boards, race, and gender in higher education and revisit the overall summary and gaps in the conclusion of the chapter.

Higher Education Boards

Historical Context of Boards of Higher Education

The first colonial governing board model was a Board of Overseers at Harvard in 1642, comprised of the governor, state officials, magistrates, and ministers who controlled university property (Duryea, 1973). By 1650, the General Court created a college Corporation made up of the president, faculty, and treasurer of the university, and two boards held governing responsibilities in the institution (Duryea, 1973). Although the Board of Overseers still held power over the college's property and funds, the Corporation could make administrative decisions about the institution's affairs and hiring practices independently (Duryea, 1973). Today's modern practice of U.S. higher education external control, however, began with the distinction of Yale College (1701), which petitioned for a single nonacademic board of control (Duryea, 1973). Yale's

trustees were ten clergymen who, along with the college president, were given the power to manage the institutional funds, property, and award degrees (Duryea, 1973). Following Yale's restructuring, colonial colleges adopted the same model of governance (Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008).

English law established that colleges were public entities chartered by the states and that their charters could be revoked or altered at the will of the government (Bastedo, 2009). States assured their interests were prioritized by requiring the state governor or other political actors as members of college and university boards (Bastedo, 2009). However, the power states had over colleges and universities changed in 1819 when the landmark Dartmouth College case affirmed the autonomy of both public and private higher education institutions as self-governed bodies (Bastedo, 2009; Duryea, 2000). The court's finding alleged that even though colleges served the public interest, "they did so as chartered agencies separate from the state" (Duryea, p.106, 2000). The Dartmouth case confirmed that boards of trustees held the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for higher education institutions and set a precedent for what would develop into today's governance model for over 4,500 public and private nonprofit colleges and universities in the United States (AGB, 2021).

Today's Shared Governance Models. In 1967 The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) formulated a joint statement outlining how shared governance should work at colleges and universities. Their statement delegates all academic matters to the faculty, administrative decisions

(leading and management of the institution) to the administration, and public policy and accountability to the governing board (AAUP, 1966; Duderstadt, 2004). Although governance is shared amongst all the institutional members, the legal powers of the university are held in the hands of the governing board and its members–the trustees (AAUP, 1966). The AAUP charged trustees with final authority over policy decisions and the welfare of the institution (1966). As such, governing boards became powerful higher education actors responsible to their constituents (AGB, 2010; Barringer et al., 2019; Duryea, 1973; Kaplan, 2006; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008).

Post-Secondary Institution Types. Higher education offers various opportunities for students interested in postsecondary education. Institutions of higher learning are classified based on their establishment purpose, educational disciplines, the type of students served, and the type of education provided (ACE, 2023). Options range between private non-profit, private for-profit, and public colleges; four-year and two-year colleges; universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, vocational-technical, adult education, and career colleges; and colleges with particular foci such as arts, single-sex, religiously affiliated, and specialized-mission colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). In this study, the literature focuses on the role of four-year public and private higher education boards. The focus on four-year institutions is due to the critical differences in the management, governance, and selection of board members at two-year institutions (Kater & Levin, 2004). While commonalities exist across all U.S. governing boards, the nuances between two-year and four-year colleges and universities are enough that the approach to the study of boards is different (Kater & Levin, 2004).

Structures of Four-Year U.S. Higher Education Boards

Governing boards can take on various names, such as The Boards of Regents, Trustees, Governors, Visitors, Fellows, Supervisors, or Overseers (Bowles, 2021; Houle, 1989; Warren, 1914). Some may govern a single institution, whereas others can oversee an entire state system or multicampus system. In fact, nearly two-thirds of colleges and universities in the United States are governed by a board responsible for more than one campus (Floyd, 1995; Minor, 2008). Regardless of their varying names, boards are generally referred to as "governing boards" or "boards of trustees" when discussed in the literature (unless an institution under study is explicitly named) for the purpose of consistency. More important than the title, however, are the nuances between the institution type–public vs. private.

Public vs. Private Boards. There are a few notable differences between public and private higher education board structures, which will be discussed throughout the literature review. Public postsecondary governance models are rooted in the state's culture and history, with no two states sharing the same underlying governance structure (Fulton, 2019). In total, three authoritative bodies can exist (and sometimes co-exist) to exercise control over public higher education– governing boards, coordinating boards, and administrative services/agencies (Education Commission of the States, 2023; Danton, 2014; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). Here, Kaplan (2006) outlined the three forms of public governing boards and their functions:

> First, states may choose to organize their schools loosely, with only one agency overseeing the group of institutions; Second, states may have a coordinating board

> that supervises the activity of several governing boards, each of which oversees one or a group of institutions; Lastly, a final group of states places all institutions in the state under the control of a single governing board. (Kaplan, 2006, p.219)

The variability of governing structures from state to state has impeded researchers from categorizing all agencies involved (Kerr & Gade, 1989; Minor, 2008). However, to help visualize the number of public four-year higher education boards in the U.S., I include a comprehensive table with data from AGB's (2020) state reports (Table 1).

Table 1 Public Four-Year College and University Boards of Higher Education by State

State	Total Number of Boards	System Types		
		System[a] Boards	Institution Boards	Coordinating Boards
Alabama	12 Public Boards	2	9	1
Alaska	2 Public Boards	1	0	1
Arizona	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
Arkansas	7 Public Boards	3	3	1
California	3 Public Boards	3	0	0
Colorado	11 Public Boards	3	7	1
Connecticut	2 Public Boards	1	1	0
Delaware	3 Public Boards	0	3	0
D.C.	1 Public Institution Board	0	1	0
Florida	13 Public Boards	1	12	0
Georgia	2 Public Boards	2	0	0
Hawaii	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
Idaho	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
Illinois	11 Public Boards	2	7	2
Indiana	8 Public Boards	3	4	1
Iowa	2 Public Boards	2	0	0
Kansas	2 Public Boards	1	1	0
Kentucky	10 Public Boards	1	8	1
Louisiana	5 Public Boards	4	1	1
Maine	3 Public Boards	2	1	0
Maryland	4 Public Boards	1	2	1
Massachusetts	11 Public Boards	1	9	1
Michigan	13 Public Boards	0	13	1
Minnesota	2 Public Boards	2	0	0
Mississippi	2 Public Boards	1	0	1
Missouri	12 Public Boards	1	10	1
Montana	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
Nebraska	3 Public Boards	2	0	1
Nevada	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
New Hampshire	3 Public Boards	0	2	1
New Jersey	11 Public Boards	0	11	0
New Mexico	7 Public Boards	0	7	0
New York	3 Public Boards	2	0	1
North Carolina	18 Public Boards	2	16	0
North Dakota	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
Ohio	15 Public Boards[b]	0	14	0
Oklahoma	8 Public Boards	3	4	1

State	Total Number of Boards	System Types		
		System[a] Boards	Institution Boards	Coordinating Boards
Oregon	9 Public Boards	0	8	1
Pennsylvania	19 Public Board	2	17[c]	0
Rhode Island	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
South Carolina	12 Public Boards	1	10	1
South Dakota	1 Public System Board	1	0	0
Tennessee	9 Public Boards	2	6	1
Texas	12 Public Boards	7	4	1
Utah	9 Public Boards	1	8	0
Vermont	2 Public Boards	1	1	0
Virginia	16 Public Boards	1	14	1
Washington	8 Public Boards	0	6	2
West Virginia	12 Public Boards	0	10	2
Wisconsin	2 Public Boards	2	0	0
Wyoming	2 Public Boards	0	1	1

Note. Adapted from *Public Four-Year Higher Education Boards Across The Nation, State Profiles*, by the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. 2020.

[a] System boards include system community college boards.

[b] Ohio also has an Advisory Board.

[c] Pennsylvania has 3 Institutional Boards and 14 Institutional Boards within a System Board.

Board Composition and Membership

Members. Most boards are composed of lay trustees, which are defined as "anyone appointed or elected to a university or college board who is not an academic and whose primary employment is not in higher education" (Hermalin, 2004, p.40). Boards are also often composed of ex-officio members and student trustees. Ex-officio members are "members based on positions they concurrently serve, such as governor, president of the university, president of the faculty senate, or alumni association president" (Rall et al., 2022, p.13). Most members have no formal qualifications or an application process to be trustees; they sit on the board for their representative role and prestigious title (Rall et al., 2022). On the contrary, some boards have student trustee members who undergo rigorous vetting and interview processes to serve on the board for a one or two-year term (Rall et al., 2021; Rall & Maxey, 2020).

Voting privileges for ex-officio members and student trustees vary by college and university. It is more common, however, for students to have a voting role over faculty (Table 2) (AGB, 2020). For private institutions, data on board membership and voting privileges are limited. Nevertheless, AGB identified that the overall average number of voting members at public institutions was 12, and on private boards, 28 (AGB, 2021). The scope of governing board size at public and private institutions can range as large as the 82-member board of trustees at the University of Miami or to as small as the five members who make up the board of regents at New Mexico State University (New Mexico State University, 2023; University of Miami, 2023).

Table 2 Voting Privileges for Student and Faculty Trustees at Public Four-Year Boards of Higher Education By State

State	Total Number of Public Boards[a]	Number of Boards that Have	
		Student Members	Faculty Members
Alabama	12 Public Boards	2 (0 who vote)	1 (0 who vote)
Alaska	2 Public Boards	2 (2 who vote)	0
Arizona	1 Public System Board	1 Student Voting Member	0
Arkansas	7 Public Boards	0	0
California	3 Public Boards	3 (3 who vote)	2 (2 who vote)
Colorado	11 Public Boards	9 (0 who vote)	9 (0 who vote)
Connecticut	2 Public Boards	2 (2 who vote)	1 (0 who vote)
Delaware	3 Public Boards	0	0
D.C.	1 Public Institution Board	1 Student Voting Member	0
Florida	13 Public Boards	13 (13 who vote)	13 (13 who vote)
Georgia	2 Public Boards	0 (0 who vote)	0 (0 who vote)
Hawaii	1 Public System Board	1 Student Voting Member	0
Idaho	1 Public System Board	0	0
Illinois	11 Public Boards	10 (11 who vote)	2 (0 who vote)
Indiana	8 Public Boards	8 (7 who vote)	1 (1 who votes)
Iowa	2 Public Boards	1 (1 who votes)	0
Kansas	2 Public Boards	0 (0 who vote)	0
Kentucky	10 Public Boards	10 (10 who vote)	10 (11 who vote)
Louisiana	5 Public Boards	5 (5 who vote)	0
Maine	3 Public Boards	3 (3 who vote)	0
Maryland	4 Public Boards	4 (4 who vote)	0
Massachusetts	11 Public Boards	11 (16 who vote)	0
Michigan	13 Public Boards	0	0
Minnesota	2 Public Boards	2 (2 who vote)	0
Mississippi	2 Public Boards	0	0
Missouri	12 Public Boards	0 (0 who vote)	0
Montana	1 Public System Board	1 Voting Member	0 Faculty Members
Nebraska	3 Public Boards	1 (0 who vote)	0
Nevada	1 Public System Board	0	0
New Hampshire	3 Public Boards	3 (7 who vote)	0
New Jersey	11 Public Boards	10 (11 who vote)	1 (1 who votes)
New Mexico	7 Public Boards	6 (6 who vote)	0
New York	3 Public Boards	2 (2 who vote)	0
North Carolina	18 Public Boards	18 (16 who vote)	0
North Dakota	1 Public System Board	1 Student Voting Member	0 Faculty Members
Ohio	15 Public Boards[+]	13 (0 who vote)	0

State	Total Number of Public Boards[a]	Number of Boards that Have	
		Student Members	Faculty Members
Oklahoma	8 Public Boards	0	0
Oregon	9 Public Boards	9 (8 who vote)	8 (7 who vote)
Pennsylvania	19 Public Boards	17 (17 who vote)	1 (1 who votes)
Rhode Island	1 Public System Board	1 Student Voting Member	0
South Carolina	12 Public Boards	0	0
South Dakota	1 Public System Board	1 Student Voting Member	0
Tennessee	9 Public Boards	9 (3 who vote)	8 (8 who vote)
Texas	12 Public Boards	11 (0 who vote)	0
Utah	9 Public Boards	8 (8 who vote)	0
Vermont	2 Public Boards	2 (2 who vote)	0
Virginia	16 Public Boards	0	0
Washington	8 Public Boards	7 (7 who vote)	0
West Virginia	12 Public Boards	10 (10 who vote)	10 (10 who vote)
Wisconsin	2 Public Boards	2 (2 who vote)	0
Wyoming	2 Public Boards	1 (0 who vote)	0

Note. Adapted from *Public Four-Year Higher Education Boards Across The Nation, State Profiles*, by the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. 2020.

[a] System boards include system community college boards.

Appointment, Selection, Dismissal. Wealth and networks have long been precursors in the appointment of both public and private governing boards (Mathies & Slaughter, 2013; Mortimer & Satre, 2007; Taylor, 1987; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). National and state decreases in the funding of higher education have left colleges and universities in search of boards that can provide, leverage, and fundraise monetary support (Kaplan, 2004). Many institutions have turned to appointing lay members with successful business records and strong social ties to corporate and political leaders that can be used to solicit university fundraising (Pusser et al., 2006; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). For example, at public institutions, governors have become inclined to recruit individuals with "deep pockets" for gubernatorial appointments (Glazer-Raymo, 2008, p. 195). As a result, boards have increasingly been taken over by business owners, wealthy university alums, and robust financial investors (Tierney, 2006).

The process of trustee appointment at public institutions is fundamentally political (AGB, 2003; Davis, 1997); the selection of trustees lies primarily in the hands of governors, state education commissioners, or an official political confirmation (Table 3) (AGB, 2020; Minor, 2008). Appointments are predominantly influenced by the governor, and higher education officers' political circles (i.e., legislators, staff, cabinet members, and other trustees) (Davis, 1997; Dika & Janosik, 2003) and seldomly go through a vetting process (Table 4) (AGB, 2020). Private boards, on the other hand, are self-perpetuating– they are selected by sitting trustees (Barringer & Slaughter, 2016; Barringer et al., 2019). Private boards are commonly composed of individuals with financial ties to the institution (i.e., people who bring sizable donations), those who have

alum status, or both (Freedman, 2004). Appointment differences are partly due to the different missions and priorities of public and private higher education (Tierney, 2020).

Qualifications. As leaders of colleges and universities, there is an assumption that trustees have the requisite skills needed to be effective board members when they are appointed or selected (Minor, 2008); however, it has been found that there are very few screening processes for candidates in place to ensure they are capable of performing their fiduciary duties (AGB, 2020; Dika & Janosik, 2003; Minor, 2008; Rall et al., 2022). Most candidate qualifications are listed as general, unclear, or absent as a protocol (AGB, 2020; Minor, 2008; Rall et al., 2022), with very few public boards across the U.S. have published or defined service requirements for trustees (Rall et al., 2022; AGB, 2020). However, patterns in the demographics, occupational data, political ties, and financial profiles of trustees at private and public institutions illustrate informal preferences, or qualifications, for layman members (Freedman, 2004; Minor, 2008; Rall & Orué, 2020). In other words, while there are no well-known qualifications or preferences, we continue to get the same type of board member profile. Informal service requirements, ambiguous bylaws, and hidden application processes are argued to create misleading pathways into the trusteeship and result in exclusionary boards with few historically underrepresented members (Rall et al., 2022).

Table 3 Appointment Process of Public Four-Year Boards of Higher Education by State

State	Total Number of Public Boards	Number of Boards Appointed By		
		General Election	Governor	State Legislature
Alabama	12 Public Boards	0	10	0
Alaska	2 Public Boards	0	2	1
Arizona	1 Public System Board	0 members	10 members	0 members
Arkansas	7 Public Boards	0	7	0
California	3 Public Boards	0	3	0
Colorado	11 Public Boards	1	10	6
Connecticut	2 Public Boards	0	2	1
Delaware	3 Public Boards	0	3	0
D.C.	1 Public Institution Board	0 members	0 members	0 members
Florida	13 Public Boards	0	13	0
Georgia	2 Public Boards	0	2	0
Hawaii	1 Public System Board	0 members	15 members	0 members
Idaho	1 Public System Board	0 members	7 members	0 members
Illinois	11 Public Boards	0	11	0
Indiana	8 Public Boards	0	8	0
Iowa	2 Public Boards	0	2	0
Kansas	2 Public Boards	0	2	0
Kentucky	10 Public Boards	0	10	0
Louisiana	5 Public Boards	0	5	0
Maine	3 Public Boards	0	3	0
Maryland	4 Public Boards	0	4	0
Massachusetts	11 Public Boards	0	11	0
Michigan	13 Public Boards	3	10	0
Minnesota	2 Public Boards	0	1	1
Mississippi	2 Public Boards	0	2	0
Missouri	12 Public Boards	0	12	0
Montana	1 Public System Board	0 members	7 members	0 members
Nebraska	3 Public Boards	1	2	0
Nevada	1 Public System Board	13 members	0 members	0 members
New Hampshire	3 Public Boards	0	3	0
New Jersey	11 Public Boards	0	11	0
New Mexico	7 Public Boards	0	7	0
New York	3 Public Boards	0	2	1

State	Total Number of Public Boards	Number of Boards Appointed By		
		General Election	Governor	State Legislature
North Carolina	18 Public Boards	0	17	2
North Dakota	1 Public System Board	0 members	8 members	0 members
Ohio	15 Public Boards[+]	0	14	0
Oklahoma	8 Public Boards	0	8	0
Oregon	9 Public Boards	0	9	0
Pennsylvania	19 Public Board	0	19	4
Rhode Island	1 Public System Board	0 members	10 members	0 members
South Carolina	12 Public Boards	0	10	10
South Dakota	1 Public System Board	0 members	9 members	0 members
Tennessee	9 Public Boards	0	9	1
Texas	12 Public Boards	0	12	0
Utah	9 Public Boards	0	9	0
Vermont	2 Public Boards	0	2	2
Virginia	16 Public Boards	0	16	0
Washington	8 Public Boards	0	8	0
West Virginia	12 Public Boards	0	12	0
Wisconsin	2 Public Boards	0	2	0
Wyoming	2 Public Boards	0	2	0

Note. Adapted from *Public Four-Year Higher Education Boards Across The Nation, State Profiles*, by the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. 2020.

[a] System boards include system community college boards.

Term Length. Once appointed, trustees serve an average of 10 years (Freedman, 2004); their service is broken down into terms, with the possibility of reappointment (AGB, 2021). The average trustee term lasts 5.5 years on public boards, and on private boards, the average term is 3.2 years. While public boards have–on average–longer terms, the number of consecutive terms a trustee can serve at public institutions is shorter (2.2 terms vs. 3.2 terms on private boards) (AGB, 2021). Trustees, however, are not always bound by term limits. AGB found that 30.8% of public four-year institutions and 22.2% of private four-year institutions surveyed in 2020 did not limit the number of consecutive years a trustee could serve on their board (AGB, 2021). This unchecked power of term limits is problematic because "it maintains the status quo and arbitrary structures to the board" (Rall et al., 2022, p. 16)

Removal. Just as the appointment process of trustees is unclear, so is their removal. In their study of public bylaws, Rall et al. (2022) found that only 44% of the institutions reviewed had written sections on removing or dismissing board members. The AGB (2020) state profiles revealed a similar pattern. Of the 329 public higher education boards, only 141 (42.86%) had a formalized removal process for members (Table 4). The lack of formal qualifications, long service terms, and ambiguous removal processes individually and collectively add to the issue of board diversity.

Table 4 Appointment and Removal Processes in Place for Public Four-Year Boards by State

State	Total Number of Public Boards[a]	Number of Boards that Have:	
		An External Vetting Process for Members	A Formalized Removal Process for Members
Alabama	12 Public Boards	0	3
Alaska	2 Public Boards	0	1
Arizona	1 Public System Board	No	No
Arkansas	7 Public Boards	0	6
California	3 Public Boards	1	0
Colorado	11 Public Boards	0	3
Connecticut	2 Public Boards	0	0
Delaware	3 Public Boards	0	1
D.C.	1 Public Institution Board	No	Yes
Florida	13 Public Boards	0	0
Georgia	2 Public Boards	0	1
Hawaii	1 Public System Board	Yes	Yes
Idaho	1 Public System Board	No	Yes
Illinois	11 Public Boards	0	0
Indiana	8 Public Boards	0	2
Iowa	2 Public Boards	0	1
Kansas	2 Public Boards	0	0
Kentucky	10 Public Boards	10	9
Louisiana	5 Public Boards	0	0
Maine	3 Public Boards	0	1
Maryland	4 Public Boards	0	1
Massachusetts	11 Public Boards	11	11
Michigan	13 Public Boards	0	1
Minnesota	2 Public Boards	2	1
Mississippi	2 Public Boards	0	2
Missouri	12 Public Boards	0	0
Montana	1 Public System Board	No	No
Nebraska	3 Public Boards	0	1
Nevada	1 Public System Board	No	Yes
New Hampshire	3 Public Boards	0	0
New Jersey	11 Public Boards	0	11
New Mexico	7 Public Boards	0	7
New York	3 Public Boards	0	0
North Carolina	18 Public Boards	0	17
North Dakota	1 Public System Board	Yes	Yes
Ohio	15 Public Boards[+]	0	0

State	Total Number of Public Boards[a]	Number of Boards that Have:	
		An External Vetting Process for Members	A Formalized Removal Process for Members
Oklahoma	8 Public Boards	0	0
Oregon	9 Public Boards	0	9
Pennsylvania	19 Public Boards	0	1
Rhode Island	1 Public System Board	No	Yes
South Carolina	12 Public Boards	0	5
South Dakota	1 Public System Board	No	Yes
Tennessee	9 Public Boards	0	8
Texas	12 Public Boards	0	5
Utah	9 Public Boards	0	0
Vermont	2 Public Boards	0	0
Virginia	16 Public Boards	16	6
Washington	8 Public Boards	0	8
West Virginia	12 Public Boards	0	11
Wisconsin	2 Public Boards	0	0
Wyoming	2 Public Boards	0	1
Total	**329 Boards**	**42 (12.77%)**	**141 (42.86%)**

Note. Adapted from *Public Four-Year Higher Education Boards Across The Nation, State Profiles*, by the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. 2020.

[a] System boards include system community college boards.

Demographics. Historically, board members have shared one commonality: most are White men from affluent backgrounds (Duryea, 1973; Mortimer & Sathre, 2007; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). Obstruse knowledge about the appointment process (Dika & Janosik, 2003) and restrictive social networks (Barringer et al., 2019; Kezar, 2014; Pusser et al., 2006; Rall et al., 2019) have served as barriers to board diversification. Despite the power entrusted to boards, board diversity has received little concern among education scholars (Morgan et al., 2020; Pusser et al., 2006; Rall et al., 2019; Rall & Orué, 2020).

Figure 2 Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Age Distribution of Trustees at Two and Four-year Private and Public Higher Education Boards in the U.S

	Male	Female		White	People of Color		Below 50 years old	50 years old or older
Public	63%	37%		70%	30%		23%	77%
Private	64%	36%		84%	17%		18%	82%

Note. Adapted from *Policies, Practices, and Composition* by the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. 2021.
[a] When excluding Minority Serving Institutions, the number of People of Color at public institutions drops to 19.8%, and at private institutions, 15.7%.

Information on the demographic composition of U.S. higher education boards is limited (Rall & Orué, 2020; Women's Power Gap, Report, 2022), though AGB's most recent data (2021) reported disparities across gender, race, and age at two and four-year public and private boards. As of 2020, on public two-year and four-year higher education boards, women occupy 37% of total seats, and People of Color occupy 30% of total seats (the number drops to 19.8% when excluding MSIs) (AGB, 2021). On private boards, women hold 36% of total seats, and People of Color 17% of total seats (the number drops to 15.7% when excluding MSIs). Lastly, boards also reported that 77% of public trustees and 82% of private trustees were 50 years old or older (AGB, 2021). The data can be found in Figure 2 above. As it stands, there is no demographic information on trustees that accounts for intersectional identities on the board, such as Women of Color.

The Function of Four-Year Public and Private Higher Education Boards

Roles and Responsibilities. Most higher education institutions in the U.S. are governed by boards with the legal authority to control virtually all aspects of the institution (Birnbaum, 1988; Hechinger, 1993). Their power is granted by charters, statutory provisions, and sometimes state constitutions (Donovan, 1959). In public colleges and universities, institutions are "legally understood to belong to the state and, by extension, to the people of those states," In the case of private institutions, their legal responsibility is outlined in the nonprofit section of the U.S. tax code. (Kaplan, 2006, p.219). Bylaws and institutional documents grant boards *de jure* authorization; however, *de facto* power and responsibilities of boards remain one of the least understood and mystifying issues in higher education (Minor, 2008; Tierney, 2020).

There are, however, general agreements on the responsibilities of higher education boards: (1) Governing boards play a significant role in institutional stability, culture, and life (Birnbaum, 2004), (2) have a legal and fiduciary responsibility for their university or college (AGB, 2016; Chait et al., 1991; Hermalin, 2004), (3) must protect and the mission and goals of the institution (Hendrickson et al., 2013), (4) administer and implement policy (AGB, 2020; Donovan, 1959), and (5) have the power to appoint or dismiss college presidents or chancellors (Birnbaum, 1988; Dika & Janosik, 2003; Pusser et al., 2006; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). Although public and private institutions possess all legal authority, board members often do not have the time (Hermalin, 2004) or expertise to weigh in on university matters (Ingram, 1998; Kaplan, 2004, 2006; Tierney, 2010). Members meet infrequently (Tierney, 2020) and delegate much of their authority to other university leaders (Kaplan, 2006). However, the "ultimate responsibility for the governance of the institution (or system) rests in its governing board" (AGB, 2010, p.4).

Charters, state constitutions, board bylaws, and policy documents from organizations like AGB can be utilized by boards to train and onboard members (Henderson, 1967; AGB, 2010). Nonetheless, research has found that board members have difficulty understanding their roles due to unclear policies, expectations, and responsibilities (AGB, 2013; Longanecker, 2006) and are left to learn their board style and culture through observation of their peers (Davis, 1997). The lack of clarity in board policy and trustee expectations has significantly contributed to the challenge of assessing board performance in higher education (Holland, 2002; Rall et al., 2021).

Assessment and Effectiveness. Boards must not be only functional but also effective in their decision-making (Rall et al., 2019). However, public higher education board performance has received little research attention (McGuiness, 2002) since most research has focused on corporate board performance or non-profit board evaluation (Ehrenberg, 2004; Ingram, 1995). Moreover, board assessment in higher education is challenging to measure (Hermalin, 2004; Holland et al., 1989), and there has yet to be a shared definition of what effective higher education boards look like (Kezar, 2006).

In 1991, Chait et al. developed a research model of private board performance and outlined six areas of competency required for board effectiveness. Kezar described these six areas in the following order (2006, p.972-737):

1. *Contextual* (the board takes into account the culture and norms of the organization it governs)
2. *Educational* (the board takes necessary steps to ensure trustees are knowledgeable about their roles, responsibilities, and the profession)
3. *Interpersonal* (the board nurtures the development of trustees as a working group and attends to cohesiveness)
4. *Analytical* (the board recognizes the complexities and subtleties of issues and accepts ambiguity as a healthy precondition for critical discussion)
5. *Political* (the board accepts the need to develop and maintain healthy relationships with major constituents as a primary responsibility)
6. *Strategic* (the board helps the institution envision a direction and shape a strategy).

Building on the work of Chait et al. (1991;1996), Kezar (2006) looked to expand corporate and for-profit board effectiveness research into the public sector. She interviewed 132 experts on public board performance, including current and previous trustees, individuals involved with board evaluation, and national leaders familiar with higher education board operations. The data was classified by Kezar (2006) into six elements that she identified were required of high-performing public boards (p.984):

1. *Leadership* (Common vision and purpose, developing a thoughtful multi-year agenda, asking tough questions, and the leadership of the board chair)
2. *Culture* (Nurturing and modeling the desired qualities of board members, building a professional, non-partisan culture)
3. *Education* (Well-developed board orientation, having educational materials from board staff, board evaluation measures)
4. *External Relations* (Joint goals, shared governance, coordinating with governors and legislature, staying on track if there are political turnovers)
5. *Relationships* (strong relationship between the president and board chair, communication across board members, engaging university stakeholders, creating social opportunities for board members)
6. *Structure* (clear role of the board, collective leading, board chair rotation, creating ad hoc committees).

Resembling Chait et al. (1991; 1996) and Kezar (2006), scholars have tried to identify high-performance strategies for boards of trustees in the private and public sectors. The literature has focused on the selection criteria of trustees (CHEPA, 2004),

board orientation (AGB, 2013; Davis, 1997; Longanecker, 2006), and diversity of board composition to enhance effectiveness (Chait, 1993; Kohn & Mortimer, 1983; Kramer & Adams, 2020; Taylor et al., 1991, Rall et al., 2019). A challenge to studying board effectiveness, nonetheless, has been that boards lack self-assessment measures and accountability practices (Holland, 2002). Members refuse to assess their performances (Chait, 1993), and this refusal to analyze internalized behaviors hinders the overall performance of higher education boards (Davis, 1997).

Measuring board accountability is a challenge, largely due to the inadequate knowledge of boards of trustees (Bensimon, 1984; Lozano, 2020), lack of empirical data (Barringer et al., 2019; Kohn & Mortimer, 1983; Rall et al., 2021), and difficulty accessing boards of higher education for research purposes (Kezar, 2006; Freedman, 2005). As previously mentioned, there are also nuances in the composition of boards. Board research has focused primarily on private institutions rather than public (Ingram, 1995) and has overlooked multi-campus system boards (Morgan et al., 2021). These limitations have allowed many higher education boards to remain understudied and their performance unevaluated. Regardless of this limited knowledge of the trusteeship, the power and impact of higher education boards are indisputable.

Further Impacts of Boards of Higher Education

Impact of Board Leadership and Governance on Institutional Performance. Beyond the formal roles of higher education boards, there are ways in which boards informally impact the institutions they serve through their decision-making and structure. For example, boards have been found to influence institutional performance (Chait et al.,

1996; Kezar, 2006), student competition (Minor, 2008), financial gains of the institution (Lowry, 2001), and the selection of academic vs. non-academic college presidents (Kaplan, 2004). More recently, boards have been at the forefront of university and college scandals ranging from admissions, athletics, sexual harassment, abuse, tenure, academic freedom, and campus safety. These scandals cost universities from $237 million at Pennsylvania State University to $852 at the University of Southern California (Mintz, 2022). In these instances, the lack of oversight by boards and senior administrators diminished public trust in higher education (Jaschik, 2018).

Impact of Boards in Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Another area of great importance is the board's impact on diversity and inclusion. Governing boards are potent agents who enact institutional policies that have the power to hinder or help historically underrepresented and vulnerable populations in higher education (AGB, 2020). Boards are accountable for ensuring that institutions adhere to the principles of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JDE&I), the mission of the college or university, and policy implementation that advances the strategic goals of social and justice issues (AGB, 2020). However, trustees represent only a small part of the general public (traditionally upper-class, white, and men in composition). Naturally, they establish policies and govern in ways that reflect the values and morals of this dominant group—even if they represent a much larger, diverse population (Chesler & Crawfoot, 1989). Scholarship has only recently raised the alarm on the diversity of boards (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2020; Lingenfelter et al., 2008; Morgan et al., 2020; Rall & Orué,

2020) and the limited knowledge of board's influence on policies and procedures that impact the diversity of college campuses (Rall et al., 2019).

Limitations in the Study of Higher Education Governing Boards

Although boards are one of the most critical components of U.S. higher education, the literature on boards remains underdeveloped (Barringer et al., 2020; Bensimon, 1984; Jones, 2011), and boards continue to be one of the least understood areas of higher education (Tierney, 2020). In other words, boards matter. However, not enough attention is being paid to the board's critical influence on higher education by scholars, practitioners, and the public.

A recent case study by Rall and colleagues (2022) discussed the bounded limitations of knowledge and research on higher education boards. The authors identify topical gaps such as qualitative analysis on board interlocks and decision-making, the role of race, class, and gender in board culture, and the shortage of studies focused on public institutions (Rall et al., 2022). Participants interviewed in Rall et al.'s (2022) study contributed that the literature on boards has been limited by access to trustees, lack of support for board research, nuances in board structures, and methodological restrictions in the study of governance. Their findings have been supported throughout this literature review by various scholars who have identified literature gaps in board qualifications (Rall et al., 2021), board diversity (Morgan et al., 2020; Pusser et al., 2006; Rall et al., 2019; Rall & Orué, 2020), board performance (Ehrenberg, 2004; Ingram, 1995), assessment (Hermalin, 2004; Holland et al., 1989), and effectiveness (Kezar, 2006).

Gender and Race in Higher Education Leadership

Women presidents and board members were absent for the first 240 years of U.S. higher education (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b). It was not until the establishment of women's colleges and women's access to higher education in the late nineteenth century that doors opened for women alumnae to gain initial access to the board (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b). Nevertheless, it took until 1990 for the Council of the AAUP to adapt its 1967 "Statement of Government of Colleges and Universities" to remove gender-specific references from its original text (AAUP, 1990). This means that the AAUP, ACE, and AGB all delegitimized women in these leadership roles for decades. The exclusionary history of higher education barred access to social networks (Chetty et al., 2017), shaping the mobility of Women and Women of Color in both higher education and leadership (Rall & Orué, 2020)

The exclusionary history of higher education leads me to identify an early gap in the literature. Only a handful of studies discuss women on higher education boards (Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Kramer & Adams, 2020; Woodward, 2009), and both race and gender remain absent from the conversation. Consequently, this literature review draws mainly from women and Women of Color navigating higher educational leadership (e.g., college presidents, deans, and administrators), with limited data on gender and trusteeship. In the following section, I discuss how race (Chesler & Crowfoot, 1989; Duryea, 1973; Niemann, 2016; Steele, 1998), gender (Acker, 1990; Airini et al., 2011; Ballenger, 2010; Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Eagly, 1987; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Madden, 2005; Priola, 2007), and their interlock (Blake, 1999; Bell & Nkomo, 2001;

Bowleg, 2008; Brown, 2007; Catalyst, 2005; Davis et al., 2006; Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007) impact Women of Color as they navigate leadership positions. I conclude with an overview of the gaps and how this study aims to bridge them.

The Impact of Race on Higher Education Leadership

The slow progress for racial minorities in U.S. higher education leadership stems directly from the exclusionary practices that omitted People of Color from attending colleges and universities (Chesler & Crowfoot, 1989; Duryea, 1973). Critical scholars argue that racism persists in all facets of U.S. social, political, financial, and educational spheres (Bell, 1995; C. I. Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism "is the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 7). As a result, racism does not have to show itself in a blatant form for it to exist and remain.

Rooted in whiteness, higher education leadership has been discriminative for centuries (Duryea, 1973), and although the number of racially and ethnically diverse board members has increased (AGB, 2020; Johnson, 2017), racist practices sustain the underrepresentation of People of Color in leadership roles (Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007). Studies of Latinx and Asian leaders show that these groups are likely to be excluded from informal networks in higher education leadership and must contend with negative stereotypes (Ferdman & Cortes, 1992; Fernandez, 1981). Furthermore, "African American, Asian American, and Latino men and women are more likely to experience covert discrimination and subtle prejudice and to be forced into outgroup status and experience occupational segregation as a result" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 173).

Within organizations, leaders must conform to Eurocentric ideologies and employ them in their ethnic, racial, and gendered behaviors (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). The slow progress of racial minorities in leadership can partly be attributed to differences in microaggressions, stereotypes, and tokenism (Oakley, 2000).

Microaggressions. Pierce (1995) defined gender and racial microaggressions as "subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations, and putdowns" (p. 281). More recently, Racial microaggressions have been defined as "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). Perpetrators are often unaware that they are committing microaggressions because racism, sexism, and other "isms" have been embedded into the social, cultural, and political fabrics of U.S. life. However, the subtlety of microaggressions does not make their impact on the individual any less damaging. Microaggressions cumulate over time and can have severe psychological effects on marginalized members (Pierce, 1995). Microaggressions stem from the clandestine discriminatory beliefs deeply rooted in society, which also influence perceptions around stereotypes and stereotype threats.

Stereotypes and Stereotype Threat. Stereotypes affect both self-perception and the perceptions of others (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) and are especially problematic for racial and ethnic minorities (Catalyst, 2005; Steele, 1998). Subconscious feelings of prejudice and aversive racism impact an individual's recommendations for leadership roles (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) and can cause stereotype threat (Catalyst, 2005).

Stereotype threat occurs when a stereotype about a minoritized group becomes salient after an individual belonging to that minoritized group performs in accordance with the social expectations of others (Steele, 1998). Stereotypes do not have to be explicit to impact an individual's performance (Steele, 1998); when there is a numerical minority, it creates a heightened sense of group identity. If a negative stereotype is associated with that group's identity, a stereotype threat can manifest (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Stereotype threat also increases as tasks become increasingly complex and individuals are identified to the tasks, such as the case for leaders (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Stereotype threat has yet to be identified in governance scholarship. However, it can be assumed that for racial minorities on boards, stereotype threat is conceivable.

Tokenism. Tokenism in higher education is not new; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X addressed this phenomenon in the 1960s to resist the notion that racial inequalities were no longer a concern in the U.S. (Niemann, 2016). Tokens represent a rare numerical minority of a demographic within the context of a contrasting, more significant majority (Niemman, 2016). Within organizational scholarship, it was identified as a numerical minority of 15 percent or lower (Kanter, 1977).

Skewed proportions of racial minorities in leadership positions shape the perceptions and interactions that racial minorities have in their institution (Niemann, 2016). Underrepresented minorities enter their workspaces as colleagues but quickly shift to become the Person of Color at their college or university (Niemann, 2016). Token's racial identities become the most salient attribute to the university and the lens through which they are perceived (Niemann, 2016). Members of the institution impose roles they

perceive to be best suited to non-white people (i.e., diversity experts) on People of Color, "irrespective of their expertise in the task or activities associated with those roles" (Niemann, 2016, p. 454). Moreover, because race is the most salient factor, identities may amalgamate (Niemann, 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). For example, Black men or women who may identify as African, Caribbean, Spanish, African American, or some combination of those identities, who may speak English, Spanish, Portuguese, or French, are tokenized and perceived to share the same experiences, regardless of ethnic or cultural identity (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Niemann (2016) identified that tokens (1) experience being viewed as the "other," (2) lack professional support, (3) face excessive scrutiny by their students, peers, and supervisors, (4) have unspoken requirements to work harder in order to gain recognition, and (5) encounter racist peers that believe tokens were given their role through affirmative action, and therefore, could not succeed in leadership positions. Although higher education institutions insist on displaying their tokenized members as a tribute to diversity efforts (J. C. Harris et al., 2015), college campuses and universities have remained exclusionary since their inception (Gagliardi et al., 2017). In spaces like governing boards, where there is minimal racial representation, the impact of tokenism becomes more salient. Race, however, is not the only barrier that stands in the way of leadership opportunities within higher education.

The Impact of Gender on Higher Education Leadership

Conflicting Gender Roles and Stereotypes. Higher education literature confirms that leadership is influenced by white, patriarchal views preserved through symbols,

patterns, interactions, and cultures (Acker, 1990; Bensimon and Associates; 2022; Martin, 2010; Priola, 2007), yet an impediment to organizational theory is that the world is seen from the standpoint and behavior of men yet meant to represent the gender-neutral human (Acker, 2016). Still, women have been mocking men and adapting masculine behaviors (such as the "power-dressed women executives" in the 1980s) to establish legitimacy in leadership roles (Priola, 2007, p. 31). As women gain power in leadership roles, an organization should adapt to mentor women into leadership positions (Ibrra et al., 2011); yet women find themselves adapting to fit gender roles (Acker, 2016; Priola, 2007). For example, because the competitive nature of academia valorizes performativity (Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008), women must often choose between being mothers or risk being passed on the pipeline by men counterparts (Airini et al., 2011; Blackmore & Sachs, 2000).

Gender stereotypes are powerful and invisible threats to women (Catalyst, 2007). While women advance into leadership roles, members of the organization or community still regard them by gender stereotypes (Mahady, 2018). For example, a study found that a woman staff member felt apprehensive about having a woman dean due to the symbolism of aggressive/masculine women in leadership roles (Priola, 2007). Similarly, women leaders are perceived to violate their stereotypical feminine roles because they communicate directly and take charge of groups (Prime et al., 2009). On the contrary, when women act on par with stereotypical women's behaviors, they are harshly judged by their peers and labeled as weak leaders (Catalyst, 2007). Navigating gender roles thus creates ambiguity (Brower et al., 2019).

A consequence of gender stereotype uncertainty is that it reduces the import of discriminatory behaviors toward women. Women may find themselves experiencing microaggressions in the workplace but minimize these hostile encounters by labeling microaggressions as dubious and keeping them private (Brower et al., 2019). To be perceived as successful leaders, women must eliminate grievances and not react emotionally due to the stereotype of being weak, soft, or angry (Brower et al., 2019; Priola, 2007). However, when men in leadership roles experience difficulties in their job, both men and women interpret this to be caused by objective reasons (Priola, 2007). On the contrary, women find it challenging to navigate conflicts because of subjective feminine biases from their peers who judge them (Priola, 2007). Since leadership roles are socially constructed within organizations as rational, competitive, and, therefore, masculine, women must reconstruct a contradictory personal view of their "women" identity to succeed (Priola, 2007). The inherent gender conflicts experienced by women follow them into all facets of leadership, including governance roles.

The Good Old Boys Network. Patriarchal influences have characterized higher education leadership as the "good old boys' network," with women advancing much slower in the pipeline than men or sometimes blocked in the process (Brower et al., 2019). For example, Kaufman (2002) found that men trustees were not interested in bringing women into the "good old boy" network and that the trusteeship is a gendered network that does not valorize nor recognize new perspectives. As support to these claims, Glazer-Raymo (2008) found that "women have to prove themselves" (p. 200) to have their voices heard on boards. As a result, women get blocked from participating as

group members. Research has also proved there is a lack of diversity on hiring committees that contribute to biased pay scales and the long climb up the leadership ladder for women (Ballenger, 2010). Moreover, studies confirmed that men inflict their own gender biases in their interpretations of the success of women and that men's beliefs of women's success depend on the situational context (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Nica, 2014; Priola, 2007). For example, a woman associate dean who positioned herself within a network of peers that could support her busy schedule was perceived as "manipulative" by a man college—even though men academics agreed that women need to learn the importance of networking and mutual support to advance in academia (Priola, 2007).

Once women infiltrate the good old boy's network, they remain outcasts (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Morley, 2013; Turner, 2008). For example, on boards of higher education, there is a limit to the scope and impact of specific roles on the board (Freedman, 2004; Hermalin, 2004a). Power on the board can take various forms (Glazer-Raymo, 2008b; Hermalin, 1989; Pierce, 2014), and it depends on membership within specific spaces (Freedman, 2004; Schwartz & Atkins, 2005). On private boards, women are "significantly underrepresented as chairs of the most powerful board committees, including audit, compensation, and governance, which may exclude them from key leadership, agenda-setting, and decision-making" (Glazer-Raymo, 2008a, p. 3). This means that when women reach senior leadership positions, they cannot access the same privilege and information as their men colleagues (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000). Another study supported examples of power inhibitors, which found that although women accounted for 30% of all board seats on private boards, no woman served on the

most potent committee—the executive committee (Kramer & Adams, 2020). This lack of access is vital in governance scholarship because while some committees directly impact university matters, others serve merely as static placeholders in university governance (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). Membership on the latter means that trustees are not tasked with decision-making and lose some of their authority on the board, as well as their ability to influence decision-making. When women sit on committees with little to no impact on university governance, their representation is merely symbolic (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). As such, gender biases, stereotypes, and the good old boy's network within higher education organizations help maintain the homogeneity of men-dominated leadership roles while simultaneously endorsing a false narrative of "pipeline issues."

The Pipeline Myth. Scholars have been warning of the rhetoric behind "pipeline issues" and instead have proven that the pipeline issue is a myth (Johnson, 2017; Women's Power Gap Report, 2022). The American Council on Education (ACE) defined the pipeline myth as "a persistent idea that there are too few women qualified (e.g., degree holding) for leadership positions" when in fact, that was not the case (Johnson, 2017, p.2). Instead, ACE demonstrated that women have been earning 50% or more of all undergraduate degrees for the past 30 years and of all graduate degrees for almost 10 years. Similarly, the Women's Power Gap Initiative and the American Association of University Women dispelled the pipeline myth in their study of 130 elite research institutions across the U.S. Their report found that 57% of the private universities and 42% of the public universities surveyed had never had a woman president (Women's Power Gap, 2022). Yet, women accounted for almost 40% of all academic dean and

provost positions, from which 75% of presidential candidates were drawn (Women's Power Gap, 2022). The drop in gender representation in the college presidency is not an issue of underqualified women. Instead, the numerical discrepancies suggest that there are systemic barriers that keep them from advancing in leadership positions. These barriers become more complex for Women of Color who face dual marginalization because of their racial and gender identity.

Intersectionality and the Impact of Gender and Race in Higher Education Leadership

Research has identified the strengths and skills that women often bring to leadership (Helgesen & Johnson, 2010; Kezar, 2004; Turner, 2002); however, attention to gender *and* race has only become a recent conversation in the literature (Bustillos et al., 2018; Schwartz & Atkins, 2005; Siqueiros et al., 2020; Turner, 2008). Early leadership research ignored the role of demographic differences such as gender and race because it was conducted mainly by White men researchers who were uninterested in the nuances (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Moreover, Women of Color have been historically overlooked in research or interpreted through White women's perspectives (Anzaldúa, 1990; Chow, 1987; Collins, 1990; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Dill, 1979; Green, 1975; Olesen, 2018; Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994). Today, however, it is understood that Women of Color face a much more complex situation than White women (Blake, 1999; Suyemoto & Ballou, 2007).

Double Minority. Feminism explores power relations between men and women and argues that hierarchical systems of oppression remain dominant and present due to the socialization of gender (Butler, 1990; Spelman, 1991). Critical Race Theorists share a

similar view of systemic oppression; however, they attribute power relations to racism prevalent in legal, political, and economic systems (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). For Women of Color, sexism, and racism restrict opportunities in society (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and as leaders (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). For example, Black women are too different from White women to share the same gender status. and Black women are too different from Black men to share the same racial benefits. In other words, White women, who share the same skin color as men leaders, can focus exclusively on gender discrimination and overlook the influence of race on leadership (Suyemoto & Ballou, 2007). Meanwhile, Black men, who share the gender status as the "good old boys" network, although they face racial discrimination, can overlook the influence of gender in leadership. This leaves Black women, and Women of Color in general, to be labeled as double-minorities because they face dual marginalization from both their racial and gender identity (Crenshaw, 1991).

Women of Color face gendered racism because they cannot separate the different effects of each of their identities in the workplace (Blake, 1999). If a woman feels she is experiencing discrimination at her job, she must identify if the prejudice results from her race, ethnicity, gender, or another aspect of her identity (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Furthermore, she must document which specific form of marginalization she is experiencing to pursue legal redress (Crenshaw, 1991; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Discrimination becomes more complex when you add sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other identities that can be the basis for prejudicial behaviors (Crenshaw, 1991; Bowleg, 2008).

Women of Color carry the burden of covert discrimination and prejudice, which the literature has shown exists for racial and gender minorities (Acker, 2016; Ferdman & Cortes, 1992; Fernandez, 1981; Oakley, 2000; Priola, 2006); however, Women of Color carry the burden of racism and sexism combined (Browne & Askew, 2006; Combs, 2003; Hyun, 2005; Leung & Gupta, 2007). Furthermore, Women of Color experience increased microaggressions that are not recognized as blatant forms of discrimination by their oppressors because oppressors' actions are overlooked by racist or sexist ideologies embedded into their ideals (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Women of Color are also more likely to hold lower-rank positions, which inhibits access to formal and informal networks for promotion (Cohen, 2002). Restricted access to informal networks explains why few Women of Color advance to higher levels since networks are vital to career advancement (Mehra et al., 1998). For Women of Color interested in becoming trustees, limited networks are arduous to their progress since networks are crucial precursors to appointments (Mathies & Slaughter, 2013; Taylor, 1987).

Racial and Gender Stereotypes. Women of Color experience more negative stereotypes at a higher rate due to the combination of being a woman and a racial minority (Davis et al., 2006). Moreover, stereotypes and stereotype threats interact with identity and self-perception (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). In other words, when someone hears negative stereotypes about their race or gender, that individual begins to alter their performance, thus reinforcing the stereotype subconsciously. Research has found that stereotype threats are weaker on those with a strong racial identity (Davis et al., 2006) and that certain aspects of identity are influenced differently by stereotypes

(Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). For example, stereotypes of White women are less focused on their identity and more focused on their skillset, whereas Women of Color confront stereotypes about their gender and racial identity (Brown, 2007). These gender and racial stereotypes are also more damaging to an individual than other stereotypes (Bowleg, 2008). Lastly, popular culture, the media, and society perpetuate stereotypes of Women of Color that can make it difficult for them to be perceived as effective leaders (Hill Collins, 1989; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010)

Women of Color on Higher Education Boards. Although a few studies have discussed how gender impacts women's experiences in the trusteeship (AGB, 2020; Glazer-Raymo, 2008a; Kramer & Adams, 2020), race *and* gender have not had the same influence in governance scholarship (Rall & Orué, 2020; Turner, 2008). To this day, some U.S colleges and universities have yet to appoint the first Woman of Color to their institutional boards or the presidency (Women in Academia Report, 2023; Women's Power Gap Report, 2022). It can be inferred that the sparse number of Women of Color on boards aligns with the mere 5% of college presidents that are Women of Color (Johnson, 2016). It can also be deduced that like People of Color, women, and Women of Color in leadership, Women of Color on governing boards must face barriers of gender roles and stereotypes, the good old boy's network, microaggressions, tokenism, and stereotype threat. Furthermore, it can be assumed that their experiences with racism and sexism are amplified because of their double-minority status. However, no research has yet to document this level of marginalization on boards because scholars have yet to investigate how Women of Color experience the trusteeship (Rall & Orué, 2020). This

literature gap is significant because it overlooks one of U.S. higher education's most potent institutional bodies. Boards make decisions for all students, staff, and faculty– an increasingly diverse population. Therefore, it is imperative to know if trustees contribute to discrimination or the marginalization of Women of Color, given their impact on policy and decision-making. Moreover, researchers are (intentionally or unintentionally) labeling Women of Color's perspectives as trivial by ignoring Women of Color in governance scholarship.

Limitations in the Study of Gender and Race in Higher Education Leadership

I have discussed race, gender, and leadership and how these concepts intersect and influence Women of Color in higher education (Blake, 1999; Bowleg, 2008; Brown, 2007; Browne & Askew, 2006; Catalyst, 2005; Combs, 2003; Catalyst, 2005; Davis et al., 2006; Sanchez-Hucles & Sanchez, 2007). Early on, I identified the first gap in the literature when I discussed that the data used to inform this literature review would draw mostly from scholarship on women and Women of Color in higher education leadership, such as university presidents and deans. Only a minor section of the literature review discussed women on boards. The second limitation was the underrepresentation of Women of Color's experiences across all leadership spaces. Because of the low number of Women of Color that reach leadership positions, the research on Women of Color's experiences is limited in scope. Much of the data draws from the experiences of White women (Ballenger, 2010; Mahady, 2018).

The last gap in the literature is that presidents and deans operate under a management umbrella (Mintzberg, 1989), whereas governing boards are in charge of

oversight and operate under a different leadership practice (AGB, 2010; Taylor & de Lourdes Machado, 2008). Managers of universities take direct action to mitigate the institution's function while governing boards oversee the policies and practices of the university (Hermalin, 2004a; Kerr & Gade, 1989; Mintzberg, 1989). This gap may have different implications for the roles and experiences that Women of Color may have on governing boards. Without research in this governance area, we cannot understand the complexity of Women of Color's identity and the challenges they face within their organizations.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by explaining the breadth of impact and scope that U.S. governing boards have in higher education. These institutional actors impact all facets of higher education and influence students' educational trajectories through policies that affect admission, enrollment, and retention. Yet, despite the power of boards, there are many theoretical and methodological gaps in the study of higher education board governance. Later in the chapter, I also discussed how race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender impact Women of Color in higher education leadership. I concluded by discussing how Women of Color on governing boards have yet to be studied by scholars in the field of higher education. This is a significant gap in research because it overlooks the types of challenges present for Women of Color trustees. Moreover, without the study of race and gender in the trusteeship, there is a lapse of knowledge about how boards may encourage discrimination from within the boardroom.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Earlier in this dissertation, I presented evidence of governing boards as living representations of an institution's mission and values and problematized the homogeneity of boards in relation to their power and impact on underrepresented stakeholders in higher education. As U.S. higher education institutions continue to diversify in the demographics of the students, staff, and faculty they service, governing boards are not keeping up with those diversifications. Regardless of this disparity, boards are tasked with the responsibility to uphold values of diversity and equity to support the needs of historically marginalized communities (AGB, 2020).

A board's equity-mindedness (Bensimon, 2006) and diversity efforts can be measured by the types of policies and decisions that boards implement or by the number of new diverse appointments to boards (Rall et al., 2019). However, how board members embody equity and diversity *within* their meetings, discussions, interactions, policies, and behaviors has not been documented. Moreover, I contend that if equity and diversity were at the forefront of board practices, boards should naturally have seen a historical shift in their diversification aligned with their stakeholders. In other words, board members would have realized a lack of assortment across race, gender, and different identities, and would have diversified without external pressure or intervention. Instead, boards have remained controlled by White, older men. Therefore, a pattern of exclusion has developed within boards that must be acknowledged and made explicit.

Governance research has also been traditionally studied through the lens of the dominant group (i.e., scholarship of U.S. higher education boards has been informed

from the purview of White men sitting at the table). Therefore, an analysis focused on the unique minoritized perspectives (e.g., Women of Color) within the trusteeship is needed to call out and advocate for effective social change. To address the lapse of research, I next present the three frameworks that guided my study, how the frameworks contributed to the research (Table 5), and the methodological approaches I took in my data collection and analysis.

Table 5 Theoretical Frameworks and Application

Theoretical Frameworks and Application			
Theory	Definition	Contribution to This Study	Gap in the Theoretical Framework (For this Study)
Critical Race Feminism	Emerged from the CLS movement, a branch of CRT. Centers race *and* gender in its analysis of power	Uses narratives and counter-storytelling to provide a platform for historically excluded perspectives	Structural Analysis vs. organizational analysis
Intersectionality	Maps the unique ways in which women experience racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression at an intersection	Can help determine how law, policies, and identities beyond gender and race may privilege or marginalize women	Structural Analysis vs. organizational analysis
Organizational Culture Theory	Addresses the internal aspects of an organization to understand how things are done and who is involved in the process	Can help discover emergent patterns in the values, beliefs, customs, and traditions within an organization	No analysis of race or gender

Primary Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Feminism

The first theoretical framework I used in this study is Critical Race Feminism (Delgado, 1995). To fully understand its use and contribution, I first situate the contexts and historical movements that led to its creation.

Historical Background

The end of the Civil Rights era and sociopolitical movements in the 1960s and 1970s gave birth to the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement and scholarship (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Han & Leonard, 2016). CLS scholars "demonstrated that U.S. legal processes were not neutral and sociopolitical value-free practices. Rather, the law legitimized the dominant group's interests and reinforced disparate power relations through legal reasoning" (Han & Leonard, 2016, p.114). That is, these scholars challenged the neutrality of the law and its application toward minoritized viewpoints. This framework, although progressive, did not address the struggles of People of Color, particularly anti-discriminatory practices that nevertheless upheld discrimination– for example, the unequal rates of incarceration between Black and white men (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; C. I. Harris, 1993). Thus, influenced by CLS, a separate legal movement of Critical Race Theory scholarship emerged and became a framework to solidify race as an underlying factor of inequality in social and political structures (Bell, 1995).

Over the years, legal scholars presented multiple ideas to frame an understanding of CRT, such as challenging the neutrality of the law by exposing racism and racial oppression (Freeman, 1978), the use of interest-convergence to gain equal access as

whites (Bell, 1980), the use of counter-storytelling to challenge dominant viewpoints (Delgado, 1989), the impact of intersectionality and the law (Crenshaw, 1991), and whiteness as property rights (C. I. Harris, 1993). In the famous *Whiteness as Property* article, CRT scholar Cheryl Harris postulated that Whiteness, as a racial identity, evolved into a form of property and privilege acknowledged in U.S. law (1993). Harris argued that property was more than just a tangible object, it is "the legal legitimization of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (C. I. Harris, 1993, p. 1715). In her analysis, she depicts four property functions of Whiteness, which include the rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and right to exclude (C. I. Harris, 1993).

Varying descriptions of the central tenets of the CRT framework have emerged; however, for this dissertation, I choose to use Delgado and Stefanic's (2017) summary:

1. Racism is embedded into everyday interactions.
2. CRT is used to challenge epistemology and traditional claims that institutions make about race neutrality and equal opportunities.
3. Equal access only comes in the form of "interest-convergence theory."
4. Whiteness is defined as "property rights."
5. Research should use storytelling and counter-storytelling to create narratives that challenge dominant structures.

The CRT movement quickly expanded beyond the law to address inequitable political, educational, and economic life in the United States. Critical Race scholars

argued that racism is embedded into social interactions, class structure, politics, and education—and would continue to prevail until its existence is acknowledged and addressed (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In 1995, CRT was used in education to expose exclusionary practices embedded in educational structures (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and since its introduction to education, CRT has been used as a methodological foundation for both data collection and as a theoretical framework (Bernal, 2002; Duncan, 2006; Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b).

The Emergence of Critical Race Feminism

The term Critical Race Feminism was first used by one of the CRT founders, Richard Delgado, in 1995 (Delgado, 1995). The name indicated a link to the CLS movement, CRT, and Feminism and was used to emphasize Women of Color's viewpoints that had been excluded across all three fields (Wing, 2014). Scholars argued that Critical Race Theory assumed the experiences of Women of Color in the United States were the same as Men of Color and did not account for gender differences (Crenshaw, 1989; J.C. Harris & Patton, 2019; Hill Collins, 1986, 1989; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Wing, 2003). CRF theorists also critiqued the essential woman voice of Feminist Theory, meaning the notion that women share one common viewpoint (Wing, 2014). The essential voice was rooted in the experiences of White middle and upper-class women in opposition to the male experience (McIntosh, 1991) and did not account for racialized experiences of Women of Color. The failure to interrogate race with Feminism meant that Feminism alone would replicate and reinforce the subordination of People of

Color, while the failure of anti-racism to interrogate patriarchy would simultaneously cause the subordination of women (Crenshaw, 2003).

As a result, Critical Race Feminism (CRF), also known as multiracial feminism (Wing, 2014), challenged multiple systems of domination that Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory alone did not account for (Crenshaw, 1989; J.C.Harris & Patton, 2019; Hill Collins, 1989, 1990; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Wing, 2003). As a branch of CRT, CRF centers race and racism as systems of power, political struggle, and oppression, shaping Women of Color's experiences (Bell, 1995; Bernal, 2002; Harris, 2012; Hill Collins, 1989; Wing, 2014). However, CRF goes one step further to argue that cohesively race *and* gender marginalize women as interlocks throughout their lifetime and across multiple hierarchies of power (Zinn & Dill, 1996).

Like CRT scholars, Critical Race Feminist scholars argue that racism, sexism, and additional forms of marginalization must also be made explicit to dismantle systems of oppression (Wing, 2014). One way to explicitly call out sociopolitical inequities is to use narratives, storytelling, and counter-storytelling to construct realities for in-groups and challenge those realities through out-groups' perspectives (Delgado, 1989). Narratives, stories, and counter-stories are used in education to deconstruct the reality of privilege and power and authenticate Communities of Color that makeup students, teachers, faculty, and administrators (Childers-McKee & Hytten, 2015; Clonan-Roy et al., 2016; Comeaux, 2013; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2018; Joseph et al., 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a, 2002b); however, there is

a demand for this methodology to be utilized in governance research (Rall & Orué, 2020). One aim of this dissertation was to fill that research gap.

Application in this Study

I used CRF in this study as a research method to authenticate Women of Color as contributors of knowledge in governance scholarship and deconstruct power relations that privilege the dominant players on higher education boards. CRF helped me unearth new voices that had long been masqueraded by the 'essential voice,' which, in this case, had traditionally been the reality of white-middle-class and upper-class men and women. This study benefited from CRF's use of counter-storytelling (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a; Wing, 2014) as a method to discover new perspectives in the trusteeship.

As Women of Color shared their stories, CRF was also used as an analytical lens to make explicit oppressive structures these women experienced within boards of higher education. CRF recognizes Women of Color as "outsiders within" (Hill Collins, 1989) who can story-tell and diagnose conditions of the dominant group because they physically exist in a social, political, or educational space. Although present and often participating on the *inside* of social, political, or educational circles, Women of Color remain *outside* due to their marginalized identities and social/political exclusion (Hill Collins, 1989). In this study, Women of Color trustees remained outside the margins, though present inside the boardroom due to occupying a space that has privileged and continues to privilege their male counterparts. The collection of their stories "allow us to see how the world looks from behind someone else's spectacles" (Delgado, 1989, p. 453). The stories that emerged from Women of Color trustees encourage researchers and

practitioners "to wipe off our own lenses and ask, 'Could I have been overlooking something all along?" (Delgado, 1989, p. 453). For all its contributions, CRF still fell short in celebrating how people's experiences are informed by the specific intersections of power for which they occupy, rather than the collective experience. Accordingly, I levered intersectionality to account for the nuances in participants' stories.

Secondary Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality

The second theoretical framework used to guide this study is intersectionality. Intersectionality was born from Black Feminist Theory (Hill Collins, 1989) and Critical Race Theory to analyze how multiple identities were ignored in many legal settings, such as employment law, criminal law, family law, and legal education (Carbado et al., 2013; Wiggins, 2001). Kimberlé Crenshaw, famous legal scholar and co-founder of Critical Race Theory was the first to introduce intersectionality in 1989 and later built upon this framework in 1991, as she exposed the subtle ways in which the law produced and legitimized the marginalization of African American women (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Crenshaw argued that sociopolitical institutions operated through a singular-axis view of race and gender, discrimination laws, and representatives, i.e., white women and African American men (1989). In the expansion of her framework, Crenshaw (1991) highlighted social movements that omitted Women of Color from vulnerable backgrounds, such as low-income, socially disadvantaged, and immigrant communities. As a result, the term *intersectionality* was popularized in legal studies to understand how discriminatory laws needed to address the interlock of race and gender (together) in their interpretation (Crenshaw, 1991). In other words, Crenshaw (1991) argued that the law was interpreting

race and gender as separate issues rather than one cohesive point of marginalization. Crenshaw saw this legal misinterpretation of race and gender in the famous *DeGraffenreid v General Motors* case when the company testified that they were not discriminating against Black women because they employed (a) Black men and (b) women at their factories (Crenshaw, 1991). However, Black women were not being hired. Crenshaw's (1991) legal dispute was that Black women were experiencing gendered racism at General Motors. In other words, their double-minority status was, in fact, being discriminated against. The court, however, ruled that Black women

> should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new 'super remedy' which would give them relief beyond what the drafters of the relevant statutes intended… thus this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively ether, but not a combination of both (*DeGraffenreid v. General Motors Assembly Division, 413 F. Supp. 143),*

The court considered that Black women would benefit from a legal interpretation that addressed both race and gender discrimination and thus dismissed the case. The challenge of identifying how racism and sexism happened at this legal intersection is what led scholars to develop the Intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). The movement of intersectionality soon expanded beyond the experiences of Black women, and from it, Critical Race Feminism emerged.

Because intersectionality stresses the significance of the experiences that converge at power relations of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other identities, one of

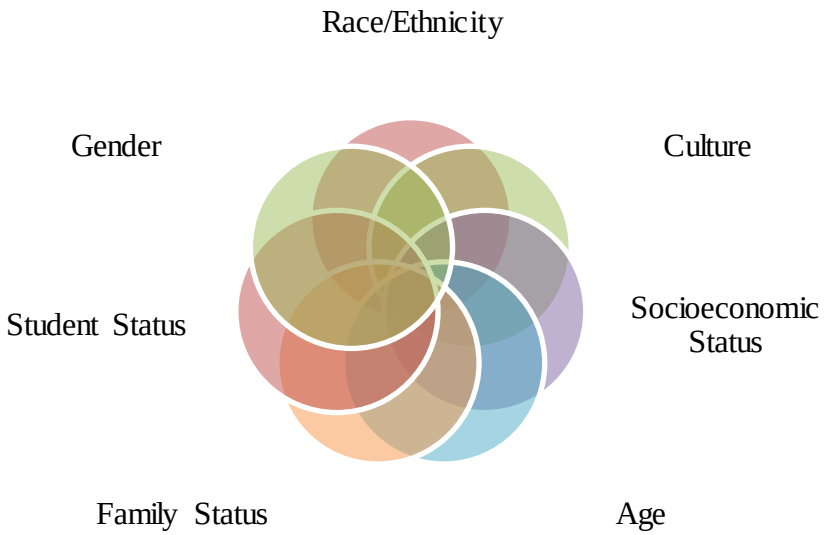
its main arguments is that there is no essential experience. Scholars have used the terms "racial essentialism" and "gender essentialism" to critique the idea that there is a universal "Black experience," "Chicano experience," or "women's experience" (A.P. Harris, 1990). Angela Harris (1990) argues that the effect of essentialism is to "reduce the lives of people who experience multiple forms of oppression to addition problems" (p. 588). Essentialism is problematic for Women of Color because when a sociopolitical institution focuses solely on race or gender or is only interested in one identifiable aspect of human life, they must choose pieces of themselves to authenticate at a crossroads (Harris, 1990). Thus, intersectionality stresses the importance of mapping the unique ways women experience racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression at an intersection (Bernal, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Pigeonholing challenges related to marginalized identities reduces an outsider's perception of the impact of marginalization on the individual. Identities compound, interlock, and inform each other–think about a Ven Diagram where the circles represent identity (race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, culture, age, family status, and sexuality) (Figure 3). The challenges and privileges we encounter due to our identity happen throughout multiple intersections where the circles overlap, and these challenges and privileges depend on the social context.

More importantly, note that as the circles interlock, the colors mix. The rings are no longer two distinct colors but a *combination* of two colors that create a third pigment. And so, these pigments keep mixing until there is a shade in the middle of the circle composed of all seven tones. That is where identity happens– where the circles and colors

amalgamate. Going back to Harris's (1990) argument about the dangers of essentialism, you can see how identity cannot be siloed into one "essential" experience or one color. It goes against our being to pick one color and circumscribe our life experiences, challenges, and privileges. We exist at the interlocks of our circles, where our unique identities create new variants of identity (colors), and unique challenges and opportunities follow.

Figure 3 A Visual Representation of Interlocking Identities



Intersectionality disregards the binary of male/female perspectives and examines the multiplicity of race, gender, class, and sexual relations in a matrix of domination (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 1989). CRF scholar, Adrien Wing, described intersectionality as follows:

> I use the term *multiplicative identity* to describe the concept that Women of Color are not merely white women *plus* color or men of color *plus* gender. Instead, their

> identities must be multiplied together to create a holistic One when analyzing the nature of the discrimination against them (Wing, 2014, p.7)

Intersectionality scholars also argued that individuals and groups can experience privilege and disadvantage simultaneously (Hill Collins, 2012). For example, identities can be leveraged in relation to various social environments. Language, culture, sexuality, social class, immigration status, and religion can all be used to navigate various sociopolitical situations and privilege or marginalize two Women of Color who share the same racial/ethnic background. Four themes by Hill Collins (2012) have been used to situate intersectionality and scholarship in practice:

1. Intersecting power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality shape individual and group-based social locations.
2. Distinctive social locations of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations have important epistemological implications.
3. Attention must be focused on relationality and relational processes.
4. The need to focus on the nature of connections among communities' knowledge and social structures.

While intersectionality addressed the notion that Women of Color are not monoliths, it also stressed the significance of "acknowledging differences while promoting commonalities" (Carbado et al., 2013, p.4). For example, Roberts and Jesudason (2013) argued that coalitions can be built between social movements when groups identify mutual structures of oppression and the relationships between the two groups' struggles. Through intersectionality, different identity groups can recognize a

connection around shared marginalization, discrimination, and privilege (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013).

Application in this Study

As mentioned, this study benefited from CRF's counter-storytelling (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a; Wing, 2014) methodology and theoretical framework to discover new perspectives in the trusteeship. Intersectionality worked in tandem with CRF to further identify if race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identities impacted the experiences of Women of Color who sit on boards of higher education. The unique stories of participants, viewed from an intersectional lens, informed which identities of Women of Color are privileged, valorized, or otherwise excluded in governance spaces. Moreover, these stories can inform social coalitions between Women of Color on boards by advocating for social change. Women of Color can attest to the commonalities in their struggles and social inequalities while acknowledging the unique strengths their identities bring to governance spaces.

As Carbado et al. (2013) argued, intersectionality is a work-in-progress that must be used in unexplored spaces because "no particular application of intersectionality can, in a definitive sense, grasp the range of intersectional powers and problems that plague society. (p.4)". This study advances Carbado et al. (2013)'s call for intersectionality as a work in progress by applying it to an unexplored area of intersectionality research: higher education governing boards. Due to my interest in the internal culture of boards, CRF and intersectionality had to be paired with a third framework that could delineate the conditions under which the marginalization of Women of Color is upheld on boards.

Therefore a third framework to analyze the behaviors of higher education boards is used to guide this study: Organizational Culture Theory (Tierney, 1988).

Tertiary Theoretical Framework: Organizational Culture Theory

The study of governance entails thinking about the structures, rules, and hierarchies that guide decision-making (Kaplan, 2006). Governance requires us to consider the "organizational context, social norms, organizational culture, and participant expectations which individuals possess within a particular university or college" (Kaplan, 2006, p. 214). As such, organizational culture theory was the third lens that informed this study. Organizational culture originates from the shared beliefs of individuals within an organization (Tierney, 1988). Because culture is a historical practice passed down in groups, behaviors, assumptions, and symbols may be taken for granted by group members (Geertz, 1973). Thus, individuals within organizations perpetuate unchallenged behaviors because culture is passed down through socialization.

Tierney (1988) introduced Organizational Culture Theory in higher education to comprehend the management and performance of colleges and universities. He argued that not understanding the role of organizational culture inhibited the ability of administrators to solve issues in higher education (Tierney, 1988). For example, as federal and state revenues decreased and resources became scarce, administrators had to make difficult verdicts in their institutions' enrollments, expansion, and function (Archibald & Fieldman, 2014). Tierney (1988) argued that without awareness of organizational culture, the decision-making could impact the purpose and identity of the institution.

To study organizational culture in higher education, Tierney (1988) proposed studying the following six aspects: (1) environment. (2) mission, (3) socialization, (4) information, (5) strategy, and (6) leadership. Tierney (1988) encouraged researchers to understand how the organization defined its environment, i.e., who are the stakeholders? And how does the public view the institution? He also proposed that researchers define the university's mission or purpose and how the mission was carried out in the decision-making processes. Next, he wanted to explore the socialization of new members and what these members needed to learn to survive in the organization (Tierney, 1988). Lastly, Tierney (1988) was interested in accessibility and strategy. He wanted to know how information was disseminated within organizations, who held access to that information, who were the formal and informal leaders, and how decision-making processes happened (Tierney, 1988).

Organizational Culture Theory is critical in higher education because it helps identify internal and external factors that inform leadership decisions (Ravasi & Schultz, 2010; Smart & St. John, 1996). Moreover, Organizational Culture Theory identifies how patterns emerge in the history of higher education institutions and perpetuate values, beliefs, customs, and traditions within colleges and universities (Tierney, 1988).

Application in this Study

Research shows that governing boards are influenced by powerful social, political, and economic external factors (Barringer et al., 2019; Floyd, 1995; Hermalin, 2004b; Kaplan, 2004; O'Leary et al., 2020); nevertheless, Organizational Culture Theory informed us that boards are also shaped by internal forces (Tierney, 1988). This means

that the leadership behaviors of board members and their organizational structure are impacted by the cultures born out of the behaviors, norms, and traditions within the boardroom, the campus, and society at large.

CLS, CRT, and CRF movements have taught us to challenge the neutrality of sociopolitical policies and instead focus on the viewpoints of minoritized members within these sociopolitical structures. In this study, CRF and Intersectionality uplifted the stories of Women of Color trustees to identify if exclusionary behaviors emanated from within the governing board, explicitly or implicitly. Organizational Culture Theory then examined the exclusionary conditions identified by Women of Color. It explained how boards inculcated these behaviors via beliefs, policies, and institutional patterns to uphold homogenous compositions and power structures. I visualized a summary of how Organizational Culture Theory, Critical Race Feminism, and Intersectionality informed my theoretical approach at the start of this chapter in Table 5. Together, these three theories informed my development of a new framework to study boards of higher education using a race, gender, and intersectionality lens (Figure 4).

Documenting equity and diversity practices from the dominant group's perspective (White, affluent, males) was insufficient for this research area since the dominant group may not correctly diagnose the conditions upon which they sustain privilege and power. Moreover, the dominant group may not recognize the internalized culture of boards (i.e., their assumptions, attitudes, behaviors, and formal/informal interactions with marginalized members within the board) as problematic since members pass down these behaviors as "the way things have always been." An analysis of the

behaviors and attitudes of boards from the perspectives of Women of Color trustees therefore challenged that boards are "neutral" when addressing issues of race, gender, class, and other identities. Board's perceptions of "neutrality" are significant because boards may inhibit equity and inclusion which can impact their ability to serve in the best interest of their higher education communities and the mission of their college or university.

Figure 4 A Framework for Studying the Impact of Gender and Race in Board Culture

Environment:
- How do Women of Color define their environment?
- What impact do race, gender, and other identities have on the experiences of Women of Color?

Access to Organization and Socialization:
- How do Women of Color in an organization describe access to the organization?
- How do Women of Color gain access to the organization?
- How do Women of Color prepare themselves to excel in the organization?

Strategies:
- What strategies do Women of Color use to navigate their environment?
- What role does identity place in survival within the environment?

Leadership:
- How do Women of Color contribute to the organization?
- What role does identity play in their contributions?

Note: Adapted from Tierney's (1988) Framework of Organizational Culture

Research Design

Both theory and practice drove my choice of using a qualitative methodology (Harding, 2013). My primary goal was to understand the perspectives of Women of Color

lay board members across the U.S. using a story-telling methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). Therefore, I developed a qualitative multi-site case study to gather my data (Creswell, 2006, 2014; Harding, 2013). To collect participants' stories, I used a semi-structured interview approach (Bryman, 1988; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011; Hennick et al., 2011). The stories told by Women of Color quickly developed into counter-stories (Delgado, 1989), which are interwoven throughout the discussion of the findings.

Research Questions

To reiterate, the questions this study aimed to answer were:

1. How do intersections of gender, class, race, and other identities of Women of Color's influence their experiences on higher education governing boards?
2. How do Women of Color contribute to higher education governance?
3. What, if any, are the challenges Women of Color face as board members?

Qualitative Multi-Site Case Study

Qualitative case studies are used to "study the experience of real cases operating in real situations" (Stake, 2006, p.6). As discussed earlier, governance data reporting has overlooked Women of Color trustees. They are both absent in demographic data, and in governance research. We can infer, however, that the sparse number of Women of Color on boards aligns with the mere 5% of Women of Color presidents (Johnson, 2016; Women's Power Gap Report, 2022). Due to the low sample population and to maintain the anonymity of participants and institutions, a multi-site case study was employed (Stake, 2006). The purpose of a case study is to "examine a contemporary phenomenon in

its real-life context" (Yin, 1981, p. 59). Multisite case studies have the same purpose but rather "collect data from multiple settings with similar methods and procedures….to enhance transferability and trustworthiness of findings to other contexts by comparing data across sites" (Jenkins et al., 2018, p.1969). The multisite case study approach thus allowed me to compare the experiences of participants across multiple sites and enhance the validity of the data. Moreover, the anonymity of the sample was crucial to this study, due to the hypervisibility of Women of Color trustees in the U.S. which I discuss later in this chapter. Overall, the study expanded across the U.S. to include participants with any 4-year public or private board service. I chose to focus on four-year institutions because there are critical differences in the scholarship, management, governance, and selection of board members at two-year institutions (Kater & Levin, 2004).

Recruitment

Participants in this study were targeted through purposeful sampling and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2014). I had a "predetermined criterion of importance" (Palinkas et al., 2013, p. 17); hence I utilized criterion-purposeful sampling because participants could "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p.153). I sent invitations to participate in the study via three avenues. First, I asked my professional contacts at the Association of Governing Boards for Universities and Colleges (AGB) to send an email announcement via their listserv and post my recruitment email on their website for board professionals. Second, I searched board websites from public and private institutions across the U.S. and the websites for state-controlled boards of higher education to find Women of Color trustees

and their contact information. An early limitation of this method was that members would often be listed by name only, with no descriptive image, biography, or contact data. This created an issue of accessibility in my search to find Women of Color trustees.

The AGB recruitment method had low participant response rates, which I attribute to a probable lack of my study's distribution by the board professionals to trustees. I also presumed that Women of Color might have been less likely to come forward if they felt that the data collection was happening on behalf of AGB rather than through an independent researcher. Therefore, I sent a direct recruitment email to board members with professional emails listed on their institutional website or whose contact information I could find via an internet search. I also attempted to recruit participants via LinkedIn. If I could not find any contact method, I resorted to my third recruitment strategy: emailing board secretaries and asking them to forward my study to any Women of Color who served on their board.

To bypass some of the accessibility issues, snowball sampling was also used to "identify cases of interest from sampling people who know people that generally have similar characteristics who, in turn, know people, also with similar characteristics" (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 535). I established rapport (Bailey, 2007; Berg, 2011; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011; Mason, 2002) with participants–and in turn, interest–through referrals from board members who partook in the study or through introductions by mutual professional colleagues. Given the private nature of boards, this method proved most effective for recruiting participants.

Participant Selection Criteria. The participation criteria were to (1) be over the age of 18, (2) self-identify as a Woman of Color, (3) currently serve or have previously served on a public or private governing board of higher education at a four-year institution in the U.S. I chose the age of 18 because it would be highly unlikely for any participant to serve on a higher education board under this age and because it allowed me to bypass needing parental or guardian permission. I targeted Women of Color in this study because they had yet to be centered in governance research. Lastly, due to the low number of Women of Color trustees, I opened the study to anyone with current or prior board service. I assumed that Women of Color who had already left their role on the board may have more time to participate in this study and be more forthcoming about their experiences since their term had expired.

Participant Profiles. In total, (18) Women of Color trustees participated in the study. The demographic breakdown of the participants was the following: nine African American or Black, six Latina or Hispanic, two Native American or Alaskan Native, and one Asian participant. The study expanded across eight states and included a total of (14) single-system, multi-system, and state boards; public and private boards; Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) and Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institutions (NASNT) (Table 6). Participants experience on their boards ranged from one year to almost three decades.

Table 6 Participant Demographics

Race/Ethnicities	MSI Status	Board Types	Total Boards	Number of States	Range in Years of Service
(9) African American or Black	AANAPISI	Single-System	14	8	1-30 years
(6) Latina or Hispanic	HBCU	Multi-system			
(2) Native American or Alaskan Native	HSI	State Boards			
(1) Asian	NASNT	Private Boards			
		Public Boards			

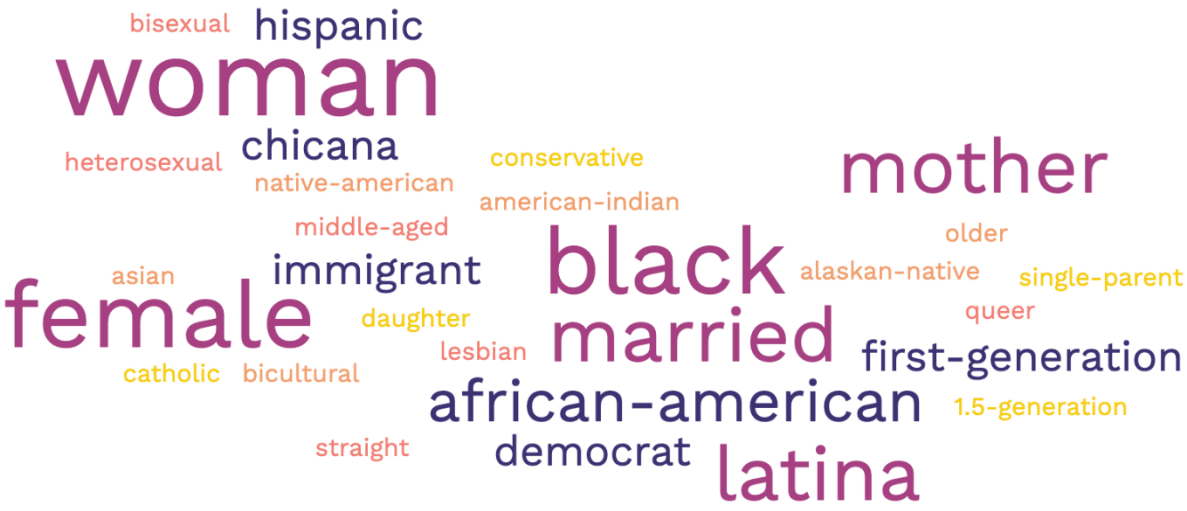
I present participants' professional backgrounds (Table 7) in three categories: Education, Expertise, and Service. Participants often held multiple professional roles at the time of our interviews or had served in various professional roles throughout their lifetime. Although participants detailed their professional expertise, I used broader descriptions to mask identities further. For non-professional identities named by participants, I generated a word cloud (Figure 5), given that this was an area in which Women of Color shared more commonalities. For participants with immigrant backgrounds, countries of origin were broadened into a racial or ethnic category (whichever the participant referred to in their interview).

Table 7 Professional Backgrounds of Women of Color Trustees

Degree Types	Profession/Expertise	Service
Bachelor's	Administration	Board (for-profit, non-profit, advisory, commission, state)
Master's	Agriculture	Mentorship
Master of Business Administration	Athletics	Philanthropy
Juris Doctor	Business	Public Service
Doctorate	Education	
	Finance	
	Government	
	Healthcare	
	Law	
	Leadership	
	Policy	
	Science, Technology, Engineering, Math	

Note: Professions are broadly described for the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality.

Figure 5 Participant Identities Beyond Professional Roles



Note: For participants who disclosed immigration status, countries of origin are masked into a broader racial/ethnic category for the purpose of upholding anonymity and confidentiality.

Confidentiality and Anonymity. Although confidentiality and anonymity are essential in all areas of social research, the information I collected imposed supplementary risks to participants since I inquired about sensitive encounters that occurred in the participants' professional settings (Wiles et al., 2008). Women of Color are hypervisible in their roles, meaning they are appointed in such small numbers that they can be more easily identified than their White, male, counterparts. Participants already face marginalization as Women of Color in society, so I wanted to reassure that this study would not cause any professional impact or emotional damage to participants. Moreover, Women of Color's hypervisibility is more pronounced because news outlets announce their appointments since many are the "first" of their kind to reach this

leadership milestone at their college or university. Their historical appointments, while a cause for celebration, reinforce that structural barriers continue to impact Women of Color's rise to leadership.

Due to the reasons outlined above, I took great responsibility to ensure that data was well protected. Pseudonyms were used for participants and institutions to protect any identifiable factors (Creswell, 2014; Harding, 2013; Wiles et al., 2008). To mask participants' identities, all boards (regardless of formal titles) are referred to as "boards" or "Boards of Trustees," while individual members are referred to as "board members" or "trustees." Additionally, all colleges and universities are referred to as "universities" or "institutions" for consistency. Data anonymization, however, does not cover all the issues raised by concerns about confidentiality (Wiles et al., 2008). Confidentiality also meant "not disclosing any information gained from an interviewee deliberately or accidentally in ways that might identify an individual" (Wiles et al., 2008, p. 417). Therefore, participant profiles were carefully arranged and desegregated to ensure confidentiality and anonymity were sustained. Verbatim responses and descriptive information are occasionally altered or generalized to ensure that board members and their systems are anonymized.

While this study stresses the impact of intersectionality on the individual–for confidentiality– stories and personal qualities that the participants disclosed had to be broken up into separate data, altered, or altogether left out because of the unique circumstances pronounced. This step was done out of an abundance of caution, given that anyone familiar with the participant, or the situation being described, could have

potentially identified a contributor to this study. For answers that were altered, the context was not changed. This made it so that the new material did not impact the result or analysis. Rather than retelling the participant's story using specific titles, designations, situations, etc., a general term or example was used. Lastly, to add to confidentiality measures, field notes and interview transcripts were encrypted and password protected.

Data Collection

Interview Protocol. I developed a semi-structured interview protocol informed by Bailey (2007) and Mason (2002) to help participants reflect on their time on the board. The protocol was divided into four topical areas: (1) Introduction to the participant's life and experience, (2) Identity impact on service/Strengths/challenges related to identity, (3) Time on the board, and (4) Board culture. Many questions were informed by previous literature on boards, research on intersectionality, and studies on Women of Color in academia. I tailored the questions to encapsulate how Women of Color experienced their ascension to and time on the board, what role their identity played (if any) in their service, and how they viewed the efforts of their respective boards on discussing and addressing issues of diversity and equity.

I revised the interview protocol once based on the participants' insights. I added a question at the end of "Would you serve again?" after my second interviewee added that addressing their desire to serve again was essential to wrap up the context of their experience. My third interviewee also brought it up in conversation, which prompted me to make the change.

Questions and probes were designed for participants to reconstruct their experiences (Seidman, 2006), with few straightforward questions (yes/no answers). Reconstruction allowed participants to craft their stories "based partially on memory and partially on what the participant now senses is important about the past event" (Seidman, 2006, p.90). The semi-structured approach also encouraged participant storytelling and created richer data that captured the participant's lived experiences while allowing open-ended data to transpire (Bailey, 2007). The interview protocol had well-defined topics. However, participants had autonomy over what they wanted to share and how they wanted to share it. For example, if I asked a participant to talk about their time on the board and they happened to cover multiple topical areas in their response, I would let the conversation transpire without interruption and probe questions based on their story rather than follow a linear format. On the other hand, some participants would recall experiences as we progressed in the interview and would want to add to previous answers.

Interviews took place over Zoom and lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. Prior to the start of the study, I asked participants for written permission to video record our conversations and re-affirmed their consent using verbal confirmation at the start of our meeting. The recording ensured accuracy in the transcription process (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005).

Field Notes. To supplement the interviews, I added field notes to my data collection and analysis. Field notes are one of the most critical aspects of research data collection, regardless of the methodology (Mason, 2002). Fieldnotes create raw data that

is in close proximity to the event, person, or place under study (Mason, 2002). In my field notes, I documented participants' reactions and demeanor throughout the interview (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018), along with behaviors that were not captured through the audio recording (Mason, 2002). This is what would later inform my transcription process and the crafting of stories throughout my analysis. I also did a critical self-reflection following each interview (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). This last step is essential in qualitative research because it is used in the reflection stage of the data analysis to ensure validity (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Harding, 2013; Steinke, 2004). Critical reflections after each interview allowed me to assess my own performance, biases, and feelings (Mason, 2002; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes would later inform me in my data analysis stage how my experiences and feelings impacted my steps to report the findings accurately. I used these field notes to cross-reference my positionality as the researcher, which I discuss at the end of this chapter.

Data Analysis

Counter-stories. Storytelling and counter-storytelling first began in the CLS movement as a mechanism to dispute a seemingly neutral legal discourse and challenge said discourse by introducing opposite viewpoints (Delgado, 1980). Legal scholarship, and in turn, laws, were argued to be subjective since one's reality and legal events could be described in different ways (Delgado, 1989). This subjectivity re-created laws and policies that sustained inequitable outcomes for marginalized groups since a dominant group created and interpreted the laws. As such, one of CRT's forefathers, Richard Delgado, pled for using narratives in the form of storytelling and counter-storytelling to

construct realities for in-groups and challenge those realities through the perspectives of out-groups (1989).

Using narratives and story-telling became one of the primary tenants for CRT and has since been used to "recognize that the experiential knowledge of People of Color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a, p. 26). The story-telling method for collecting and interpreting data is not intended to distort reality but rather amplify the voices of marginalized individuals so that an alternative perspective can dispel notions of colorblindness (Bell, 1995; Harris, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Similarly, Critical Race Feminism uses narratives and counter-narratives to "bring together understandings of epistemologies and pedagogies to imagine how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality are braided with cultural knowledge, practices, spirituality, formal education, and the law" (González, 2001, p. 643). The conversations in this study help highlight the numerous levels of marginalization that can happen for Women of Color by individuals, the board, and the institution.

For this research, I wanted to use storytelling to challenge what counts as knowledge (Bernal, 2002). I chose to do this by expanding what scholars know about the trusteeship from the dominant perspective (White males) and creating new knowledge informed by the voices of marginalized Women of Color that serve on higher education governing boards (Rall & Orué, 2020). By recognizing a viewpoint that has been historically excluded and providing a platform for that viewpoint to be uplifted, I wanted to document how marginalization prevails for Women of Color trustees.

Originally this study was going to use a counter-narrative approach (Kim, 2016; Stanley, 2016) of Women of Color trustees; however, due to the small number of Women of Color trustees in the U.S. and the uniqueness of each of my participants' experiences that unfolded in our conversations, I chose not to employ that method. Narrative storytelling could potentially out participants by telling their stories from start to finish (Kim, 2016), making them identifiable to their peers. I also wanted to avoid clumping together multiple participants and use composite narratives (Wills, 2018) because Women of Color are not monoliths. The Intersectionality framework used in this analysis focused on the nuances within the same demographics. Hence, I chose to compile stories and present those in the form of counter-stories in the form of narratives throughout my findings (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). In this process, I had to leave out some data points that were presented throughout the interviews (i.e., participant nationalities, university or college-specific events, discussions that would identify a campus, and background information on participants that made news announcements or could be found via an internet search) to maintain anonymity and confidentiality in the research.

Transcriptions. I reproduced the interviews to their full extent by transcribing the conversations verbatim (Seidman, 2006). I chose to re-create verbal and nonverbal context in the conversations by adding cues to the transcriptions, such as laughs, sighs, and pauses (Siedman, 2006). I had to make decisions about punctuation and did so consciously to reflect the participant's voice inflections (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 2006). Repetitious "umhs," "ahs," and other fillers that would not reflect the participant's speech were omitted since this research was not focused on the language development of the

participant (Siedman, 2006). The authenticity of the speech was balanced by the obligation to "maintain the dignity of the participant in presenting his or her oral speech in writing (Siedman, 2006, p.124).

Coding. After the interviews were transcribed, the data were analyzed utilizing a deductive and inductive approaches. The data was coded using Dedoose, a mixed-methods data management application. The application allows the researcher to create a codebook, do line-by-line coding, and run various analysis tools to create aggregated code counts, show code cooccurrence, and illustrate relationships between codes and participant descriptors and characteristics (i.e., race, institution type, years of service) (Dedoose, 2021). The data was analyzed using Saldaña's (2013), Emerson et al.'s (2011), and Miles and Huberman's (1994) guides to qualitative data analysis, which begins with broad coding and systematically refining codes as one progresses through levels of analysis. The first round of codes were defined deductively via an open-coding method, and broad codes were categorized by the interview questions (e.g., the impact of identity on board work, challenges and strengths faced, experiences with peers) (Emerson et al., 2011). The second round of codes was induced via reoccurring themes in the participants' experiences (e.g., challenges, strengths, and the impact of diversity). The process resulted in 86 defined codes and 579 distinct excerpts from participant interviews.

Themes. Using my three analytical frameworks, I designed a new framework from the themes that emerged in the data and categorized participants' experiences. These were: Environment, access to the board, socialization, strategies for survival, leadership contributions, and the impact of diversity. Within these categories, subthemes

emerged. For example, under the environment category, themes of microaggressions, tokenism, stereotypes, feeling alone, socialization with peers, and self-doubt emerged. I discuss these patterns in more detail in Chapter Four.

Trustworthiness and Dependability

Validity. Scholars have argued that the steps a researcher takes to analyze data are subjective, and there is no singular, correct method of interpreting results (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). However, that does not allow qualitative researchers "free reign to analyze in any manner that they choose" (Harding, 2013, p. 5). Metrics and principles have been established in qualitative research to ensure that one's conclusions are valid. That is, the results provide an accurate description of the events that transpired, along with an accurate explanation of the phenomenon and why it happened (Jupp, 2006). Harding (2013) argues that when researchers engage in a data analysis process with multiple stages (transcription, coding, finding themes), the participants' view and their narrative interpretation can be distorted. To ensure the non-distortion of data in qualitative research, metrics are in place to prove the data's validity (Creswell, 2006, 2014; Gibson & Brown, 2009; Harding, 2013; Heaton, 2004; Jupp, 2006). Qualitative validity in my study was achieved through readings of interview transcripts (Schmidt, 2004), triangulation of data (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005; Bryman, 2008), and in-depth reflexive analysis (Harding, 2013).

I triangulated data by ensuring that I captured "different facets of culture and social action… socially shared codes, conventions, and structures" (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005, p. 824). I also ensured that the context of the interviews and my

subjective views of the findings' interpretations were checked or corrected by my research advisor through investigator triangulation (Steinke, 2004). Due to the sensitive information that higher education governing boards discuss in meetings, all boards must operate (to some degree) in closed sessions. Therefore, many of the stories that participants chose to share were experiences that did occur in front of a public audience. Therefore, videos of public meetings or observations would not serve this study. Instead, I established patterns in the experiences Women of Color described throughout their stories. While Intersectionality informed me that participants would have unique experiences, the CRF framework reeled in the commonality of marginalization based on race and gender. Altogether, data triangulation occurred within the interview analysis, through my reflection in the field notes, and the outside evaluation of my research by a governance expert.

Reflexivity. To enhance the validity of my study, I was constantly engaging in reflexivity (Harding, 2016). Reflexivity required my self-examination as the researcher (Heaton, 2004), the choices that I made while analyzing the data (Harding, 2013), and the implications of the approach I took (Jupp, 2006). I recorded key decisions as they were being made in my data analysis (Harding, 2013) and recorded field notes that could be accessed anytime during or after the project (Gibson & Brown, 2009). I documented my decision-making process so that I could assess the validity of my findings and so that an external reader could do the same (Harding, 2013). Through a comprehensive and detailed account of my work, I ensured my research quality (Steinke, 2004) and accounted for how my decisions would impact the outcomes (Fontana & Frey, 2005). By

engaging in an internal inquiry, I "explicitly identify reflexively… biases, values, and personal backgrounds such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status" that shaped my interpretation (Creswell, 2014, p. 187). It was crucial that I was aware of how my positionality impacted each step in the data collection, analysis, and even as I wrote this dissertation.

Positionality

Creswell (2014) used the term *worldview* to clarify the broader philosophical idea of the researcher and how experiences shape our beliefs and formulate questions about social issues, interactions, relationships, and even ourselves (p.6). Before selecting a research topic, he advised that one should consider "the general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of the research that a researcher brings to a study" (Creswell, 2014, p.6). As a result of my identity, my research was informed through a transformative paradigm (Cresswell, 2014; Mertens, 2010), and the goal of my dissertation was to "…focus on the needs of groups and individuals in our society that may be marginalized or disenfranchised" (Creswell, 2014, p.10). I provide my background to understand how my experiences inform my positionality and why I am interested in addressing address empowerment issues, inequality, alienation, domination, and social justice.

Background. I am a Latina immigrant from Argentina. My culture is integral to who I am and how I was raised. I come from a low-socioeconomic background. However, I admit I never felt the impact of social class status until my family moved to the U.S. I acknowledge that I have the socio-political privilege of looking like a White-

American. I have never been targeted for my skin color, nor do I have to worry about being a potential target of racial violence based solely on my appearance. However, discrimination is not absent in my life–far from it.

I didn't have the language to identify it then, but I can look back to when my family arrived in the U.S. and see how schools "tracked me" because of how my Hispanic name read on paper. I heard countless times, "Oh wow, your English is so good!" when instead, I wanted to hear my name pronounced correctly. By the time I was in high school, a counselor (who took a five-minute meeting with me) discouraged me from applying to the University of California (UC) and told me to apply to a "more realistic" school for me–I was an "A" student.

When I graduated (from the UC) with my bachelor's, I immediately began a professional career in higher education and saw similar instances of discrimination. A Latino colleague interrupted me during a work presentation to say, "I'm surprised you haven't already changed your name to Valerie." I had White (men and women) supervisors go out of their way to target me and other Women of Color in our office for unprovoked reasons. I also saw how Men of Color contributed to Women of Color's directed discrimination and benefited from their marginalization. I was tokenized as a Latina immigrant to recruit students to our institution, yet I was the least underpaid staffer in the office. When I completed my Master's degree in higher education policy, I was still "too inexperienced" for a salary raise.

Discrimination was also present in my personal life. From an early age I noticed how I was treated differently when speaking Spanish in public. My mother and I would

be out shopping, and store employees would blatantly ignore us and greet the following English-speaking customer. Just a few months ago, at my daughter's baptism, a (White) priest referred to us as the "Rodriguez Family" and, before the mass ended, looked at me and told me to "make sure I didn't take anything with me." It made me feel shame and embarrassment.

These experiences are integral to my research interests (Creswell, 2006, 2014). It was crucial that throughout my dissertation process, I was aware of my positionality and did not misinterpret my participants' experiences with my interpretations of the world (Olesen, 2018). As the researcher, I held power over whose voices were selected and how they were represented (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005), which meant I also risked the distortion of those narratives. During the interview process, I cautiously chose how much of my own racial and ethnic background to share with the participants so as not to influence the conversation's outcome.

Limitations

Firstly, credibility and, in turn, access were a limitation in this study. I recognize that my identity permeated throughout every interaction that I encountered (Mendoza-Denton, 2008), and understood that my gender, class, and ethnic identity impacted my interactions, visibility, and access to the data (Mendoza-Denton, 2008). I reflected on my positionality in and addressed how I accounted for my identity in the data analysis.

One early challenge of my identity was my professional status. My identity as a graduate student researcher was vastly contrasted with my lay members' professional profiles. I was self-aware of this throughout my interactions with compelling institutional

actors. I relied on introductions from organizational players, such as board secretaries and board professionals, to gain access to participants. This was significant because the import of the study was at the hands of those with gatekeeping access. I will not know whether my study was able to reach the breadth of participants that I intended.

I also approached board members through "insiders" in the community (Harding, 2013, p. 13). My advisor, faculty mentors, and work colleagues formulated working relationships with lay members that served as a "strong recommendation and introduction to strengthen [my] capacity to work in a community and thus improve the quality of the data" (Harding, 2013, p. 13). This, while a benefit to my study, could have influenced participants' reflections due to their networks' awareness of their intent to join the study.

Secondly, in the U.S., the number of Women of color serving on higher education boards is minimal (AGB, 2019; 2021). While this was a numerically "small" sample, there are not many Women of Color within the larger population to recruit from. When we consider the inaccessibility of board members, coupled with email response rates, having 18 participants consent to the study is not a "small" representation. The reach of this study ranged across fourteen institutions, eight states, multi-system boards, single-campus boards, and state boards. The study also covered multiple Minority-Serving Institutions and boards with varying appointment and selection processes.

Thirdly, the findings I present are not the sole themes in my analysis. For the purpose of this dissertation, I focus only on answering my three research questions. Therefore, there were other topics outside of the scope of this study that were not addressed, for example, the role of politics in higher education governance, Women of

Color's motives for joining higher education boards, the comparison of experiences between corporate boards and higher education boards, and how DE&I work is conducted by boards. Those findings merit subsequent examination.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the three frameworks that informed the study: Critical Race Feminism, Intersectionality, and Organizational Culture Theory. Each framework informed an aspect of the study design and the data analysis since I was interested in the impact of race, gender, and other identities on the experiences of Women of Color trustees while on their board. I reviewed the study design and provided participants' backgrounds to contextualize the stories I will present in the next chapter. I also discussed how I ensured the data collected was valid and trustworthy through self-reflection, thorough re-reading of transcripts, and data triangulation. I detailed the measures I took to maintain anonymity, confidentiality, and my positionality's role in my research. In conclusion, this chapter served as a guide to frame the study's methodology and ensure researcher reliability.

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, I use the framework presented in Chapter 3 to contextualize the experiences of Women of Color on higher education boards (Figure 4). I begin by delineating how Women of Color defined their environment. I use Women of Color's voices, journeys, and perspectives to explore the reasons for their underrepresentation and marginalization at the hands of other trustees and socio-political barriers. I then discuss how participants demarcated access to their board, how they were able to navigate access, and how they prepared themselves to succeed in their environment. I describe the strategies that Women of Color used to survive their organization's culture and what lessons they shared for succeeding as Women of Color trustees. Next, I present the strengths and impacts that Women of Color had on their boards and universities as leaders. I end the chapter by discussing the implications of increased diversity on the experiences of Women of Color on higher education boards, and their respective institutions.

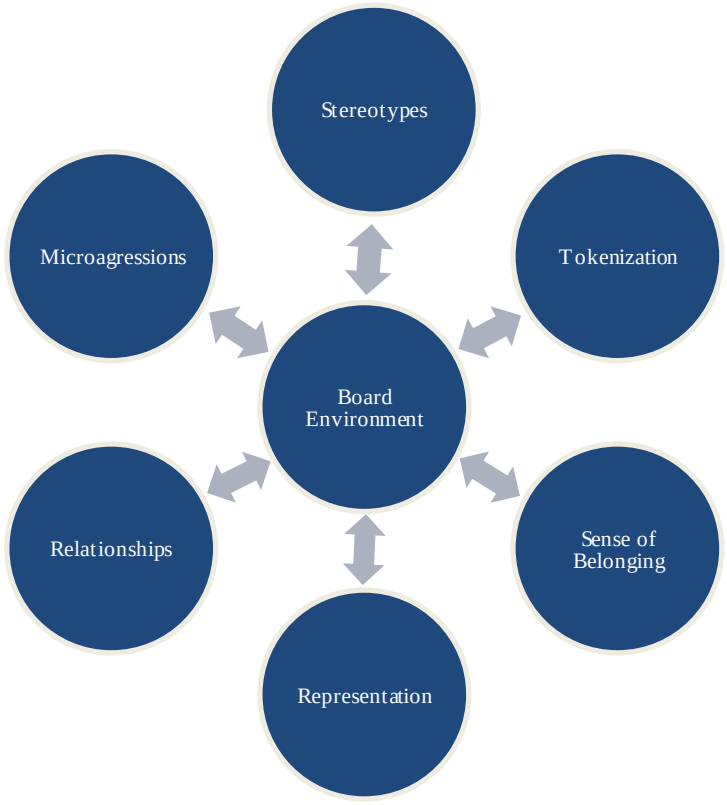
The findings of this chapter will showcase that Women of Color faced the commonality of marginalization as both racial *and* gender minorities, but also how their intersectional identities had unique impacts on their experiences as trustees. I reference the narratives presented in this chapter as "counter-stories" because they break from the traditional, White-centered scholarship in higher education governance. Women of Color's counter-stories challenged the "seemingly neutral" realities of the dominant group by reconstructing the reality of racism and sexism that Women of Color experience as marginalized members of higher education boards.

The Organizational Culture of Higher Education Boards

Environment

> *...[equity] on the board is true in the sense that everybody has a say, and if you raise your hand, it has to go on the record, and they jot it down. But not everybody carries the same weight. So that's, that's what I mean by it's not equitable. Is it? Is it equal? If you raise your hand, they put it down, you know, okay, everybody gets a turn to talk. Blah, blah, blah. Sure. But, you know, is your influence the same? Your persuasion? Are you taken seriously in the same way? Are you listened to when it's your turn? Like, no, I wouldn't say that. - Victoree*

Figure 6 The Impact of The Board Environment on the Experiences of Women of Color Trustees



The counter-stories presented in this segment support how the organizational environment sustained exclusionary and discriminatory behaviors on the board. I first begin by detailing the microaggressions that Women of Color trustees faced on their

boards. I discuss how microaggressions were not blatant and, at times, difficult to validate. Next, I discuss the challenges around stereotypes, tokenism, and representation. Lastly, I discuss how the culture of boards influenced Women of Color's sense of belonging and the relationships they built with their colleagues (Figure 6).

Microaggressions

All but three participants faced microaggressions on their boards related to race, gender, and other identities, whether directly or indirectly, by their peers. Women of Color experienced microaggressions in various ways, and at times, Women of Color experienced microaggressions at intersections. I begin with Angeles recalling her time as chair of her board,

> …I personally think I've had more issues with being a woman than being a Latina. I think being board chair during [a difficult time], I experienced, I would say, some sexism, if you will, by certain other members. And I was–I don't know if I was surprised– I guess I was kind of surprised. I hadn't really experienced it to that degree. And having the position I was in, you know, I guess I did have a lot of power. And I was making decisions. But I felt that my decisions were really being questioned. And it tended to be White, older males, to be honest– it really was. And I wasn't the only one [noticing] because other members noticed it as well. So that was really the first time… During this period, I was being forced to make lots of consequential decisions and, like, constantly getting pushback from some other members… I would hear them talk to each other and think, 'oh, boy, you know, are you kidding?' …So I think, for me, it wasn't necessarily– I mean, I

> don't think it was because of my Latin identity. I think it was more being a woman who was younger than them.

Angeles' comment that she "was not sure if she was surprised" that she experienced sexism as a trustee illustrates how sexism is so entrenched in the lives of Women of Color that it is omnipresent. Sexism is almost the expectation rather than the exception. Angeles went on to say that even though she had the position with the most power on the board, the chair, she was not respected as a leader by her White male peers.

Kiana, a younger Black trustee, recalled how her board perceived her at the start of her tenure. For context, Kiana's board is in the general region known as the South. She began the conversation by stating that she's never felt "othered" by her peers, but the conversation changed as she recalled the culture of the board:

> When I demonstrate my expertise or knowledge, I feel like I'm heard and respected. Never felt like, 'Oh, I want to say something and no one's listening,' or 'I can't speak'. Like, that's never been the case. But I still feel like that, um, you know, it's a different culture [in this region] … I felt like there was some sort of shift of acceptance once I got married. Because when I was like talking, getting to know people–when I joined the board. It was a lot of like, 'Who are you?' Because I don't have children. I wasn't married at that time. My partner and I, you know, we had just bought a house... So, it was kind of like, like I'm some wild person, because of that. And it was just like some suspicion I got in the questioning as I was getting to know people. And then when we got married, it was just this whole like, 'Oh, now you're like a responsible real adult.' So weird.

Both Angeles and Kiana experienced microaggressions as Women of Color, but their experiences varied and had different implications. Angeles' microaggression was based on age and gender, while Kiana's microaggression added a layer of complexity when it included her marital status. Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality speaks to this phenomenon of identities interlocking and often not impacting two Women of Color to the same degree. Marginalization happens in layers, can compound, and can be experienced differently depending on the socio-political context. For Kiana, her institution's location added a cultural layer that had different implications for how marital status was valued. Kiana attributed the board's attention to her marriage based on the culture of her region.

I was aware that social environments and social class would contribute to the varying privileges and disadvantages that Women of Color faced in society. However, socio-economic status also affected participants in their role as trustees. I heard this through Lisa's story as she discussed that status was an added point of marginalization for her. She explained how classism impacted her when she interacted with another woman colleague,

> …we had a board member who–she's no longer a board member, thank God. But the first day I met her, she came in, and she was like, 'Why I've sat on 80 different boards.' And 'I'm on this board now.' And 'I'm on nonprofit boards,' like, 'I get paid on the boards that I'm on,' it was just arrogance. And the thought that 'I'm up here, I'm a millionaire, you're down here, you're like on university boards, you don't make any money.' You're like, you know, poor, I guess, in her eyes. And it

> was just an air of arrogance and an inability to identify with people who don't have it like that…people that are every day working hard…because she made it. And then, because she's made it, no longer being able to remember the struggle that maybe she had when she first started off. And I think that there's the thought of, you know, the more successful you are in business or, the more degrees you have or what honorifics and all of these things… That means you're smarter than the person that may not have all of that. And so, to me, I see that as probably the biggest–I don't know how you would frame it–but the biggest deterrent that I've had the biggest, I think, slap in the face that I've had, is just sometimes people just think that they're better than you because they achieved more in life and not necessarily understanding you've only achieved more because you have had privilege all of your life you've had a lot more opportunities, because of the color of your skin than I will ever have, because of the color of mine. And so yeah.

While Lisa and her colleague shared a gender identity, social class and race were contention points between their experiences, once again showing the import of using an intersectional lens rather than a gender-only analysis. Lisa talks about how race plays a role in the opportunities afforded to White people and not People of Color, and how her colleagues fail to recognize their White privilege– the benefits White people carry with them because of their race (McIntosh, 1989). White supremacy is so embedded into the social fabric of U.S. life that the White woman trustee does not think twice about reflecting on her privilege and power. On the contrary, Women of Color, like Lisa, are cruelly aware of the myriad of social, political, and economic advantages that White

people enjoy daily that racial minorities do not. Without cognizance of their privilege, White board members resort to false narratives of "meritocracy", "equal opportunity," and "race-neutrality" in higher education. Lisa's counter-story also notes that her colleague fails to relate to working-class people. The White woman's lack of critical consciousness is alarming because trustees are responsible for financial aid policies that impact low-income populations. Her board colleague must develop a social, cultural, historical, and political understanding of the many challenges a lack of resources poses to students, staff, and faculty. Otherwise, her decision-making can harm low-income students and Students of Color.

The microaggressions Women of Color endured were also not confined to board meetings. Instead, microaggressions were embedded throughout the institutional actors. For example, when asking Shannon about the challenges she faced on the board, she said,

> I am the first African American female board chair at my institution, and our marketing department has yet to do anything with that… [the institution] didn't do an announcement when I was elected Board Chair. I feel like Harry and Megan in this… I did the research– all of my predecessors were in the business publications, they were in the major newspapers, all of that. There was *nothing*. Not a press release even written when I was elected board chair. And I said something because my family was agitated about it. My aunts–they kept waiting to celebrate [my appointment] and it never happened. [The institution] didn't do anything. Then when I said something, they did a press release and they sent it to the African American newspaper–only. No other press outlet. Nothing. [the

> institution] only did anything during Black History Month… Still to this day, I attend all the celebrations on campus, you know, offer words, and speak– I tell you I'm on campus, every single month. I go to [events]. I do all of it. And our marketing department…they don't see the value. They have never done anything, you know? And if they do, its because I said something. So [the challenge] is getting in the door and being respected, being taken seriously, you know, when you're in the room.

Shannon goes on to talk about microaggressions demonstrated by administrators during board meetings. She contextualizes how Women of Color on her board were often not referred to by their titles, while every other trustee was,

> I also noticed that if certain people on our board asked a question, [administrators] would say, 'yes, Trustee Dominguez…this is what the information is.' And then I would ask the question and they'd say, 'Shannon, let me get back to you on it'… Like they call certain Trustees by their titles. They're not consistent. [and] I don't care if I'm called Trustee or not. But just be consistent… If you're talking to John, but you refer to him as 'Trustee such as such' and call me Shannon– I pay attention to that. And I see it all the time… we have another Trustee of Color, an African American female, who is also a doctor. And I have seen administrators call her by her first name. And I notice… and I speak up on those types of things.

In this instance, the microaggression, although not manifested by a fellow board member, was validated by the board's lack of response. The burden to call out the microaggression fell on Shannon when she spoke to the administrator's behavior. However, Shannon's

board stayed silent, which sent a powerful message. Waiting silent while discriminatory behavior presented within the boardroom spoke volumes about how Shannon's board saw her and the other African American trustee. The board's behavior encouraged a discriminatory culture within the institution, reinforcing the microaggression. Shannon, like Angeles earlier, was chair of her board (the most powerful member in the room) and yet could not gain the status her counterparts had by neither her peers or by the institutional actors.

Another participant, Martina, described a microaggression she experienced based on gender. Martina, who was the only Black woman trustee at her institution, detailed how her identity as a woman was often disregarded in the boardroom,

> I don't know. It's just me. I mean, I've definitely felt more as a woman at [my institution] we're in the minority now. And we weren't always, we had a majority a few years ago. And I do feel like–just the women–occasionally, you get a little sidelined. It's happening less now… New president. But I think that's the bigger challenge... I have had run-ins, occasionally, with some perspectives on Black athletes, and I'll hear some comments that I think are completely ridiculous that I'll have to step into. And, you know, but … It's not personal to me. But it's, it's what the challenge is, is that I'm the only one right now on the board that will make those statements, right? because I'm the only one that's Black, or the only one that hears something that way. We had one particular incident where I just had to really set the stage for how I heard [the board member's] comment–and I'm

not really that sensitive to comments–but there was one that I found kind of offensive.

Here, we see several issues unfolding. First, Martina is the only woman on her board, making her identity as a woman oftentimes the most salient for her in terms of feeling undervalued. However, her identity as a Black person, and more particularly, her perspective on Black athletics, also came into play when addressing microaggressions committed by her peers on the board. Again, the burden of calling out the aggression fell on Martina while other board members stayed silent and added to the problem. Martina also had to be the one to contextualize the discriminatory comment and call out her fellow board member's views on Black athletes. The third matter that Martina addresses in her story is that of the university president. Martina's sidelining as the only woman on the board was reduced when a new president took over at her institution. To contextualize her story, I looked further into whom she was referring to, and yes–the president that Martina is referring to is a woman. For Martina, the appointment of a woman president shifted the exclusionary culture of the board, which speaks to the importance of representation and the impact that diversity can have on institutional cultures.

Stereotypes

In addition to facing microaggressions, participants felt they had to be careful not to be stereotyped by their peers on the board. Chelsea explained to me how her identity as a Black woman was one of her strengths; however, she also expressed how it was equally challenging to be seen at times as *only* a Black woman:

> It may seem pretty obvious, but the flip side [to my identity] is that I think sometimes people don't understand why I'm taking certain positions on issues. And, most of the time, that position is taken as a result of who I am and my experiences. And so, the other thing is, the other challenge is, that you know, as a Black woman on the board, you do have to be careful that you're not sort of portrayed by your colleagues on the board all the time, that it's a Black/White, male/female issue, okay? So there's a balance that you have to reach in terms of bringing up certain issues because, you know, people will look at you, 'oh she's only saying that because she's Black." Well, not *only* saying–it's part of the reason I might be saying something. Or, 'she's only saying that because she's a woman, and she doesn't understand." No, it's not *only* because I'm a woman but partly because I'm a woman. So I think the challenge is making sure, or, trying to get over the fact that some of my colleagues on the board who don't look like me, don't sort of fall into stereotyping me as Black and me as a woman.

Chelsea addresses feeling misunderstood due to her unique background and how her salient identities can be misconstrued in her advocacy efforts. She tries to explain how race and gender are not the only two perspectives through which she approaches issues on the board, but rather how these identities add to her conceptualization of the world and her decision-making. Chelsea's board members, however, fail to see her intersectional lens and, at times, typecast her as solely caring about Black issues or women's issues.

Recalling Sofia's story on her tokenized identity, and the need to speak to Indigenous issues due to the lack of institutional support, she explained how this resulted in a negative stereotype. She was referred to as an "angry Woman of Color."

> …and that's why oftentimes, you know, people will perceive–especially Women of Color– as being kind of more cutthroat, or like, you know, not being happy with anything… from the way that [Women of Color] react to things. So, for example, if somebody comes up there and does a big presentation on Native student outreach, or whatever, [the board says] '*see,* aren't you so proud of us for doing the absolute below-bare minimum… for bringing this presentation to you to talk about for 15 minutes?' And when you're not happy with it, it can oftentimes look like, 'oh, you know, you're just not happy with anything.' And so, you constantly have issues that you're bringing up. And [you hear] 'oh my gosh, can you just for once be happy for a minute?' But it's because oftentimes [Women of Color] are given things that have no substance and no value. And we see that because everything that we do every single day has substance and value. And so, if we see that [the board] is not matching our energy and the way that we're working and operating, then we're gonna see a problem with that–it's very obvious… And so I think that definitely comes with part of the struggle, the fact that because we have to work so hard being in these positions and surpass so much, we can see the things that are not good in a way that I think people regularly wouldn't see it.

Sofia's counter-story is supported by the existing literature. Research has found that women in leadership must eliminate grievances and not react emotionally due to the stereotype of being weak, soft, or angry (Brower et al., 2019; Priola, 2007). She is experiencing conflicting gender and racial stereotype roles. She either must (1) ignore her identity as a Native American woman familiar with the challenges her community faces and accept her board's complacent efforts or (2) risk being labeled by her peers as hostile. She cannot win in her position. Moreover, Sofia addresses a pattern of gendered racism when she talks about how much Women of Color must endure and surpass on their path to leadership. She must work harder than the men and White colleagues around her simply because of the privileges those two groups enjoy that she does not. Lastly, Sofia's board gaslights her. Dr. Huzien defines gaslighting as a "form of psychological abuse in which a person or group causes someone to question their own sanity, memories, or perception of reality" (2022, p.1). The Board of Trustees alluded that she was a problematic colleague when the board members did an "absolute below bare minimum" job and ignored the struggles that Indigenous stakeholders endured daily. The Board engages in a type of psychological manipulation that puts into question the way in which Sofia is experiencing the board's inaction.

In the case of Elsie, another Native American trustee, she recalled a stereotype made by a woman trustee regarding people who received financial government assistance. As background, Elsie said she only encountered racism or sexism a few times on her board. This was one instance in which she recalled a racist comment and was able to detail it in our interview,

We were having a budget discussion about tuition and the budget and shortfalls in the state, I think one of my colleagues said, 'Why don't they just take money from welfare and apply it to education?' or something like that… and so, I wasn't sure anybody would speak to the issue. And so I raised my hand and said, 'I want to be very clear, the only time my family was ever on welfare was when my mother was a student at a university. So I don't think that solution flies.'…The room got really quiet. It was a little bit awkward. But I was not going to back off of that comment. It was like, 'are you blaming poor people for education not having enough money?' That's not okay with me... I was uncomfortable with the insensitivity she was displaying. And she apologized and said, 'Well, I didn't mean anything by that.' And it's like, 'well, you did, but it's okay. Now you get it. You know, that's not okay. That's not okay to say that. Making poor people responsible for the lack of higher education funding is just not going to fly in this in this room.' And it's just the ongoing stereotype that people on welfare are lazy, People of Color– you know. And I would say that it was funny because there were two [Men of Color] on the board who just kind of smiled… during the coffee break, [one of those men] said, 'You know, I wasn't sure whether I was going to touch that or not, but I'm glad you did.' And so, there were moments of collegiality, of People of Color, and people who were sensitive to those kinds of issues. Who said, 'Thanks for doing that, you know, let's move on.' But there were only a couple of moments like that, where I thought, 'Oh, my gosh, people,

> you've got to have to kind of think before you speak', you know, but most of the time, it was pretty comfortable.

Note that Elsie did not excuse her colleague's behavior. She believed that the microaggression from the trustee's mouth reflected how that trustee inherently felt about low-income people. Elsie then had to explain her upbringing in a low-income household to her colleague to contextualize the board member's problematic comment. Yet, Elsie should not need to share a personal story to educate her Board of Trustees on stereotypes. Moreover, in Elsie's story, we see again how the labor fell on a Woman of Color to come forward and call out the trustee's discriminatory behavior. Although Elsie refers to this instance as "moments of collegiality" between People of Color, the other Men of Color on the board heard the derogatory comment, smiled, and waited for someone else to say something. In the last part of her statement, Elsie says instances like this happened more than once. Although she felt "pretty comfortable," Elsie inadvertently became one of the voices on her board who called out racism for what it was–creating a token board member.

Challenges Identifying Discriminatory Behaviors and Cultures. A consequence of gender and racial stereotype uncertainty is that uncertainty reduces the import of discriminatory behaviors toward Women of Color. Women of Color may find themselves experiencing microaggressions in the workplace but minimize these hostile encounters by labeling microaggressions as dubious and keeping them private (Brower et al., 2019). Microaggressions are dangerous because they can be subtle and embedded into everyday interactions. This subtlety indoctrinates racism, sexism, and other forms of

discrimination into social structures, which can result in the inability to identify microaggressions as what they are–discrimination. For example, I asked Caitlyn, an Asian trustee, if she had ever felt positive or negative differential treatment on her board, and she replied, "no." However, she later began to recall a time that a fellow trustee was met with discrimination by someone working security,

> I won't say this about my own experience, but… let's say you're walking into a secure, you know, place, and whether you'll be stopped because you don't look like you belong… that hasn't happened to me, but it has happened to, you know, a female colleague of mine, a Woman of Color. It was almost like a presumption that they didn't belong. So…I think I think there are ways– subtle ways– in which [differential treatment] has happened to me, but you know, I'll say they're, they're subtle.

The colleague that Caitlyn is referring to experienced blatant discrimination. As a Woman of Color, this colleague was discredited of her title as a trustee and her double-minority status caused her to suffer targeted policing by whoever oversaw security. However, Caitlyn goes on to explain how this instance is an example of how she may have experienced "subtle" forms of discrimination. Critical Race Feminism explains that subtle forms of gendered racism are how society perpetuates racial and gender inequality-–because often, discrimination is not blatant. Moreover, the inability to call out explicitly how racism, sexism, or gendered racism are institutionalized makes it harder for Women of Color to validate their experiences. Caitlyn's counter-story in a later section will

describe how, in fact, she did experience instances of gendered racism that impacted her time on her board.

Blanche, a Black participant, also said she had not experienced any form of differential treatment. However, her answer changed as we progressed in our interview. Blanche had served on two boards, which I refer to as Institution A and Institution B.

> In fact, as I think about it, this would have been the one place where I did feel like I felt some discrimination… [Institution A] was in a campaign, and I was never asked to give a gift. Now, what I don't know, is–I wasn't close enough at the time to know how that campaign was structured. At [Institution B], we didn't launch a campaign until we had a conversation with every trustee. So my expectation was that a conversation was going to happen. It may be that [Institution A] had another way of doing things, but a part of me said, 'I wonder if they think I'm Black, I don't have money,' but they also could have thought I had a commitment to [Institution B]. So there, you know, I didn't know quite what was going on. But you asked about feeling treated differently; that would have been the one time.

Blanche could not definitively state if Institution A was stereotyping her as a "Black woman with no money" or if Institution A was trying to be considerate of her dual appointments. Whether Institution A believed she had no money to give because she was a Black woman, or if Institution A believed she had no money to give because she had multiple appointments, a presumption was made about her wealth. Regardless, Institution A's actions of denying Blanche the opportunity to gift to the campaign was a form of exclusion.

Blanche's counter-story is an example of how microaggressions can be challenging to identify on higher education boards due to the structural ways in which racism, sexism, and other discriminatory practices are often interwoven and embedded within organizations. For example, someone on the board at Institution A made a fundraising policy decision and excluded Blanche's narrative. The discretionary decision thus accepted the culture of the dominant group and did not account for marginalized members who may have had different opinions. The board accepted structural racism as the norm and that is how the microaggression was able to transpire. Like Caitlyn before her, Blanche began her story by telling me she had not faced discrimination. However, both Women of Color served on boards that had inculcated an exclusionary culture that ultimately led to them experiencing varying microaggressions.

As we heard in the counter-stories presented thus far, the microaggressions that Women of Color faced were multi-dimensional. While some microaggressions were caused by peers on the board, at times, microaggressions were perpetrated beyond the boardroom and by institutional actors. Often board members added to the hostile cultures of the institution through their silence, leaving Women of Color to support each other or to speak out on behalf of minoritized communities.

Tokenization

Tokenization was another challenge that Women of Color faced on their boards. In my literature review, I cited that skewed proportions of racial minorities in leadership positions shape the perceptions and interactions that racial minorities have in their institution (Niemann, 2016). Women of Color trustees entered their workspaces as

colleagues but quickly shifted to become the "Person of Color." The lack of Women of Color, or racial diversity in general, suddenly made participants hyper-visible "race champions." I begin to discuss how Women of Color became tokens with the example of Lisa's counter-story,

> …they gave us a script for our meeting... And I was like, a little bit offended, because my script was giving shouts out to all the Black faculty that have done extraordinary things. And I'm like, why am I doing this? And it's because I'm the Black person who cares so much about DE&I on our board, but I just didn't like it. And one of my colleagues said, 'I care about Black people, too, even though I'm White.' So why is Lisa doing it? We just got to stop that stereotype… That, 'okay, we're gonna let the Black person talk about the Black issues.'

Lisa went on to share with me in the interview that her minority status was also often seen as *the* Person of Color,

> I will say, you know, I look at our board, and I get kind of upset. I was actually hoping we would have gotten a Hispanic person on our board because we haven't had a Hispanic person in probably [decades]…And I just, I feel, oftentimes people feel like, 'Oh, well, if we just have one Person of Color, that's enough. They're gonna speak for other People of Color.'… Well, my experiences are different from the people that come from the Hispanic/Latino community. They're different. Yes, we're minorities, but there are different issues that we each bring with us. I can't identify in everything with our Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American [communities]…

Lisa's remarks depict what is referred to in the literature as tokenization (Nieman, 2016). When there is a lack of racial diversity in an organization, race or ethnicity becomes the most salient attribute tied to People of Color in the eyes of their peers and institution. Suddenly, someone like Lisa, who identifies as a Black woman, is seen as the expert on issues relating to *all* Black people, and moreover, *all* People of Color–as if the experiences of all Black-identified people and People of Color are the same. It raises the question of whether her White trustee counterparts were experts on all issues of affecting White people in the U.S.

Similarly, tokenism was present in Sherry's story when I asked her, "Who does the board turn to during diversity and equity conversations?" Sherry explained, "[my board] has two [minority] female, and we have me, a Latina. So, I think, like, everyone's head automatically turns, you know, to that experience". She wrapped up her statement by saying, "I think when it comes to issues of equity, we look in the room to the person it affects." Again, through Sherry's discourse, we see how a board assumes that the experiences of Trustees of Color are representative of entire communities. It also shifts the responsibility of the other board members to be familiar with issues of inequity, regardless of their racial identity.

In the case of Victoree, she called out tokenism for what it was,

> …Depending on the issue… If it's a [specialized issue], then you get locked out, like, you know, really quickly, you're gonna speak on this… I wouldn't even say [I'm] valued–there's definitely tokenization that happens. So, I think it's okay to name that. And I think, you know, there are other issues where you're

> knowledgeable, and maybe people think it's not your place. But you happen to be the person in that room that can say something. So, you raise your hand regardless and make your point and have it noted.

While Victoree felt comfortable speaking about issues relating to her identity, her story illustrates how tokenized members of organizations are often disregarded as "knowledgeable" beyond their tokenized attributes. In this instance, Victoree experienced a microaggression when her peers disregarded her as a valuable conversationalist beyond her identity as a Woman of Color.

If tokenized members do not feel comfortable speaking about issues of race, it can also cause internal emotional conflict for that individual. As Sherry talked about her being the sole Latina on her board, she also explained the pressures she faced because of her identity,

> I think one of the hard things for myself is knowing that, you know, you're such a minority representation, there's a lot of pressure to be that, you know, trailblazer... Everybody wants you to make decisions that align with your population, even though you might have a different experience. And I feel like there's a little bit more of a hypercritical [feeling]. I have excitement, but then great disappointment looming– if you do take a misstep. So that is, I think, the most challenging piece because there's an expectation that others do not have.

Sherry's remarks validate my argument of why higher education boards must be (1) diverse and (2) well-versed on issues of race and racism. Latinos are not monoliths; their experiences vary tremendously. If the Board of Trustees makes a decision that impacts

Latinx members of her institution, Sherry's opinion should not be the only one in the room that informs the policy. Secondly, Sherry's hypervisibility on the board as the sole Latina makes her the target of scrutiny. Her actions are more harshly analyzed because Sherry represents a group that has historically faced numerous obstacles in higher education–the stakes impact of her decision-making is higher for Latinx access, retention, and success. In contrast, White trustees don't meet the same scrutiny by White people since their access to education has never been in jeopardy–the stakes and impact of decision-making are lower. Moreover, if White trustees were to face scrutiny, criticism would not be targeted at one member but rather at most of the board.

Lisa also shared Sherry's feeling of intense pressure to be the token board member and advocate for her constituency.

> …until [my colleague] came on, I was the only Black woman on our board. And so I did feel a very heavy burden, if you will, to make sure that I was representing, and also positioning myself, to make certain that things that were of importance to people who look like me were on the table being discussed and that resources were being mended out to give back to that constituency base.

Again, we see how Lisa feels an added emotional toll that her White counterparts do not have to worry about in their role. She went on to explain that Black students on her campus had been asking for specific resources and support (which Lisa successfully advocated for as a board member), and continued,

> So it's just those kinds of things…making sure I'm advocating for what is important to us, what will help us to be successful– and it's not just the Black

> students… When you look at our faculty, we're only [less than 5%]. So, I'm like, 'Why is that?' We have to push to get more People of Color in these positions because students then can have someone that they can identify with. And I feel that our faculty should mirror our student population. And unfortunately, when we get African American faculty, they don't stay. So going into [meetings], you know, with the provost and talking with administration, 'Why is that? What is the issue with retention? Why are people feeling that they're not able to be successful here? Are they not getting the support and the resources that they need?' And so, I am constantly championing those types of issues that I feel are important. And it's not to the exclusion of other, you know, very important matters, or, you know, the population, the student population, or our faculty and staff overall. But I do feel that I put in that extra for people that look like me because if I don't advocate, then who is who's going to advocate? Who's going to be that voice?

In the case of Lisa's institution, she felt that if she did not speak to issues impacting Black and African American constituents, the board would fail to address them. The Board of Trustees at Lisa's institution lacked depth and awareness of the needs of the Black and African American population, which raises my question, "What would happen if Lisa was not on the board?" Lisa's board relied on Trustees of Color to be experts on issues that impacted Communities of Color, which is problematic given (1) the small number of Trustees of Color and (2) the misconception that People of Color are experts on issues of DE&I. By placing the weight of DE&I on minority tokens, Lisa's' board added to her labor while avoiding their duty of service as trustees.

The same pattern of tokenization appeared in Sofia's counter-story, who told me how her colleagues used her Indigenous identity to assign her work mainly relating to Indigenous groups, which often required additional labor on her end.

> …in some cases, it's kind of opposite where [the board] is like, 'Oh my gosh, yes!, Like, you're here! You're amazing, you're comfortable with these identity groups!' but then it's like, 'Oh, you know, I have all these things for you…'And then…you're taking on the kind of extra, like, 'Oh, just because you're *this,* I'm gonna give you all of *that*,' right? And oftentimes, it's just like, it's hard. Because technically regular people can do that work, right? But you're giving it to me, and you're *only* thinking about it because I'm here. But why aren't you thinking about that in a regular, everyday context?

Sofia's concerns here were twofold. First, she experienced tokenization due to her Native identity. Sofia's story elicits how the board expected her to take on responsibilities relating to Indigenous populations, leaving the rest of her colleagues to focus on policies unrelated to the topic. However, Sofia saw the board as 'regular people' and explained how issues related to Indigenous populations should be addressed by everyone on the board, not just her. The second concern in Sofia's counter-story is *how* the board viewed Indigenous issues. Sofia explained that the board looked at Native American populations as a silo instead of incorporating Indigenous issues into the everyday 'regular' conversations and priorities of the Board of Trustees.

Throughout Lisa's, Sherry's, Victoree's, and Sofia's stories, we saw how The Boards of Trustees relied on Women of Color's expertise in issues relating to race,

gender, sex, class, and culture, "irrespective of their expertise in the task or activities associated with those roles" (Niemann, 2016, p. 454)." Moreover, it allowed boards to avoid their responsibility in addressing these issues themselves. The board's lack of action, and perhaps interest in the issue, was problematic because it required additional labor for Women of Color to educate their peers. It also raised the issue of how the absence of Women of Color in the room could further marginalize Students of Color if the board's understanding of the issues presented is deficient. Boards make decisions that impact a wide array of students, staff, and faculty with marginalized backgrounds. If it is part of the board's job to be proficient in finance, business, and development, then it is also their job to be trained in issues related to diversity and equity. If Board of Trustees lack DE&I education, it becomes a disservice to their constituents and can add to the board's internalized micro-aggressive behavior.

The challenge of tokenization for Women of Color is the racist idea that token members gain access to a space with restrictive access as a tribute to diversity efforts. I go back to Blanche's story, a Black trustee, who told me that she had not encountered differential treatment while serving her terms. When I asked Blanche if she felt her identity was valued by her board, she responded,

> I think they are. On one hand, I think all boards are trying to diversify. So, there's the number, you know, 'we can count her twice. She's a twofer.' But I think it's the expertise more than anything that, you know, that people defer to… but I do feel valued on all the boards I serve.

Blanche's statement here is twofold. First, she describes tokenization. She alludes that, as boards are looking to diversify, an added value to appointing her is meeting a diversity quota. This is a form of interest convergence (C. I. Harris, 1993)– "granting" her membership at the expense of advancing a predominantly White board's diversity goal. It also markets Blanche as merely a race or gender-representative figure on the board– a microaggression in and of itself, given her extensive qualifications as a trustee.

Secondly, I want to focus on the portion of Blanche's statement in which she references herself as a "twofer." Twofer is a designation for a person who belongs to two minority groups and can satisfy two quotas to appeal to multiple political constituencies. She is a double minority—both a woman and a Person of Color. In her case, Blanche is referring to her board tallying her as (1) woman plus (1) Person of Color, satisfying (2) categories–gender and race. When, truly, Blanche is a Woman of Color–and should not have to be "tallied" to meet any quota. In fact, the twofer issue is another way to frame how I arrived at my problem statement early in this dissertation. Looking back, I discussed how organizations like AGB do not account for Women of Color in their reports. Instead, AGB's figures double-count minority status and portray a misleading quantity of diversity and representation found on higher education boards.

Beyond misleading computations, Blanche's 'twofer' status erases her unique experience as a Woman of Color trustee. Blanche is now politically recognized as either a woman or as a Person of Color by her board. This political erasure of Women of Color, such as Blanche, is what CRF scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw fought hard to denounce in her scholarship. Thinking back to the origins of Intersectionality, we recall the legal battles to

recognize Women of Color's discrimination based on the duality of race and gender, such as in the *DeGraffenreid v General Motors* case. In her statement, Blanche does not "prove" that her board is using her to meet diversity quotas and tokenizing her; she can only infer that it is an added benefit. However, her heightened awareness that the board might use her to represent two distinct political groups can be triangulated by a) the history of Women of Color's legal erasure in socio-political contexts b) the devaluation of gender and race, illustrated by the lack of Women of Color trustees across the U.S, and c) the cultural environment her board has instilled.

Now, I want to recall that Blanche said she felt valued by her board. As the conversation continued, I asked her what she thought her strengths were as a board member. She responds:

> My expertise is more salient for me. And I think the way other people respond to me…I think, 'if I did not have the credentials that I have'...you know… People pay attention. I think I bring a lens that my other board members don't have. And in some ways, that gives me some power that I am not sure if I was a corporate African American woman, I would have the same power… I'm not that. So, I don't know. But I do think the expertise, in some ways, evens how people might otherwise respond to me, as a woman and as a Woman of Color.

As she answered, I picked up on how her intersectional identities are at play. Her professional expertise, as well as her life experience, are identities she felt were added strengths to her role on the board. However, she also notes an internalized conflict. Blanche felt unsure if her identity as an African American woman would be valued on

her board without her intersectional expertise in her respective field. Once again, we see her describe an indoctrinated culture on Boards of Trustees where race and gender are devalued on their own accord. Although Blanche's story has yet to depict a blatant example of tokenization, something embedded within her organization's culture has fostered a climate in which Blanche has now twice questioned her added value as an African American woman on the board. In contrast, White men have the privilege of ignoring race and gender challenges as trustees. Microaggressions, stereotypes, and discrimination are exacerbated for Women of Color due to their lack of representation.

Absence in Representation

Women of Color must often navigate being "the first" appointees of their kind, leading to tokenization and increased hypervisibility. Lack of representation also forces Women of Color to navigate uncomfortable situations around identity. In this section, I present how Women of Color trustees felt the absence of critical mass and how they navigated those situations. I begin with Tiara, who explained to me what being a Black trustee meant to her community,

> So our trustees are held in very high regard years after, right? I will say, in our Black community, even more so. So, while [my university] has had a rich history, I have an email with every Black trustee that [my university] has ever had on it. And they're all living… so clearly it didn't go all the way back to [my university's] 100-year history. You with me?

Tiara is referring to the exclusionary history of White supremacy and the impact racism had on the trajectory of Black people and People of Color in higher education. Even at a

university celebrating a centennial milestone, we see the ramifications of discriminative policy. Black trustees at her institution are a "newer" addition to the Board of Trustees. She continues,

> …So with that, like, when our community comes together, we do a large Black Alumni [event] every couple of years or whatever. I mean, it's a moment then, like, all the trustees stand up, and the whole room was like, 'WHOAAA.' I mean, like, it's just thing, because people are, like, appreciative, and, you know, and all those things, and then people are like, 'how do I become a trustee?' And, you know, those types of things. And so, in that sense, [being a trustee] is definitely something that is respected… sometimes almost like, you know, like, almost too much, right? Like, you're like, 'hey, it's cool, I'm just serving on the board.' You almost want to turn it down sometimes… Because that's really not our culture, but it happens.

It is evident in Tiara's story that the Black community at her institution values her as a trustee. One reason being that leadership reflexive of the Black community is rare at her university. The exclusionary history of her institution obstructed the pathway to trusteeship for Black people for decades. Moreover, it makes her uncomfortable at times. She's appreciative of the respect, but also is unsure how to navigate the notoriety of the role.

Tiara mentions that Black alums are eager to learn more about becoming trustees, which can be explained by a change in self-perception (Carlone & Johnson, 2007). Tiara's symbolic representation (Lim, 2006) is important for the self-perception of Black

alumni at her university. Her marginalized representation alone leads to attitude changes in the marginalized group being represented (Theobald & Hairder-Markel, 2009). The Black alumni at her university see themselves reflected in a trustee role and change their self-perception as future trustees. They can now envision themselves in leadership roles.

For Victoree, while her identity was not underrepresented in quantity, how she showed up in the spaces she was in was not a common practice. Victory shared how the way she presented herself made an impact on her board,

> …I brought my wife to a couple of things… and that was unintentionally groundbreaking…I didn't mean for that to be a big deal. It was just like, my normal life. But I guess there were other folks within the community who like wouldn't dare bring their same-sex partner. I don't know if it was taboo, or, I have no idea. But there were other out trustees at the time. Right? I felt like, it was a pretty, you know, queer-friendly board when I was there. So, I didn't feel like I had to hide anything. But I got commentary that was like, 'Oh, I'm so glad your wife is here.' Like, okay? (laughs) Thank you? So more, with respect to being an out LGBTQ member, versus like, being a woman, or being Latina– not that there weren't gender dynamics, and not that the patriarchy didn't exist. It absolutely does. But I got more commentary about my queer identity than anything else.

Victoree explains that although there were several lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) members who were open about their sexuality, her colleagues must have felt some level of uneasiness about embracing their identity on the board entirely. Victoree's story reminds us that while representation through a physical quota of people

in the room happens for historically marginalized groups, often, members remain disenfranchised due to the social constructs established by the dominant group.

The most recent survey results from the Center for American Progress (2022) highlight that LGBTQ individuals experience significantly higher rates of discrimination in health care, employment, housing, and public spaces, than non-LGBTQ individuals. So, it is no surprise that her colleagues might have felt apprehensive about bringing their partners to events due to the embedded oppressive systems that safeguard cis-heteronormative relationships. Victoree unintentionally disrupted the deep-rooted social norm of "performing" heteronormativity, giving a more meaningful sense of representation to her LGBTQ colleagues.

Another trustee, Shannon, also called out unspoken social norms and how she could use her role to disrupt social barriers by embracing her image as a Black woman,

> I do have one other thing… in terms of who we are, in terms of how we represent ourselves. I have never presided over a board meeting, or a commencement, with the natural protective hairstyle. I still subscribe to the image of what mainstream– you know. And I struggle about that, you know, I struggle. And I have one daughter that definitely chastises me about it all the time —to show up to a meeting with, you know, my authentic self… like this.

Shannon was signaling to her hair, which was styled in dreads. She continued,

> And, I haven't, I haven't done it, but I think it's important. I think I'm very close to doing it. I think it's really important for students, and I think your question about how to attract more Women of Color... I think if I look more like this, in my role

as board chair, and our marketing department actually did anything about it (laughs)…I think people would take a second look like, "*She's* the board chair?" Shannon went on to explain how she often crossed university faculty in her community, and they either didn't recognize her or had a hard time believing she was the chair of her university board because of her natural appearance. She tells me, "[University members] are like, '*you're* the board chair?' And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm it–Google me."

The socially constructed image of what trustees (and professionals) "should" look like stems from a discriminatory history of White supremacy that has reinforced Eurocentric standards for behaviors, looks, and language deemed "appropriate" for work settings (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Shannon's example of naturally worn Black hair has long been the target of prejudice and sometimes cause for removal of employees–even though race-neutral laws barred discrimination based on protected categories. A Critical Race analysis of hairstyling in the workplace tells the story of how grooming policies in the U.S. are rooted in White standards of beauty/care and have perpetuated discrimination against Black people through modern day (Pitts, 2021). Employers argue that they are not barring employees' hairstyles based on race. However, work policies have not been race-neutral regarding "acceptable" standards of grooming, care, and presentation. Racism is so entrenched in U.S. history that those who end up being targeted for "unacceptable" hairstyles are Black employees (Pitts, 2021).

It wasn't until 2022 that the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2116, Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair, otherwise known as the CROWN Act, which prohibited racial discrimination based on hairstyle or texture in educational and

employment settings (Baker, 2022). Centuries of discrimination have made it so that Black women like Shannon are hesitant to present their "authentic selves," as she called it. That's because racism has constructed and sustained an image of what leadership and professionals "should" look like through discriminatory policy. Shannon goes on to talk about how she can change the perception of the trustee image through her representation and role,

> I think that [representation] is something within my control, as a board chair, to really show up. I'm going to be on campus all day next week… and I'm gonna be rocking the dreads. (She smiles and signals to her hair)…and that's gonna be very different from what they're used to seeing when it comes to me.

While we can appreciate that representation is an added strength Women of Color embodied in their roles, we must equally acknowledge the weight of being "the first" person in any social, political, or educational setting. Lack of representation impacted microaggressions, tokenism, and stereotypes, increased the hypervisibility of Women of Color, and forced them to navigate uncomfortable situations. Moreover, the lack of representation of Women of Color impacted their sense of belonging.

Self-Doubt and Questioning Belonging

Being a racial and gender minority came with the challenge of feeling alone on the Board of Trustees and questioning belonging. Here we turn to Daisy, an African American woman, who explained how her minority status resulted in her self-doubt,

> When you're one of only a few in a space, you still–and even at this stage in my career–you know, I still have moments of doubt. I still, you know, question

whether or not, I might have an impact. But also, our people, do they see me as, as the leader that I see myself as?

Daisy's concern here began as she felt the physical absence of other Women of Color trustees on her board. The lack of Women of Color on her board also made her question what the board looked for in trustees and why certain board members were chosen to serve. She discusses how the emphasis on wealth and money also impacted her view of the board. She continued,

> And so, you have these questions about what assumptions are made about you…especially on higher boards, there's also an assumption around your capacity to give. And so that also layered in for me this reality…I'm not a millionaire. I don't have any buildings named in my honor. You know, and I don't have the ability to do– I mean, certainly, I could probably maybe network in different ways–But for me, [giving] was a space in which I saw that as a challenge, a big challenge, and recognized it. And I felt like the assumption is probably like, oh, 'well, she can't possibly be wealthy.' And you know, 'she can't possibly contribute at this level.' No, I never said that. But these were things that I often thought about, and frankly, it was one of several reasons why I also decided not to renew my term. It was kind of a lot of different reasons why I decided not to return. But I also recognize that, like, this is a volunteer role. And I don't, you know, to what extent will I be able to contribute financially in the way that they want in the long term? And is that where I want to, you know, place my dollars when I, you know… is this a space where I want to do that?

Daisy felt her institution was stereotyping her by suggesting that she did not have money to donate, just as we heard in Blanche's statement. We see again how racism is entrenched into the organizational structure of boards because a decision about donations is made with the dominant group's input rather than as a collective board. As such, the board assumed Daisy's wealth because they never cared to hear her narrative and stereotyped her. Daisy's narrative also reinforces a relationship between wealth and trusteeship that we have heard throughout multiple stories. Something in Daisy's institution created a culture that to be a valuable addition to the Board of Trustees, one must be wealthy. In thinking about wealth as a precursor to the trusteeship, I was reminded of the Critical Race Theory tenant "Whiteness as property rights." In this case, "property" was saved only for those who "earned" or bought their seat through donations. The role of the Trustee can thus be claimed by the highest bidder–it is a given right of those who hold power through monetary capital.

Daisy's concern about wealth as a precursor to the trusteeship was reinforced by Caitlyn, when she discussed her moments of self-doubt,

> I don't know how many of my colleagues ask themselves this question…But sometimes, I've asked myself… 'what am I *really* doing on this board?' And sometimes I do feel like, you know, I'm not connected, maybe? I mean… am I connected in the way that [the organization] wants board members to be? I'm certainly not, you know, in the wealthy category– which lots of board members are, right?... So it's kind of like, 'Am I rich and powerful enough?' Like, 'What am I doing here relative to the other people who are occupying the seats?' I would

> say there's a lot that I bring in terms of substance and the work that is valuable, but it's not typically what other people might want or think of, in terms of board members... So I do feel like I asked myself pretty regularly, 'What am I doing?' And, you know, 'Do I really belong here?' So I would say that probably goes hand in hand with some of the questions about how more Women of Color come onto these boards. And the question is, will they be asking themselves, 'What am I doing here?' But the more of them there are, the less that's a question like that. That [feeling] you don't match, you know, or 'which one of these is not like all the others?'… And the board in this particular time, not everybody is incredibly wealthy. Whereas, you know, at a different time, you might have had a good majority that were actually really wealthy. So, I would say that's sort of another kind of piece… if we want to build diverse boards, you have you build them in sort of a critical mass so that people do feel like they belong. And I don't feel like I *don't* belong, but sometimes I still do question whether I do belong.

Both Daisy and Caitlyn had extensive strengths and contributions as trustees–which they recognized by their accounts. However, they both questioned if the strengths they embodied were valued in the same ways their respective institutions valued wealth. This supports the culture of boards reflecting wealth and power. Moreover, in Chapter Two I shared that there are no well-known requirements to serve on a Board of Trustees. Therefore, how could participants not belong if there are no well-established qualifications?

Caitlyn articulated that she would look around and think "which one of these is not like the other?" and noted that she was underrepresented as a Woman of Color. She stated the import of having critical mass on the board in order to increase Women of Color's sense of belonging. A lack of critical mass also impacted, Kiana, whose counter-story I shared earlier. She also expressed self-doubt, but it was about her ascension to her role. Remember, she was a younger Black trustee.

> I think there was also the element of me being a little, like, I'm like half the age of people on the board… so I felt a sense of responsibility of like, let me take advantage of this opportunity to be a woman, to be young, even on an HBCU board, [to be] like the Black woman…that board is half White…half of these HBCU boards are, White. And so, I don't take for granted that I have this seat. So, I think there was also that element of, whereas people are like 'I've done so many things' and are very comfortable in their skin, and they just show up, and kind of 'whatever.' I felt very like, I'm not so sure *how* I got here, but here I am. So let me like try to do a good job.

There are multiple things to unpack in her statement. First, there is the issue of hypervisibility and tokenism that we have seen throughout participant's counter stories. She felt a sense of responsibility because the opportunity for young, Black, women to represent on her board was not commonly afforded to people. Second, she adds how other trustees felt entitled to their role because of their backgrounds (which she later detailed were not related to higher education), and just 'showed up', whereas she worked harder to prove herself. Thirdly, her underrepresented identity, again, causes her to

question how she was able to gain a seat at the table. I can't disclose any more background information about Kiana to maintain her identity hidden, but I will note that during our interview, she had extensive qualifications for her role. There was no doubt in my mind–as a person who has spent the last six years learning about higher education governance and involved in governance–that Kiana was well-prepared for her role. Lastly, Kiana's point to mention that half of the HBCU's boards are White reminds us that White privilege dominates all facets of higher education. Even in institutions that were created because White supremacy denied Black Americans access to education during slavery and segregation.

Relationships on the Board

The last impact of organizational culture on Women of Color trustees was evident in the relationships participants developed while on the board. In my protocol, I asked if there were members on the board Women of Color socialized with more than others. Participants mentioned that they got along with everyone on their board, a few even socialized with everyone equally. However, patterns of socialization by race and gender emerged, and this was evident in over two-thirds of the responses.

Generally, socialization by race or gender was due to either the hostile culture of the board, or because Women of Color didn't feel as connected to their White, male, counterparts. I present an example of each and begin with Sherry,

> Hmm, definitely the females kind of stick together… So if I need to ask something real quick, I'll go to a female. I had a few questions about something for next week's board meeting. So I [went] to the ladies. You know, I do find

> when they answer questions–which this is something that really sticks out–they're like, 'oh, yeah, I had [that question] too.' And it's more like, coming to a consensus together, and it feels a little safer. Whereas the handful of, you know, gentleman, I've asked questions to are very much like asserting their knowledge. So, it's an interesting feeling. So, I am automatically like, 'okay, I'm gonna go ask this lady instead of him' because I feel like [the men] hold it in the back of their head like, 'Well, why didn't she understand that?' Or 'why didn't she know that**?**

Sherry details how the behaviors of the men on her board made for a much more hostile environment. Instead of helping Sherry and understanding that her informative questions to ensure her success as a trustee, the men on her board made her feel talked down to. This type of behavior is problematic for any board member to experience. It creates a culture of silence and instead misses the opportunity to educate and strengthen the board as a collective. Sherry found that other women on the board also had similar questions, which speaks to an internal issue of miscommunication or misunderstanding that other board members may be experiencing. Moreover, if the culture of the board is anti-collegial, it reinforces the socialization patterns women engage in outside of the boardroom. In Sherry's case, she shared that the woman continued socializing via text.

Caitlyn also shared how she socialized on her board:

> You know, to be candid, I have socialized more with women. I have socialized more with the People of Color on that board…I don't think I'm unfriendly to some of my White male counterparts. But sometimes, I feel like they don't necessarily see me as being that relatable. I don't work in their industry. And so yeah, it's like,

> what is the commonality there? And it happens to be more with sort of my White male counterparts–with the exception, you know, of a couple– that I feel like, it's harder to have a casual conversation. And it's harder to socialize.

Caitlyn is speaking of a lack of similarity between careers, which can be common when there are a multitude of professionals on Boards of Trustees. However, notice another trustee, Ana, who also shared that she had no industry commonality with a Woman of Color on her board, and the difference in collegiality,

> …I'll never forget the first time I walked into the boardroom, which is enormous and intimidating. And [a Woman of Color] came up to me and gave me a huge hug and welcomed me to the Board of Trustees. And that act alone from the person who I had really thought would be super not connected to me at all…that made all the difference in the world to me. And so, I guess what I would say is, if I had to say to any Woman of Color who's serving on a board, your allies may come from places you don't expect. So, you have to be open to that. And your job as a Woman of Color on the board is to make everybody else feel welcome too– particularly newbies– because our job is to be the very, very best we can on these boards so that there'll be more of us.

Both Caitlyn and Ana speak to the same underlying issue–not finding common ground with their peers based on their professional backgrounds. However, in the case of Ana, another Women of Color on her board put that dissimilarity aside and embraced her on the board because she understood the impact of collegiality. Caitlyn's male counterparts, on the other hand, did not.

Daisy's story talks about the impact that males on boards could have on Women of Color's socialization. She served on two different boards, one being predominately women-led and the other predominately led by men, so she begins with the former.

> On the board that's all women, race doesn't factor into the people that I'm closest to. It's um, it's both generational and people that I've worked with, like on task forces or committees. Where we've done a lot of work together and in the process of working together, you know, you build bonds with people.

Daisy goes on to talk about the second board she serves on,

> It was very interesting because we saw that during COVID, the women board members started having check-ins with everybody– this is on the board that is predominantly male. And while I do have two or three very close male friends, I would say those that I'm closest to tend to be women…I would say, related to this, that when I first came on the board that is predominantly male–and I've been on that board now many years. There were three or four of the more senior male members whom I found exceptionally welcoming. And it was almost as if they were aware that it might be hard to fit in. Whether it was conscious on their part or unconscious, I don't know. But they really kind of welcomed me into the fold, and they had enough status–I mean, these were really senior members–that it also made the entry, I think, and the connecting with people, particularly easy.

Daisy's latter half of her statement speaks to an essential part of the socialization process for new members in organizational settings. Particularly the role of senior members, or members with status, in establishing a welcoming culture through socialization. Daisy

could not determine if they did it consciously, but she recalled its impact on her socialization process when she joined.

Although Women of Color could socialize with anyone, they found themselves gravitating towards social circles based on gender or racial identity. As senior members were welcoming toward Women of Color, particularly as they began their early tenure, it greatly impacted their experience. It shows that as Women of Color join higher education boards, men can still foster an inclusive environment and establish a positive working culture even if there are no other Women of Color colleagues. I now move into a different type of socialization in organizational theory, and that is how Women of Color learn about the organization, and how they prepare for their role.

Access to Organization and Socialization

"I would say [the biggest barrier] is just access, honestly." -Daisy

I define organizational access as access to the trustee role. In other words, who has access to the role and how is access granted or limited? I wanted to explore this aspect of board culture because the pathway to trusteeship is generally unclear and ambiguous (Rall et al., 2022). I asked participants about their experiences and pathways to delineate how other Women of Color might gain a seat at the table. What do they need to know? What are the barriers?

Who Has Access?

Access to the trusteeship was described by participants as a "a White man's world" and as a "boys' club." Thinking back to Chapter Two, I discussed about how 'boys' clubs' are networks that forms between men to privilege their ascension to

leadership. The boys' club network has been previously identified to impact women trustees, however, in this study I found that the appointment process created a boys' club network to the trusteeship for men and Men of Color. I also found that masculinity and Whiteness was valorized in the election process and reinforced gender and racial discrimination for Women of Color. As I present the counter stories in this section, I use no participant pseudonyms. That is because tying appointment processes to aliases could make Women of Color in this study identifiable. I begin with two stories of how the boys' club was reinforced on boards with gubernatorial-appointed roles. I present Participant One's explanation of how the boy's club manifests on the board,

> …there's a bill going up in California that says that you must have gender diversity on boards. So, there's a reason why people got together to lobby for a bill–a statewide bill. Because there's a problem, in terms of gender representation, in terms of People of Color, in terms of LGBTQ people. It's still a good old boys' club. But the good old boys' club extends to good old White boys, good old Black boys, good old brown boys, right? The boys, little by little, have been having their clubs and pulling each other in. Women–even though there are women's associations–don't quite have that lobbying power yet. And I think you need somebody to lobby behind the scenes for you to get your agenda, your resume, and your experiences in places that you can't enter. And I think women don't have those layers of good old, you know, whatever, advocating for them, right? There's a lot of Latino male leadership in [my state], at all levels, actually. But for Latina women, for example, that's not the case. For Black women, for example, that's not

> the case– proportionally to the population, if you look at it that way. But you know, these good old boys have made it and they're still there, and they're gonna be there. And they're not always competent. So, it's not always about competence. It's sometimes about who you know and who can put your name forward, or advocate for you, or send a letter, or send an email– that's still the game. That's still the game.

Another Woman of Color, Participant Two, also discussed the emphasis of a boys' club.

> I also think, oftentimes, we see this a lot in the spaces, even if you are ethnically diverse. A lot of the board members, I mean, in their 20s, they all worked in the same offices, they all worked in the same people's places, they were in the same programs, like, there's almost these cohorts of leaders that grew up together, and support each other, and get each other into everything. And you see that a lot…

Participants One and Two's stories talk about how men's networks perpetuate the same cycle of people in leadership roles, regardless of race. The boy's club is why the Critical Race Feminism framework stresses that gender must also be used to analyze patterns of exclusionary behaviors. If boards are looking to appoint People of Color to increase diversity without the inclusion of Women of Color, boards remain homogenous.

A similar pattern of gender privilege occurred for participants who had to navigate an election process. This time, the boys' club was not perpetuated through networks but rather through the votes of constituents. Notice how Participants Three and Four understood that gender was important to win their constituency's votes,

> You know, as I was running against other males with my constituents. I felt a little bit [differential treatment] sometimes talking to [men]–especially by some of the rural cowboys who answer the door with their guns on them, you know. But once I told them that I was in [a historically male-dominated profession], they were like, 'Oh, okay.' And so that kind of took some of that leverage back. Which is interesting because I don't tell them that I oversee [a historically woman-dominated role] in [my job] because then that would be two steps forward, two steps back.

In the case of Participant Three, she was both marginalized by her identity as a woman and privileged by her professional identity in a male-dominated field. Participant Three adapted and leveraged her identities to navigate the social-cultural expectations of her constituents and gain their approval. Moreover, we see Hill Collin's explanation of how identity itself comes from a self-construct of intersecting power relations experienced by individuals in society (2021). Participant Three intentionally kept part of her professional identity hidden because she knew the social impact it would have on the "rural cowboys" perception of her. Her story speaks to how she was able to sustain power in a social structure that privileged men and gender identities.

Participant Four, also elected to her role, shared a similar story of how gender was important for her election and how she leveraged her identity to win.

> I'm one of the few people on the board that actually, like–I did it on a resume. As opposed to…we've got one member whose father was on the board years ago. We've got…billionaires…millionaires… And I'm just a regular, you know,

> person., I'm still on another board. So, I'm doing better than most people in terms of qualifications, right? But if you can't get the traditional, um, you know [wealth and power]… I did it the way everybody does it. I went to [a prestigious school]. You know, I'm in a [male-dominated field]. I mean, I feel like I did it the old-fashioned way. If you don't do that, I don't know how you get on if you're a racial minority. For example, if you looked at my resume and you took my name and race off everything, you would think I was a White guy. And so, I would argue that the way you do it is the way we've always done it. And if that's a problem, if that's a barrier for people who are racial minorities, or women, then the barriers are still there. I didn't get there differently.

Participant Four's story speaks to a few issues of gender and race. First, she talks about how, like Participant Three, she could be both marginalized and privileged due to her race, gender, and professional background. Secondly, she articulates that some on the board gained their position due to wealth, status, and nepotism. What she describes can be understood through a CRT lens as "Whiteness as Property Rights"–I discuss this in the following section.

Thirdly, if we look back on the literature review, I discussed how there are informal qualifications that privilege candidates and create inequitable pathways to higher education boards (Rall et al., 2022). Participant Four's story helps support those findings. Participant Four explains how she made career choices that would help support her ascension into the trustee role. In our interviews, she told me how her professional career (aside from her trustee role) had unspoken rules that could help someone gain

opportunities not commonly known among professionals. She analyzed the resumes of leaders above her and was able to carve out a similar career path to them following a "hidden curriculum." So, when she refers to "doing it the old-fashioned way" the context behind her rhetoric is that she discovered a hidden curriculum and charted it. What's concerning, however, is her statement of, "If you looked at my resume and you took my name and race off everything, you would think I was a White guy". Her statement suggests a preference for "White-guy resume" type of candidates. Moreover, it alludes to how there are systemic forces at play that create racial and gender minorities from achieving the same level of success. She concluded with "if that's a barrier for people who are racial minorities, or women, then the barriers are still there." The barrier is thus embedded into the underlying structural organization and accepted as the norm because it goes unchallenged by counter stories like Participant Four's.

The four counter-stories of Women of Color navigating selection and appointment processes are narratives that challenge the power of gender identity. The first two stories discuss how even when there is racial diversity in leadership, the "good old boys" network remains exclusionary for women. The last two generally speak on how Women of Color must leverage themselves to fit into the socially constructed version of what leadership should look like. Across all the interviews, the "boys' club" or "man's world" was a culture evident regardless of the board type (public/private, elected/appointed MSI/non-MSI). It even presented on boards with high racial diversity. However, one difference between boards with racial diversity and those without was White privilege.

Whiteness as Property. When Participant Four told her story, she unknowingly addressed the theme of "Whiteness as property." She began by telling me that there were members on her board that had gained their seats due to wealth, status, and in one case, a relationship with a prior board member. She also spoke to her resume qualifying her because it read like a "White guy's." Both of those statements tell similar yet different stories. The first is one of property rights. As a reminder, "Whiteness as property" includes,

> encompassed jobs, entitlements, occupational licenses, contracts, subsidies, and indeed a whole host of intangibles that are the product of labor, time, and creativity, such as intellectual property, business goodwill, and enhanced earning potential from graduate degrees (C. I. Harris, 1993,p. 1728).

I argue that the trustee position is property due to the powers associated with its title, and a proven historical pattern of exclusivity, typically reserved for White men. In Participant Four's story, White men who were *not* qualified by skillset gained a seat at the table solely due to their privileged identity. For the trustee in Participant Four's story that had familial connections to the board, Whiteness became transferable meaning the property was transferred from one family member to the next (C. I. Harris, 1993). For those with wealth, their property right to "use and enjoy" meant they could reap the economic benefit of Whiteness and qualify to be trustees.

The second statement about Participant Four's resume indicates how White privilege and absolute right to exclude are maintained as the status quo. She states, "This is the way it has always been done," which shows how the status quo allows for racism to

remain embedded in the social and economic fabric of the U.S. and its workforce. It becomes normalized that an individual's resume should read like a "White guys" in order to be successful. This ideology shifts the onus to the individual instead of questioning the social, economic, and political barriers that sustain White supremacy and access to opportunities for historically marginalized members of society.

A secondary pattern of Whiteness as Property was found in Participant Five's counter-story. When she spoke to me about the challenges she's faced on her board, she opened up about the exclusionary culture,

> I think the biggest challenge is the thought that I am in a space strictly because of DE&I, strictly because of affirmative action–[the board] just needed a Black woman. And here's our Black woman, she's the total– we've fulfilled a quota…

Participant Five is depicting another example of "property" in the form of access. Again, thinking about Whiteness as "the right to exclude others" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), there is a social construct that those seats are reserved for Whites-only. There is a racist belief that without a DE&I effort or a need to fill a diversity quota, Participant Five's appointment would not have been possible. As we continue our conversation, Participant Five explains:

> What I'm saying is that there is that space where I sometimes feel that [People of Color] are looked upon as being less than, and maybe not as smart, and only there because they had to find someone. And if I was White I wouldn't even have made it, you know what I'm saying? So it's just… I always get that sense. And also, the thought that sometimes I'm invisible. Because quite frankly, as much as people

> want to say it isn't… racism is still alive and well. And there are some people that simply will not think anything of me, because of the color of my skin. They will just be dismissive of me. And, you know, I see that a lot in many professional circles, as well as in academia on the Board of Trustees.

Participant Five's counter-story explains that racism is embedded in all fabrics of her professional circles, including the Board of Trustees. As the CRT framework informs us, racism is "the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.7). The feeling of invisibility that she gets is a result of microaggressions by her colleagues. Her hypervisibility as a Black woman also adds to her tokenized status. Her story resonates with the challenges told by participants earlier in the chapter. Regadless of how the pathway to the trusteeship benefits men and Men of Color, participants were able to leverage access and prepared themselves for their role as trustees.

Pathways to the Trusteeship for Women of Color

A few participants could not describe their appointment process in detail because the appointment process was opaque. In other words, Women of Color could not compare their experience to their colleagues' because the pathways to the trusteeship was not well documented. Others had very clear pathways–commonly found for boards with election processes. All participants said their ascension was an atypical route. "Atypical" was defined by Women of Color as appointments that were not "political plums," meaning Women of Color were not close friends with a governor or representing a political agenda. Most participants happened to work in a space that gave them access to the

opportunity or were mentored through the appointment process by other trustees or college presidents. Generally, boards, state officials, or college presidents recruited Women of Color due to their extensive leadership experience in various professions.

Socialization

Tierney's (1988) Organizational Culture Framework defines socialization as the way in which new members get socialized, how information is articulated, and what new members of organizations need to know to survive. Theories of socialization in organizations recognize that socialization includes formal and informal learning experiences (Tuttle, 2003; Wanous, 1992). One formal way in which organizations socialize members is through onboarding and orientations. In governance scholarship, this socialization style has been previously studied (Dika & Janosik, 2003; Houle, 1989; Rall, 2014). Although I did not anticipate collecting data on formal socialization processes, Women of Color naturally discussed participating in leadership training to prepare themselves for their roles. A few went through trainings provided by the Association of Governing Boards of University and Colleges, while others partook in women's leadership academies or leadership training for historically underrepresented groups. All Women of Color had prior experience serving on private non-profit, private for-profit boards, or commissions. However, the transition into a higher education board was new for about half of them. Having prior governing board experience was not a formal requirement for anyone to serve. Once on the board, Women of Color used numerous survival strategies to navigate their environments and flourish in their roles as trustees.

Strategies for Survival (Lessons Learned)

> *"I never adapt my identity to anything. But we always adapt our behaviors to survive. That is what we do as Women of Color, as LGBT people. We always adapt… I don't change who I am, I am who I am. But I will hang back, I will listen, I will learn the strange and incendiary customs of a place because that's how we operate in this world. It may not be as conscious for those who come from that world. They just sort of own it; it's their world. But if you don't come from that world, you're always looking, observing, and adapting, and it becomes second nature to you. How else do we survive?"- Ana*

Decisions on governing boards are made by all trustees through formal votes. It is necessary to acknowledge that Women of Color never felt like they could not speak to an issue on the board, nor did they ever have their voting power revoked. In other words, no blatant forms of discrimination kept them from being able to do their job. However, as governance literature suggests, women are appointed to boards in such small numbers that their voices are often muted, dwindling their power (Kramer & Adams, 2020). Additionally, we heard how systemic oppression impacted Women of Color's self-perception and feelings of belonging on the board. So, what happened when Women of Color did not have the strength of numbers or support on their boards and had a viewpoint they wanted to bring forward? How did Women of Color strategize to make impactful decisions and gain power?

To counteract feeling silenced or lost amongst the dominant group, Women of Color used five strategies: (1) They learned the power of their voice, (2) They learned not to wait their turn, (3) They formed coalitions, and (4) They presided over board meetings as the most prepared person in the room (5) They made their stories known to their stakeholders.

The Power of Voice

Organization scholars argue that socialization can also occur through an informal longitudinal or learning process that can last one's entire career (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992). This informal socialization happened with Women of Color as they navigated their careers. Many participants spoke about the importance of finding their voice as professionals and board members to navigate their roles successfully. The process of "finding one's voice" was not an easy one, it took years. However, it was used by Women of Color as a tactic to engage in environments where they found themselves to be the minority– and it became a survival strategy. I begin with Rachel's story, a trustee with ample experience in many education leadership roles throughout her lifetime. She retells the history of racism and sexism throughout U.S. society,

> … I'm accustomed…I'm old enough. I'll be [age] in two months…I grew up when there were colored-only water fountains… when the Ku Klux Klan would burn, you know, steaks on your yard. So I remember all of that. I wasn't a little, I was a teenager and young adult…I remember when my parents could not vote, and you had to take that literacy test. And I would be with them, I heard the questions that were being asked… I'm old enough that I've often been the only woman and the only African American in a room or on a board or in [another role] I was in for [many] years… I was one of only six African Americans out of 18,000 [people at my work] ... So, I've often found–I guess I've gotten accustomed to–being that person. But it didn't mean that everybody else was accustomed to you being that

person in the room. So, I've often found myself. I found my voice. If that makes any sense.

Firstly, Rachel's counter-story is impactful because it reminds us that a time when White supremacy was accepted in its blatant form is not far removed from today's society. Rachel's story also sheds light on the fact that trustees her age are commonly found on U.S. higher education boards. However, unlike Rachel's position, most trustee positions are held by White men. This group of older White men directly benefitted from the discrimination, segregation, and violence subjected to Black people that Rachel recalls in her counter-story. To be clear, I am not accusing the "older White men" population in the U.S. of being White supremacists. I am merely illuminating that just as there are African Americans in the U.S. who lived through the Jim Crow Era and were victims of violence, so too are the perpetrators of that violence around today. And just as African Americans, like Rachel, hold positions of power in the U.S., it can be inferred that White supremacists must also.

Secondly, the challenge that Rachel confronted as the only African American at her job, long after her young age, was the covert manifestation of White supremacy. In other words, racism and segregation did not end after the Civil Rights movement. White supremacy took on a new dangerous form hidden in "race-neutral" policy. The newfound way White supremacy presented itself in society was the foundation for the Critical Race Legal movement and why it is crucial to acknowledge the persistence of racism in the modern day.

Lastly, Rachel says that as the only African American woman in the room, many around her expected her to stay silent or did not welcome her into the shared space. She explains how she had to navigate that alienation and marginalization by finding her voice and gaining the confidence to speak out on issues important to her. Rachel went on to talk about how speaking out became a strength that she used in her leadership approach,

> …A lot of people know [speaking out] is the right thing to do, but they're afraid to do the right thing. And on the board, the biggest thing you can do is speak up. When you see something that's wrong. Speak up. If you see us doing it wrong, speak up. Don't sit and twiddle your hands because you don't want to be seen as the troublemaker. Somebody has to. And you'd be surprised at the number of people who've come out of hiding and are willing once one person speaks up... it's about what you do, how you volunteer, how you speak up, about doing the work. And someone asked me [in a previous role], 'I've been on this board longer than you, why would they pick you over me [as chair]?'–It was a male asking that question– And I said, 'Because you sit in the corner, and you fold your arms, and you don't help get the work done.' And he looked *shocked*, and I said, 'Well, you asked that' (laughs).

Rachel knows the importance of speaking out when there are difficult conversations to be had and standing up for what is right. She also explains how it made her a better leader– despite the sexism and racism she encountered early in her career. Speaking out allowed her to command power in any room she was in. She navigated multiple uncomfortable

and hostile environments throughout her boards and learned an informal socialization strategy–the power of her voice.

A similar strategy of finding a voice was evident in Caitlyn's story. She talked about how she found her voice, like Rachel, from being the only minority woman in the room:

> Okay, well, um, so one of the strengths I feel is, you know, if I could sort of go back to my, my parents again, I think my, my, my father sort of introduced his ideas, less so because less so being a woman, but being a minority, and being an immigrant, really applying that you have to be twice as good. You have to be better than everybody else to get a fair shot, like you had more to prove, being an immigrant and being a minority. And I grew up in the 70s… And, and I was one of three Asian kids in my elementary school, that type of thing, right? So, so a much bigger minority, at that point in time, was that you had to be better than everybody else–or you had to try at least to be better. And that meant, like being more diligent, working harder. So, to me is one of the strengths of that part of my identity, is to sort of come at things with as much preparation as I can manage. And so, I feel like that's something that I carry with me. And so, my colleagues have this idea that I read everything–I don't read. But they have this idea because I read a lot. I take a lot of care in preparing for board meetings. And, and I also, you know, I didn't, and I didn't necessarily get this part from my parents, but, you know, part of me got it from going to graduate school is about speaking out. Because you can sort of train yourself to not speak out, or you can train yourself

> to speak out. And in graduate school, even though it was intimidating, I felt like if 'I don't say something, I will never feel like I have a voice.' And to me, like, so it's important to have a voice. And so, part of that all of that sort of goes into, I think, you know, I do speak out a lot on the board. I don't, even if I feel intimidated, I don't let that stop me. And I think that goes back to my identity as an immigrant. And to a certain extent, even though my father didn't impress that upon me, I feel like it's important as a female, it's important as a minority female, to assert myself and to have a voice. And so that's, you know, that's how I behave on the board.

Most participants spoke on the importance of finding their voice as women and as Women of Color (depending on the diversity of their boards). Participants with more life experience became more comfortable with this survival strategy. Take, for example, the conversation I had with Blanche as we talked about some of the challenges of being a Woman of Color trustee:

> I think some of the [challenges] are the standard behavior of males who are privileged. But I don't get spoken over very often because I just don't allow that to happen… But I think that, in the cases of some people, they have a tendency to assume they have better ideas….You know, as I said, I don't get talked over very much…and I'm not afraid to take up space. So, in some ways, I can negate some of that. It's kind of hard to ignore me, I just don't allow that to happen. So, I don't feel silenced in any way. I feel like, in most cases, my ideas are taken seriously.

You hear that Blanche alludes to having experienced sexism and racism in the past and developed a tool to counteract being silenced–she took up space. As Women of Color piloted through rooms and spaces where they were marginalized members, they knew the import of their voice and asserting themselves on their boards. Their familiarity with how racism and sexism bleed into all facets of their world, including their professional experiences, led them to engage in their second survival strategy: taking up space.

Do Not Wait for Your Turn

Throughout the interviews, I asked participants if they had been able to reach the goals they set for themselves during their tenure. All participants had been able to reach their milestones or were in the process of doing so. To reach their goals, participants spoke about the importance of taking leadership roles rather than waiting to be approached to lead. I begin with advice for any Woman of Color looking to pursue a leadership role on a higher education board. Ana recalled her ascension into her leadership position on her board and shared this counsel to go with it,

> I became vice chair very, very, very soon after I got on the board… and then you can move up to chair. That was not easy because certainly, I was told to wait my turn. 'It wasn't my turn yet.' And well, I–I did not do that. Because no Woman of Color who waits her turn is ever appointed to anything... Remember that, Valeria.
>
> So don't wait your turn because the men don't. And the White guys really don't.

Ana knew that there were informal powers at play on her board. She was being told that she had to wait to take a leadership role because she was not a senior board member, regardless of her expertise and qualifications. She knew it was not a formality on her

board to have to "wait", especially as her male counterparts did not. The informal rule was merely a way to shift power to dominant board members.

On the contrary, I share two examples of Women of Color who look back and reflect on how their self-perceptions as Women of Color negatively impacted their professional goals. I begin with Caitlyn,

> … I was pretty sure that I wanted to be chair of [the finance] committee. And when I spoke with a senior colleague of mine, I expressed some doubts about whether I really did want to be chair of that committee because, you know, finance is not necessarily a specialty of mine…the advice I got was, 'well, you know, don't do it just because you feel like you should do it, do it because you want to do it.' And I took that advice, and I didn't become chair of that committee... And then looking back upon it, though, it was sort of this conflict between, 'okay, as a Woman of Color…would it be a good thing for me to serve in the leadership role of that committee?' Absolutely. Instead, I went towards my own interests, and that was this inherent conflict… sometimes I still think, 'oh, I should have done that, though'... And earlier, I had also expressed interest in becoming chair of the Board… And so, although it's not written into the bylaws, that the vice chair becomes chair, that's generally how it happens –and it certainly hasn't always happened that way... And so, each time I expressed interest in becoming vice chair in order to become chair, there was somebody else, let's say, a male, who I respected and worked, you know, very well with, who was also interested in being vice chair. And I would always kind of rationalize to myself

> why I should support that person…Because I had longer time left, you know, good reasons. Sometimes there were personal reasons …So I just think…it's interesting to even think about how I've rationalized not stepping into more of a leadership position, or assert why I should be the next vice chair…But to me, that's just that's a way in which women–if I could generalize–women, and even Women of Color, in particular, might continue to step aside and not take the reins. When, they should.

Caitlyn's self-doubt came from a long history of gender and race stereotypes in the workplace (Catalyst, 2005; Steele, 1998). As the literature reads, stereotypes do not have to be explicit to impact an individual's performance (Steele, 1998). Since Women of Color have been absent from leadership positions due to a history of workplace discrimination, the stereotype of Women of Color not being capable of leadership created a stereotype threat for Caitlyn, and she rationalized not stepping into the role. The stereotype subconsciously impacted her self-perception and held Caitlyn back from pursuing the leadership role she wanted. Caitlyn assessed (and internalized) the social expectations imposed upon her based on her political location within a hierarchy of power. This process of identity (re)construction is what intersectionality suggests happens for Women of Color throughout their lifetime.

In the case of Sherry, she talked about how she waited until she was "fully qualified" to pursue her role on the board,

> … I know that I've heard from a lot of people… [They are] so excited to have me on [the board] because they're saying I'm the first person that is, has [my

> background] and has a complete understanding of education, and comes with a very robust resume in regard to, you know, knowing what's going on within higher ed. So, I think it's interesting because I've been told in the past that people, you know, don't really have a background or, you know, a college degree– which is great, like, we need diverse thoughts and experiences–but that I come as a very, very highly qualified candidate… So I thought that was interesting because it kind of speaks to a lot of the work I do. I only apply to stuff if I feel like I'm completely qualified. And I see that a lot of people, you know, often will apply and be like, 'I will achieve those skills once I get there.' And I think it has a lot to do with the, you know, minority female human experience of you need to be completely qualified, which really has a lot to do with that imposter syndrome.

Sherry's story is the same message as Caitlyn's, except she labels what she felt as "imposter syndrome." The term "imposter phenomenon" (later adapted to imposter syndrome) was coined by Clance and Imes (1978) when two psychologists studied women with tremendous academic and professional accomplishments who had self-doubts about their abilities. Their study found that women were experiencing "imposter phenomenon" at higher rates than men in the same careers. Clance and Imes' (1978) study, however, has been contested as problematic because imposter syndrome places blame on self-perception rather than on the impact of systemic racism, classism, and other biases that were absent from research when the term was developed (Tulshyan & Burey, 2021).

While Caitlyn and Sherry do not name explicit forms of discrimination or marginalization in their stories, their rationalization for "waiting" or not "being qualified enough" stems from a history of racism, sexism, and other "isms" embedded into social fabrics. Their stories also speak to the many ways in which informal rules continue to benefit dominant groups. Caitlyn began to tell me that "even though it's not written into the bylaws," the vice chair becomes chair. In her case, the lack of formal rules allowed for the rule to be bent and benefit anyone who had the confidence to take on the chair role. The same thing happened in Sherry's case. There was no formal rule of qualifications to serve; however, she waited until she felt qualified because that is how she had been socialized. Both women fell victims to the "informal qualifications" of boards that I have been discussing throughout this dissertation. Women of Color discount themselves from trustee positions even though there are no clear expectations of what the trusteeship entails. Meanwhile, White men continue to benefit from the informal structure of boards, further privileging their identity.

Women of Color are informally socialized out of leadership roles because the social fabrication of gender and gender roles maintain hierarchical systems of oppression and domination (Butler, 1990; Spelman, 1991). Moreover, popular culture, the media, and society perpetuate stereotypes of Women of Color, making it difficult for them to be perceived as effective leaders (Hill Collins, 1989; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Therefore, as participants shared their stories, they emphasized a need for Women of Color to disrupt the hierarchical systems of oppression and assert their turn as leaders.

Create Coalitions

A secondary survival strategy for Women of Color on boards came through forming coalitions. Coalitions took place in informal ways, for example, through text messages, lunch meetings, and phone calls. Alliances were necessary, particularly across gender or racial lines, due to the few historically underrepresented trustees on boards.

Sometimes the coalitions were formed because of the hostile environment of the board, for example, in Sofia's case, she explains how Women of Color came together,

> …there's almost like a silent coalition among the women on the boards, I feel like, I didn't see it as much in [my first board], because I think everyone was very clear about treating everyone equally–we had a woman majority board at one point, which was like, one of the first times I think that it ever happened. But when I transitioned over here, it was like, I mean, especially intensive for Women of Color… I had, some of the women, colleagues of mine, like, coming to me after a meeting, and us going out to dinner, and just like, you know, tears coming out of like, 'this is so difficult', like, 'when will they treat me the same way'. And like, these are people that are way more senior than me and are way more senior than a lot of the members on the board, who were just like, you know… We have this, like, emotional connection, in the fact that we're being discounted in so many ways… And I think that also, that also ended up being really good in terms of professional connections, because, you know, if someone had an idea, we could echo each other, we could uplift that person, you know? And that's why there's a kind of silent solidarity that was happening among all of us is just, we know, it's

> hard. And we see them, you know, kind of feeling weaker, and we're, we're ready to jump off and help out.

Sofia's story describes a hostile environment and solidarity that formed among women. Her story depicts how status on her board did not matter–even senior members felt the hostile behavior of their male counterparts. We see in her story how the exclusionary climate of the board forced women to find community in coalitions.

On some boards, coalitions were formed to ensure that the voices of minoritized members were not muted. Tiara explains how her colleagues achieved this,

> You need to be strategic. Right? For instance, you remember I mentioned there are [a few] Black trustees on our board right now… Because we all started on different committees, there are different issues going on, so different people reach out to us... So we come together once a month and be like, 'what have you heard?' 'Hey, what do we need to pay attention to.'… 'ohh, there's a board meeting coming up? Such and such is gonna be on the agenda, we need to be ready.'

Tiara goes on to tell me how this sharing of information has not always included Black women. She told me about a former mentor of hers who sat on the board years prior and had a different experience,

> When I shared with [my mentor] that we did that, she was like, 'I wish we would have had that.' But when she was on the board, there were probably three to four Black trustees. But they were all men. And she was the only female. And apparently, they would talk to each other, but they wouldn't talk to her. Right?

> That was her journey…So when she heard that, that we have that type of relief, she was overjoyed. She was like, 'Oh, that means y'all are *powerful*, right, without looking like you're colluding, y'all colluding'… 'I love it.'

Notice that Tiara's mentor brings up the term "powerful." She mentions this because power on boards is sustained through a group's shared goals and ability to "collude." The collusion then impacts the group's influence on decision-making. The dominant group will always be powerful because the board operates under the dominant group's ideology. The dominant group's values are upheld because of their ubiquitous collusion. While every board member's vote holds equal weight, if there are minute representations of any given identity, those voices are silenced. This is why critical mass on boards is significant. Through critical mass, marginalized groups can influence organizational change. Tiara and her colleagues found a way to create informal power and ensure that their representation on the board would not be subdued. Tiara goes on to tell me why her Black colleagues find this strategy necessary,

> …there are issues that impact our communities. And as Trustees of Color, there are issues that are important to us. And there are just general issues that we want to make sure are handled in certain ways. And we all bring different expertise, and we all sit on different committees. So, it's really important, you know… you have to be strategic in terms of your priorities and how you ensure those are handled and addressed when you step into that environment. And allies along that journey.

As property holders, White trustees can dictate rules and control policy decisions that impact all facets of higher education governance. They also hold the ability to control the cultural discourse of racial equity (Wildman, 2005). A consequence of this is that "White privilege is not only normalized within the leadership ranks, but it can travel undetected due to the dominant group's control over discourse." (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015, p.683). In other words, White trustees fail to acknowledge the privilege and power through which their privilege is sustained and protected (Wildman, 2005). This is why, on boards like Tiara's, Trustees of Color feel the need to come together to find ways to gain control over dialogue because they know that historically, DE&I discourse has been apt to the interpretations of the dominant group (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Tiara's coalition is thus formed to ensure that the interests of Communities of Color at her university are handled in a culturally appropriate way and reflective of their needs. Her story reminds us that Women of Color can find allies on their board and create strength in numbers.

Come Prepared

The last strategy Women of Color used to leverage power was positioning themselves to be the most equipped person in the room. Once on the board, Women of Color joined high-impact committees and attended meetings well-read to ensure their advocacy efforts would be worthwhile. I begin with Ana's story,

> … I look at my background and think, 'I want to be where the most power is and where the most action is. And I'm going to show up as the most prepared person in the room, because I'm a Woman of Color, and nobody's gonna assume I know anything.' So I want to show up at that committee. And from the second I sit in

> that committee, I want to ask very hard questions that show that I've read all the material and read all the footnotes and read all the attachments, and there's nothing you're going to pull the wool over my eyes, right? So it affected the way I perform. It still does. You got to be better than everybody else –Not better, but you have to be better prepared than everybody else. Do all the reading. Be very thoughtful… I selected those committees because I knew what I wanted to get done. The way I showed up at those committees, I think, is part of my upbringing and all the stuff that I know happens when I walk into a room that's mostly dominated by White men. Still, [my profession] is dominated by White men. Right? So you've got to really know your stuff. If you're going to start playing that game.

Ana understood the stereotypes that her identity carried in the board room as a Woman of Color. She began by acknowledging her dismissal from the board before she even had a chance to showcase her abilities as a leader. Ana navigated what has historically been a White, men-dominated space by being primed and engaged with the material presented to the board. She understood that there were committees that held much informal power, and she placed herself in those spaces where critical and impactful decisions were being made. She also refers to the "game" of the trusteeship. This was a common pattern found across interviews. Multiple participants discussed the double standards of the trusteeship and how racism and sexism are "still part of the game."

Similarly, Sofia talked about how her colleagues' professions (and, in turn, status) often put her in a position where she had to work harder to prove her stance on issues

impacting her institution. She explained how her identity on the board affected her preparedness,

> Especially in my position, I had to be one of the most well-informed people in the room. Because if somebody came at me with an argument, they already had somebody that was behind them, they have the, like, credentials, they have the time on the floor, they have the lawyers in the background… it's almost like they have an army behind them. What do I have? I just have me and my voice. And maybe some of the other people in this room that agree with me. But I need to be ready for them to respond with things that I know are not true, or that are kind of like, fuzzy around the edges, and push [back]. And so, in a way, I had to adapt the way that I interacted with people in kind of being very well-informed, very well-read, understanding what I'm coming into, and the arguments that they're going to give me and how to react to that. And kind of doing this whole thing in my head. So, you know, I definitely had to become a little bit different in that way.

We hear again how "voice" comes through in Sofia's answer. Both she and Ana understood that the culture of their boards required them to exert their knowledge to not be reduced by their peers' microaggressions. Women of Color expected pushback from their colleagues (because sexism and racism are fixed in society) and were well-resourced to handle challenging conversations and disputes.

Share Your Story

Women of Color represented the backgrounds of a wide range of stakeholders. As participants shared personal details about themselves with their campus communities, it

cultivated a positive relationship between them and their constituents. Victoree elaborated on this as she continued her story on representation,

> … I think students who look like you are more likely to come to you, right? Or you might be more approachable for those reasons. They might see themselves in your story. And I would also say trustees who let themselves be known with respect to their story and their identity, and what's important to them, they get approached by constituency groups. If you keep who you are sort of hidden, then people don't know if they can come to you. So, you'll be less effective, actually. So, it's better for people to know a little bit about you and to give, like, indicators that you welcome constituent advocacy and that you want to hear from the population groups that you're serving. You'll be a better trustee if you share some of yourself.

Victoree's story begins by reinforcing, firstly, that representation matters. She notes that students felt more comfortable speaking with her because they could see themselves in her story. Secondly, Victoree suggests that trustees willing to share more about themselves make for better leaders because it signals to underrepresented groups that they are championing issues that impact marginalized groups.

Angeles suggested the same phenomenon happening at her university. As we talked about the strengths of her identity, she began by telling me, "If anything, I think I get more love–if you will–because of who our students are and who a lot of the faculty are." I followed up by asking her if she felt like students saw themselves reflected in her, and she responded,

> Definitely–I've been told that. And it's been, it's sort of been one of the joys of the job–meeting the students and the faculty and hearing their experiences and telling them mine…I always get a lot of positive [feedback]. Sometimes I, you know, I wouldn't. But people always said, 'Oh, it's so great to hear about your experiences and your stories.' So I tried to do that more. Generally, I wouldn't, you know, at the beginning, I didn't do it that much. But I do now more.

Victoree and Angeles communicated the added value of students, staff, and faculty feeling represented by their boards. Both participants expressed how representation increased constituents' comfortability voicing their experiences and concerns with trustees. Women of Color created pathways for communication when they shared their backgrounds with their stakeholders, even if their stories differed. On some level, Women of Color made a connection to their stakeholders and became more approachable–a leadership quality that is highly valuable in any workplace. Caitlyn supported how Women of Color trustees were seen positively when she shared with me, "I think people see me as more approachable. That yeah, I'm going to make time or that I'm going to be friendly."

The survival strategies I have presented showcase the lengths that Women of Color must go to as they navigate their environment on the board–a challenge that their White men counterparts do not face. Despite their challenges, Women of Color never altered from being exemplary leaders. All participants discussed that their identity was an added strength.

Leadership

> *"You know, when you stop and think about it, you look back and go, 'Oh, my goodness, I What have I done? Nothing. All I do is go to meetings' … so this has kind of been therapeutic for me, I probably needed to think about [my accomplishments] more because you kind of get busy… and it's a hard long job, you know, lots and lots of time, and you kind of forget what, why you're doing it and what you've accomplished." -Carla*

Women of Color displayed leadership contributions in myriad ways on their Boards of Trustees and within their institutions. Half of the Women of Color were able to serve as "formal" leaders, such as the chair or vice chair of the board. Some were elected by their peers, and others spoke to the bylaws as a way in which they were able to leverage power. For instance, some bylaws enforced that all members rotate as chair and vice chair; or that all members chair each committee, regardless of preference. This ensured equal power distribution. However, leadership extends beyond the formal role of the chair or vice chair. Leadership can be symbolic and take an informal structure (Tierney, 1988). As such, this section focuses on how Women of Color embody leadership and strengths through formal and informal roles.

Figure 7 Contributions of Women of Color Trustees to Their Boards and Institutions

As I share their impacts, I first begin by situating, once again, how Women of Color's identities were complex, intersectional, and uniquely positioned within society. Their first contribution was just that–the inimitable perspectives participants brought to their roles and their advocacy on the board. Women of Color had tremendous professional expertise and brought an equity-minded approach to their decision-making. Participants also worked towards improving the board culture, and the overall culture of the institution (Figure 7) Overall, Women of Color's benefits to their respective boards were immeasurable to their campus communities.

Intersectional Perspectives

I begin this section by reminding us that the use of an intersectionality framework in this study was to emphasize that there is no essential "Black Women Trustee

Experience", "Latina Trustee Experience," "Native American Women Trustee Experience," or "Asian Women Trustee Experience." Essentialism is "a belief that all people perceived to be in a single group think, act, and believe the same things in the same ways." (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p.40). There is a benefit in underrepresented groups to forming solidarity for social, cultural, and political purposes (Guinier & Torres, 2003); however, people do not give up their perspectives because of shared group identities (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Instead, the focus of this discussion on identity is to highlight how the *unique* positionalities of Women of Color were added strengths that they brought with them to the Board of Trustees.

The stories told by participants portrayed how intersectionality impacted Women of Color as they navigated various socio-political environments and how they identified along racial and ethnic lines. For example, one participant began her story with, "Well, I'm an African American woman. Black. Either term I use. It depends on what I'm doing, which one I use." Here the participant is explaining that her identity may have to take on a different label depending on the social context of the conversation and with whom they are speaking. This leveraging of identity in relation to various social environments is what Hill Collins (2012) argues is one of the principal tenets of the intersectionality framework.

Participants also discussed how their family's socio-political history impacted their racialized identity and how they experienced the world. One participant explained,

> I identify as a Black person. As a Black woman. And I use pronouns she and her. Let's see… And Black… American descendants of slaves, enslaved folks, Black.

> My parents are first-generation North, from the South, where my grandparents and great-grandparents were born and lived in Mississippi. And it is an important part of the kind of work I do around the liberation of Black people in this country.

This participant gave a historical and geographic context to her family's background and how it informed her identity and positionality within society. Another Black participant shared the same message about the geographical impact on her experience as a Black woman,

> So I can kind of tell you, from my perspective, my experiences as a Black woman are kind of different from what a lot of my contemporaries' or counterparts' experiences have been… So, I, number one, come from a very conservative part of the state... But secondarily, I also grew up in a city that was predominantly White. And so, I, therefore, matriculated through a school system where there weren't people that looked like me at all. So my experiences growing up were always that I was the only one in the room that is pretty much the way that my life has been, which I think has allowed me, as an adult, to be able to adapt to almost any and everything, because I'm so used to having to really be able to get along with anyone and everyone, and to be able to appreciate differences. And also, to allow people to experience what's different about me and maybe teach people a little bit more about my culture and things of that nature.

In this case, the added intersections of political ideology and class impacted how this participant experienced her Black identity. Again, we see through these stories how the

inter-social location of Women of Color influenced their social standpoints (Hill Collins, 2012).

There were also differences in how participants gave meaning to their ethnic identities. For example, here are two examples of women who identified as Hispanic. The first participant, who revealed was from a Latin American country, said,

> So I guess I define myself as Hispanic. It's my heritage. And an immigrant– because I'm an immigrant to this country. And I think those are the two main, you know [identities], particularly on this board, that really are relevant to the student population that we serve.

Another participant who identified as Hispanic shared a different background,

> … just to tell you about myself, I'm a native [U.S. location]. Born and raised. Our families, you know, Hispanic families, have a very long history in [U.S. location], with a few 100 years that my family's been here. They were Spanish colonists a long time ago. And so, both my mother and father are Hispanic, and you know, born and raised… and many generations of people here in [this state] … so I've been raised here all my life.

While both women identified as Hispanic, one referred to their cultural and immigrant experience in the U.S., and the other referred to their cultural upbringing influenced by her family's Hispanic roots in Europe.

None of the Women of Color in this study shared duplicate identities because no group is a monolith. As you can recall from Chapter Three, there were various ways in which other identities (beyond race and ethnicity) were referenced in the stories Women

of Color Trustees brought forward. Identity was experienced at intersections, leveraged depending on the social situation, and sometimes one aspect of identity was more salient. There were also many aspects of identity that participants likely didn't disclose since I could not elicit an entire life story within a one-hour interview–nor was that the purpose of this study.

There are intricacies to identity and self-identity. However, Women of Color's unique perspectives and knowledge are part of what made them such valuable trustees on their boards. They brought with them a range of life experiences and expertise, which allowed them to be more effective leaders and better positioned to understand issues affecting today's diverse higher education landscape.

I begin with Chelsea, who unintentionally described the theoretical frameworks that guided this study as she talked about her strengths as a board member,

> I bring a different experience to the board. I'm able to understand why staff may feel a certain way on certain issues, I understand why people may perceive that they're not being treated fairly when we are here, and various things that come up to the board about being treated unfairly and whatever the issue may be. So, you know, I think it's a different perspective. You know, I grew up with a different lifestyle. I look, you know, around the table, and [my lifestyle] is quite different from most–not all–but most of my colleagues. I think it's that different perspective that I bring as a result of, you know, being a Black woman. And I bring it from both being a woman, but I also bring a different perspective being, you know,

> Black. So, I think two different perspectives. And maybe a third? Being a black woman and the intersection of the two.

Chelsea's explanation of her identity embodies the definition of the intersectionality and Critical Race Feminism frameworks. She's describing how she has not one but three ways in which race and gender impact how she experiences the world. Thinking back to the Ven Diagram I presented in Chapter Three, as two colors of the identity circles amalgamate, their combination creates a third shade. Thus, Chelsea talks about having three perspectives or "shades" in her interlocks of identity. Chelsea's governance work is sometimes guided by her identity as a woman, her identity as a Black person, and her identity as a Black woman–all three perspectives she brings with her as added substance. She's also speaking about social class and how her awareness of classism is an added layer of understanding which helps her relate to the concerns brought up by staff members to the Board of Trustees. Chelsea's background and experiences make her more relatable to all constituents impacted by the board's decisions. Participants' familiarity with marginalization added to their equity-mindedness approach as trustees.

Equity Mindedness. Equity-mindedness is defined as a person or practitioner who can "assess and acknowledge that their practices may not be working. It takes understanding inequities as a dysfunction of the various structures, policies, and practices that they can control" (University of Southern California [USC] Center for Urban Education, n.d.). What makes leaders equity-minded is that they continually reassess their biases, assumptions, and practices to close equity gaps within their institutions. Take, for example, Blanche, the trustee who tried to develop an "equity muscle" on her board,

> Well, I take issues of inclusion pretty seriously. And so, um, that obviously informs my work on the board… I'm also pretty conscious of the role that class plays, and try to pay attention to that. I mean, it's an aspect of diversity, but sometimes it gets missed. So, I'm making sure that we're doing a good job of serving students who are the first in their families to go to college, students who come from low-income backgrounds–Sometimes we can make assumptions about a student's experience or even a faculty member's experience. And so I think those are lenses that I bring in a sense of holding the institutions accountable for what they promise and what they should be doing.

Blanche is the textbook definition of equity-mindful. She is conscious of issues of DE&I that are often missed–the intersectional pieces– and is aware of biases that trustees may have towards minoritized students. She also makes it her mission to hold her institution accountable for their messaging and promises.

Next, I present how Ana used an equity-mindedness approach:

> I know exactly who I am, and where I came from, and what the university actually means to real people. So, I think that made me a really effective board member, I had personal experience of how it can transform the lives of, working-class people and People of Color. And also how [higher education] can be alienating… So I think it made me more sensitive to what students were experiencing. And that's an asset on the Board of Trustees …its an asset to actually know what students think and feel and not be coming from so high I

> cannot relate to them–though it was a long time ago that I was a student. And I recognize that generational difference.

Ana, like Blanche, recognizes differences in perspectives that trustees may miss when debating student issues. She is aware of the generational gap between board members and the students they serve. Ana continues with an example of how she used her equity-mindedness in her resolution of a campus issue and in her practice on the board.

> **…**we had a number of very difficult cases related to sexual assault and sexual violence that had to be handled during my tenure. And I think being a woman helped me understand the vulnerability of those individuals who were the victims of the circumstances... And the importance of addressing the problem from bottom to top and not accepting platitudes. And really drilling down to make sure that the conditions that allowed that to happen, have been addressed. I think that being a woman meant that I wanted to absolutely make sure that we did everything right when it came to fixing those problems. And it meant that I was particularly interested in listening and turning to our staff that were advisors on sexual harassment, sexual violence. We had a really terrific staff person, and she would be who I would ask questions of during our sessions regarding certain cases…I wanted to hear what she had to say. Because she might not be allowed to talk, right? So, all she got was a little tiny bit of the presentation, but I knew that she really knew what was going on. And I would elicit that. So, I think it's a strength to understand that different perspectives in the room are going to give you different opinions. And when you're a Person of Color or when you're a

> woman–you know that you need to get called on. You need to call that person to the desk and get them into the conversation because they're otherwise going to typically be excluded.

Ana wanted to ensure that the institution took responsibility for the issues presented before the board and that changes were made to eradicate the problem. She was also aware of the social conditions in the boardroom and the power imbalances between the trustees and the staff who occupied the room. Ana recognized her privilege in the room and used it to bring forward the perspectives that would help the board make the most informed decision and make the staff feel welcomed into the conversation.

Kiana, whom we recall is a Black trustee at an HBCU, also recalled how her identity informs her advocacy on her board:

> I think there was one time we had a conversation about race. And something about resources. And the tone of it was like the campus had just gotten more money from the state than it had gotten, maybe ever, during one legislative session, which was good. But I know enough to know about HBCU underfunding and lawsuits in history, to know that [that money] in no way makes them no longer low-resourced, or that the state doesn't owe them more money that [the school] could probably legally sue for... And so, this legislative White person– White man– was just like, 'Y'all should be happy' kind of thing... And I felt like the President was trying to communicate with him–but it was like a testy conversation. And so, I had to, like, help him understand, like, you don't actually know what you're talking about, as it relates to resources. And so yeah, sometimes

> when I'm like, "No, we need to [talk about race]" they try to be very, "Oh, this board is like half Black, half White", or like, "We're all here in harmony wanting to see this university win" And I'm like, maybe? I hope so. But probably not. Like, I don't know… I feel like I'm one of the only ones that talks–has said the word– like talked about racism, explicitly, as it relates to how that university is, like, supported, operated, all of that stuff. I feel like the folks who are [on the board] and more vocal, they're more careful with how they frame things… because they want to stay in relationship and be impactful. But since I don't have anything to lose, I'm able to be a little push a little more.

Kiana's board avoided conversations about race and engaged in a "colorblind" ideology that CRT scholars warned about. Kiana's board presumes race-neutral because they have a mix of diversity among trustees. However, as we have heard through the counter stories presented this far, having a marginalized identity does not make a diversity champion; it also does not equate to inclusion.

Kiana's statement about race coming up only once in conversation on the board is also shocking, given that the Higher Education Act of 1965 defined HBCUs as "any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). By omitting conversations about race, Kiana's board is failing to fulfill its fiduciary duty in carrying out the HBCU mission. Decision-making at HBCUs cannot happen without explicitly acknowledging how race and racism impact Black Americans

before enrollment, during matriculation, and post-graduation. How can trustees negate conversations about race at an institution founded as a result of slavery and segregation?

Kiana also alludes to other board members carefully framing conversations about race on the board to "stay in relationship" and "be impactful." This implies that having a conversation about racism on the Board of Trustees goes against the informal social standards of collegiality. If a trustee goes against the social norm of being "race-neutral," the trustee's position on the board can be compromised. Kiana's counter-story about her having "nothing to lose" and talking about race regardless of the norm illustrates how White supremacy is embedded into the culture of her board.

Lastly, along with Kiana, Black colleagues were gaslit by the White man who claimed Black people should be happy with the legislative decision to increase university funding. Even though, as Kiana points out, one-time funding does not negate the immense resource gap of HBCUs compared to other higher education institutions. The interaction is similar to what Sofia, a Native American trustee, experienced on her board related to support for Indigenous students. Both are examples of how People of Color remain marginalized in society because of the delusion that equity is a "quick fix." Kiana's positionality impacted her equity-minded approach to her work, and she understood that the path to social parity and justice is far from over.

Equity work is often siloed to race experts and scholars (Museus et al., 2015); however, in this study, Women of Color used an equity approach to policy and decision-making, regardless of their profession. Participants engaged in what Rall et. al., (2020) refer to as "culturally sustaining governance", that is, "a mindset, tool, and approach to

empower trustees and their affiliates to prioritize equity through resources, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes that inform decision-making" (p.144). Women of Color understood their institution's mission and the range of backgrounds and circumstances of their students, staff, and faculty. They made decisions that would address equity gaps while also recognizing how gaps in their epistemology could influence their decision-making.

Expertise

Aside from demographic diversity, Women of Color also had much expertise and a range of professions that enhanced their boards. Take, for example, Martina's story,

> I was a [profession a], I was a [profession b]. I was a [specialist] in school. And have a [specialized background]. And there's absolutely nobody on the board of any, like, any of my boards that have done any of those things. So, I bring a perspective, just from such– I'm just so different. I mean, I'm Black, too. But that's, like, not as different as having those experiences. And so, universities have a lot of issues with [topic], especially these days, and most of them have never been [experts on topic]. We don't have any [specialty] degrees on our Board of Trustees at [University], and on my other boards, we don't either. And so, bringing a [specialty] background… I just feel like…I have a [range] in professional background. Now me being a minority as well. And when there are women's issues, that–you know, I have that as well.

Although much of her story is redacted to ensure anonymity, we can imagine the accolades that Martina brought with her to her board. The complexity of these

participants' backgrounds proved that their range and expertise were beyond their colleagues' in many ways. These trustees were much more than just their racial and gender identities. For example, Elsie notes that her tribal identity is an added value to how she approaches her role. However, she explicates that her tribal identity is not her only forte,

> I think one of the things the board valued was my method of inquiry of questions, and asking deep, meaningful questions or strategic questions. And so, I think those were skill sets that were valued. And in many ways, I think my skill sets were valued more than perhaps me being a Person of Color because I've been working for so long and in different kinds of jobs. But also, there was, I think, a sense that I had worked in enough places besides [the university] that I brought a sense of urbane newness to the conversation…complexity was not wasted on me–sophistication was evident. And so that level of sophistication was something that came to be valued, regardless of my tribal identity. And then tribal identity was valued differently... There were a couple of times when I talked about the importance of the tribal festival in the spring and the Powwow and what a meaningful recruitment tool, and reinforcement tool, it was for the tribal students on campus. I talked a couple of times about the talent that [the university] had lost–they'd lost some really valuable talent in some recruitment and student support on campus. And I talked about that, but I tried not to be the Indian representative. I tried to be knowledgeable and helpful when it was on the agenda or a presentation…but I didn't try to represent that agenda.

Elsie tried to avoid being tokenized and stereotyped by her peers as only caring about Indigenous issues. Her intersectional lens shifted depending on the context of the conversations on the board, and her unique characteristics only made her perspective much more valuable. She had a type of expertise that was more salient to her in her role, and she believed it was valued by the board.

Another participant, Rachel, details her unique professional background and how she was often tapped for her expertise,

> ….I have [a terminal degree] that I got after a [terminal degree], that comes in very handy. So I'm very comfortable. I'm not someone who's going to be bluffed, I can talk to the auditors about where we are. I've served on the accrediting boards…And so I don't have to guess at things. I can tell them 'This is going to be a problem. We need to get in front of this right now.' Or 'We need to go find an outside General Counsel, because the one we have isn't serving the needs of the board in the way that you would traditionally expect.' So I think I've been helpful. If the chairman is in doubt about something, he'll call and ask me, and we'll walk through it. And sometimes it's as simple as me telling him, 'You've done everything right,' or 'Why don't we have the board, the President and Executive Committee meet'… sometimes it's as simple as saying, 'Is there a reason, we do it this way?'… I actually enjoy seeing the hand move.

Rachel had a wide professional range that made her an asset on her Board of Trustees. Her counterparts sought her out because her opinion and expertise bared much weight. Similarly, Tiara's story detailed how her life history added value to her board,

… so the reality is, is that your frame of, you know, perspective/expertise is shaped by your lived experiences. And so, everyone brings their lived experiences to, you know, this type of work. My lived experiences include growing up in [location] and being, you know, a Black woman, but my lived experiences also include… being educated in a highly selective environment in terms of my academic background, right? My perspective also includes the fact that I have worked in [field]. And I've worked in [field]. My background includes an extensive background in [expertise]. And so, all of those things inform and shape how I show up on a board, right? In many different ways…I bring a lens that is probably a bit more focused on resources, allocation of resources, focused on equity, focused on haves and have-nots, and understanding the implication of policy on different stakeholders and the *impact* of policy. And I believe that's part of why, you know, I was elected to the board– that I brought a rich perspective that may help to round out a board, right? When you build a board–if you're building an effective board–you want a well-rounded board. And it's an interesting thing... Every person doesn't have to be well-rounded, but you need a well-rounded board. And so, you identify individuals with various expertise and perspectives. And when you're building a board, and when you're filling roles on a board, you look for where your gaps are, you look for what your strengths are, you look for where you want to be stronger…and so, my background … is relatively unique for the composition of our particular board. I'm not the only one, but one, you know, probably a smaller group of the overall kind of profile of our

> board. And, you know, [my background] added to what I can bring in my contributions to the board.

What stands out from Tiara's story is her expertise in the "allocation of resources…equity… haves and have-nots… and the *impact* of policy". Tiara's unique background can be argued to be one of the most critical on her Boards of Trustees, given the impact U.S. governing boards have on higher education policies that hinder or help historically underrepresented communities. Tiara's expertise embodies what Boards of Trustees in the U.S. *should* prioritize in their qualifications when recruiting new colleagues. Yet, she is one of the few members of her board who share such characteristics.

Tiara also implies in her story that an individual does not need to be all-knowing to be a successful board member but rather that the board must be cognizant of what knowledge is lacking and whose voices are missing. She calls this having a well-rounded board. Carla, shares this sentiment, except she uses a different term in her narrative,

> I have a [specialty] background…that the other trustees don't. What I have found is that we all kind of have our own niches, you know? …I see that as each one of us bringing our unique education and unique backgrounds to [the board]. And I think it makes for a well-balanced board.

Both Tiara and Carla speak of the import of having board members with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and thoughts, which researchers argue enhances board effectiveness (Chait, 1993; Kohn & Mortimer, 1983; Kramer & Adams, 2020; Taylor et al., 1991; Rall et al., 2019). The identity of Women of Color encompassed more than just

race and gender. It included professional background, social class, sexuality, age, and other identities that informed their positionality and approach to decision-making. Overwhelmingly, all participants stated they could not separate their backgrounds and life experience from their advocacy and Trustee roles. The impact of Women of Color was felt beyond their decision-making. Their impact extended to the board culture and institutional culture.

Impact on Board Culture

Women of Color left lasting impacts on their boards and institutions. The strengths I have presented thus far informed how they approached their work and identified areas that needed to be improved to ensure a more inclusive campus climate. I begin with Shannon,

> ….The very first thing I did as board chair was that I changed the start time of our board meetings to a friendlier time in the morning… and I even had employees come to me very quietly and thank me for that. Because if [the trustees] had to be on campus at 7 am, what time do you think [the staff] had to be on campus to be ready for us, you know? So sometimes even the structure of how we meet, and the convenience of meeting, and, you know, things of that nature… it's a slab baked into what some of the challenges are. It's just... really, it's a man's world. It's a White man's world.

Shannon told me how the board meetings conflicted with the schedules of those with familial responsibilities, such as school-aged children, and those who worked traditional 8-5 pm jobs. She also explained the amount of preparation that board meetings required

on behalf of administrative staff and the stress that being on campus so early added to their job duties. She identified this as a barrier of accessibility and made a simple policy decision that created an environment more considerate of everyone's background. She also added how the environment favored White men, who were retired and did not bear familial responsibilities.

> Elsie also looked to improve the board culture through simple policy changes:
>
> …one thing that I did push, and I felt good about it… I didn't carry the weight of the decision, but I begged–because we were a new board– for the board to adopt a culture. And as a consequence, one of the protocols was that we identified one person on our board who would send congratulatory, sympathy, and get-well cards to key members of the campus community on behalf of the board… and so that way we would sort of get our little fingers out into the university community by paying attention to what was going on on campus, and what was happening in people's lives. And, then [the board memebr] carried that further and sent cards on behalf of the board, to board members. Then the President did it as well, the administrative office did it as well. We sort of just got this idea that handwritten correspondence on behalf of the Board could be meaningful and could support the notion that we were coalesced in a way around a common cause that made us care about each other.

Elsie was one of the participants who shared that her board had diversity and was very collegial. You can see how when she joined the board, which was a newly established board at the time, she pleaded that the Board of Trustees adopt a culture. Elsie set a

precedent for her board and fostered a communal relationship among members and various campus stakeholders.

Rachel also alluded to how women improved her board's environment:

> I do think it's important for Women of Color to be on school boards. I think all the rooms have been made by men generally. And certainly, most of the research has been done in a White environment. And it does make a difference when a Person of Color is there. It makes a difference. Even if you're in an environment where most of the people are People of Color, being a woman changes things because how we're going to solve problems is very different. I can see that. And I have checkered a lot of things that men tend to write down….Do we have no responsibility for anything? What does our HR guideline say about giving a person this opportunity? Are we digging a hole for ourselves by having bad behavior, that we didn't live by our own rules? Women tend to do that more. And it's what I've seen … on this board, being a woman has made a bigger difference because we've tempered the temperament of the board. The board meetings are no longer yelling, screaming things. We're laughing. We're applauding. We're bringing student groups and we're bringing the cheerleaders in. We're praising [athletes] who won with their grade point average. And these are not just student-athletes, there are great students. We're celebrating more. We're getting out on time, we're not here all night.

Rachel speaks again to the import of an intersectional approach in researching race and gender because on her board, beyond People of Color, women also made an impact.

Rachel's board had racial diversity, hence, why she speaks about the impact women had on the board, and the culture shift that occurred when more women joined with her. The shift in the board's demographics affected the culture of the board–it became more celebratory and collegial. Rachel also addresses why the narratives I collected in this study are considered counter-stories. As someone familiar with research, Rachel clarified, "Most of the research has been done in a White environment." I presented Rachel's argument in the literature review in Chapter Three. As Boards are predominately White, most governance scholarship has been informed by a White lens. The one study that discussed Women's experiences as trustees (Glazer-Raymo, 2008) was informed by the perspectives of White participants.

A similar shift in the board culture and the institutional culture happened at Lisa's university. She told me about what she's accomplished as a trustee so far,

> … One of the goals was to make certain that we were elevating the standards of the board, where, you know, [the university] used to describe being on the board as a country club job there– they didn't really do any work, it was all fun traveling with the sports teams, and whatever. And I'm like, that's why [our university had issues] …because you weren't doing your job. So, I think as soon as [me and a colleague] came in… that culture of the board changed quite a bit. We are now a working board, we are very engaged… so that is ongoing. I do believe [changing] the perception that [the board] is more accessible than any previous Board of Trustees have ever been, where people feel comfortable with us, and talk to us about issues. That was really huge for me. Because we had often been viewed as

> being in that ivory tower– couldn't relate, didn't really know what was going on campus. And that's really not true [now]. We're very much involved with our student organizations and our faculty. So yes, I have had a lot of initiatives that are still ongoing, and there are some that I'm like, 'Oh, I can check that off and I've got more years to my term. I'm really confident that I will have them all checked off by the time that I leave.

Lisa was motivated to join her board when her institution faced a lot of difficulty. She wanted to shift the culture of her board and has been able to do so during her tenure. She was very intentional with her time and advocacy efforts. She and other Women of Color on her board also worked towards changing the board's perception and improving its relationship with campus stakeholders. Another trustee, Marisa, tells me about how she also joined at a time when her university was under scrutiny,

> I had two particular interests when I joined the board…One was to strengthen the role of the board as a governance entity. I mean, higher ed boards tend to be, in my judgment, passive. You know, they're either viewed as advocates, or they differ tremendously to the president. So, they tend to defer to the president or the chancellor, or whoever. And I came in at a point where, all of a sudden, that blew up in everybody's faces. And before I came, I said, 'I'm not going to just, you know, I'm not a vessel to be fed.' You know, 'I'll have questions.' And it turns out that because of the circumstances, it's really accelerated the ability to put the topics of: Who are we as a board? What is our governance responsibility? How do we lean into being a strategic, forward-looking board and not just a reactive board

> to whatever is put on our plate? And that has happened. And I played a role in that. And, that, I feel very good about. The second one is really it's fundamental, which is the long-term financial sustainability of the institution, [our funding model] is not sustainable. That's just not the way to go. And so, one of the topics that I really wanted to raise is, 'How do we think about this?' I'm on this board for many years, I don't want to look years from now and say, 'Oh, my God, we really are going downhill or depressed because we didn't pay attention to this'. This is a time to really look forward and think about, 'What is the way that we end up being a long-term, financially sustainable institution? What are the ingredients of that?'

Marisa's outlook on the board's responsibility in being forward-looking comes at a time when the U.S. has seen many higher education scandals due to the inaction of governing boards. I presented a few cases of the board's contributions to university scandals in Chapter 3. Like Lisa, Marisa joined her boards during university turbulence and quickly asked difficult questions. They both wanted to ensure that their boards took responsibility for their passive governance history and thought more prudently about the future of the board and institution.

The stories I have presented delineate the impact of Women of Color trustees on their respective boards. Their influence began with simple changes to their board policies and trickled into more extensive campus community changes. Participants' stories show leadership's bearing on the outcomes of its organization and how boards can model a positive cultural environment by fostering a strong internalized culture. In this last

section, I discuss Women of Color's impacts beyond their board and directly to their institution.

Impact on Institution

The last contribution of Women of Color trustees was to their institution and constituents. Participants helped establish and strengthen relationships between the board, administration, students, staff, and faculty. Essentially, they fortified a shared governance model of academia and laid the groundwork for a robust institutional culture. By building relationships with campus stakeholders, Women of Color contributed to inclusionary efforts and uplifted issues to the board that their counterparts were overlooking.

Relationship-Building with Campus Stakeholders. I first begin with the positive relationships that Women of Color fostered amongst campus stakeholders. Ana told me about the impact she left on the administration of her university,

> …I'm really proud of having created a much more warm environment and better connections between the Office of the President and the Board of Trustees. And just creating an atmosphere that was less tense, less hostile, less accusatory, but much more collaborative–collegial. And I was really touched when I left the board, to have so many members of the Office of the President and leadership tell me that they really appreciated me changing the tone of the meetings, changing the tone of the interaction so that it was more collaborative and a lot less accusatory–intense. And I think that's really important– that collegiality and professionalism. All these types of bodies are essential for really good functioning governance.

Ana disclosed throughout her counter-stories that she was operating on a Board of Trustees with a very hostile environment. The negative culture of her board influenced meetings and began to impact internal relationships. Ana changed the tone of the meetings when she became chair and improved collegiality between the board and the Office of the President, which made her an effective leader. Eckel and Kezar (2016) argue that "effective leadership in colleges and universities requires orchestration amongst key players–faculty, senior administrators, and trustees." Under a hostile and accusatory culture, her board impacted its ability to engage in effective, shared governance.

Chelsea also improved the shared governance model of her institution,

> I also set up a task force to deal with the issue of shared governance in order to try to better the working relationships between the board, the administration, and the faculty. And that was pretty successful. I brought in a great Interim President, who really sort of turned us around and got us in a position that we were able to hire a good, permanent President… I'm very proud of that. I'm very proud of the fact that, under my leadership, our new President will be our first [historically underrepresented identity] President. Very excited about that.

Chelsea's story reminds us of the power of governing boards on the leadership structure of colleges and universities–I presented this at the beginning of Chapter One. Influencing leadership structure is a crucial role of U.S. governing boards. Chelsea was able to help diversify the presidential position and help make institutional history on her campus. Moreover, she strengthened the board, administration, and faculty relationships.

Sofia focused on engaging with the faculty on her campus as well. She understood that her institution had many unique voices and perspectives that she wanted to connect to her board,

> One of my strengths revolves around being able to see the world in a very different way than other people would, you know? And I mean, that doesn't just go for me, right? It goes for most people, which is why, for me, the most important part of being in my position was reaching out to people whom I have literally no idea what their perspectives on the world were. Like, reaching out to these smaller–whether it be like small student clubs, or you know, coalitions of faculty where there's only like two Filipino faculty on campus, and they're talking to each other, and that's their committee, right? Like, it's just them. And trying to reach out to these people and going, you know, 'What is your unique experience?' Like, 'What is going on? What are the issues that you want to see?' And kind of just seeing another side of, 'this is the way that I see the campus' … because I already have my perspectives… so being able to latch on to that [experience] and saying, 'well here, like, let me try to bring this up to [the trustees], let me try to uplift this point to them, let me connect you with this person because I think they'd be interested,'…and just trying to be that connection point.

Trustees are often far removed from campus since, typically, they are not active university members. In my line of work and throughout my experiences as a long-time member of my university, I have found that it is rare to see a trustee on campus. Even if trustees visit the campus, access is limited to specific demographics (academic senate

leadership, student leadership, and administrators) or is vetted by a campus relations administrator. This means many stakeholders have a university career without meeting their board leadership. Knowing the limited access trustees have to the public, Sofia went beyond her fiduciary duties to find marginalized groups at her university and bridge connections to ensure their voices and needs were heard by her colleagues. Sofia's ability to connect with her constituents fostered relationships at her institution that were otherwise lost to her board. Women of Color understood how trustees were often seen, as Lisa called it, "operating in the ivory tower"; therefore, participants went out of their way to connect with students, staff, and faculty and become more approachable.

Participants in this study displayed many strengths. They had unique backgrounds, life experiences, and expertise that influenced their advocacy efforts and approach to leadership. Women of Color were methodical in their decision-making process, were cognizant of equity gaps on their campus, and understood the needs of their constituents. Participants comprehended the challenges of the environments and worked towards improving the culture of their board and institution. The list of strengths I have provided in this section is not exhaustive. Women of Color also brought additional attributes and contributions, such as efficiency, problem-solving skills, and mentorship.

I wanted to tell the stories of the leadership contributions of Women of Color to showcase that in addition to their unique perspectives, participants' ability to enact change, improve relationships, and advance the interests of their stakeholders make them impactful leaders. Participants contributed to equity efforts by using an equity-minded approach to decision-making. They pushed for inclusion when Women of Color sought to

improve the shared governance structure of their university. Ultimately, participants contributed diversity due to their leadership actions and efforts. The stories I presented are standards of leadership that all boards should look for in their members. Women of Color illustrated an image of the possible leadership traits that Boards of Trustees could embody and how every board member can contribute to DE&I efforts.

Impact of Diversity on the Organizational Culture of Boards and the Experiences of Women of Color Trustees

> *...I think that's one of the beauties of it and why you want diverse boards and diverse organizations. Because depending on your experiences, how you grew up, and what you were exposed to, you will bring different thoughts to different issues that you will comprise…And so, if we all sort of have the same background, went to the same schools, or the color of our skin is the same, we're all the same gender–I don't believe we're going to get the best results for your organization. I think you will get the best results when you have people who have had different experiences.- Chelsea*

In discussing board demographics, three participants shared that their board had a wide range of demographics (race, gender, sexuality, profession), and three participants said their board was diverse but could improve amongst age demographics, sexuality, and nationality. The remaining participants (12) shared that their boards had mediocre diversity or pronounced race and gender equity gaps. Overwhelmingly the two racial demographics that Women of Color identified were absent from boards, aside from the general Women of Color category, were Asian and Native American trustees (women and men). I echoed this conclusion as I, too, found that these demographics were challenging to come across when I recruited participants for this study. Overall, the demographics of higher education boards lacked representation across various identified categories–and yes, diversity made a difference.

Racial *and* gender diversity significantly impacted the experiences of Women of Color trustees, such as representation, tokenism, microaggressions, and stereotypes. This finding aligns with the non-profit literature on the impact of critical mass (Konrad & Kramer, 2008). According to their study, at least (three) women were needed to reach critical mass on non-profit boards and reduce gender barriers, create a more supportive environment, decrease tokenization, and increase board collaboration (Konrad & Kramer, 2008). The difference, however, is that critical mass on non-profit boards was measured by gender only. For my study, the intersection of race *and* gender mattered for Women of Color.

Nevertheless, as either race *or* gender increased on the board, the board's culture shifted to a more collegial model. As a result, a few participants (three) reported a positive board experience with zero instances of racism or sexism and a board culture they described as "tremendously collegial and respectful." However, for most participants, the case of outward collegiality was often present, but experiences with marginalization remained evident for Women of Color trustees.

I present in this section a few stories participants shared about diversity's impact on boards and their DE&I efforts. Participants commented on how the board's culture changed under the guidance of diverse leaders and how diversity impacted members' decision-making processes. I juxtapose two stories, one from a public board and one from a private board, to showcase how diversity impacts higher education boards as a collective. I present these two stories without pseudonyms because they describe appointment processes.

> …the culture of the Board of Trustees also changes with the chair and leadership, I believe. And it has changed over time, even on the years that I served on it, it changed a lot. And it mattered when a Person of Color became the board chair. It made a difference. Because up to that point, it certainly felt like the old guard, old school folks who'd been around forever, who were predominantly White and very wealthy, were really the power at the board. They were the committee chairs, they were the ones who were the board officers–and then it sort of changed all of a sudden, and you had two People of Color, who were the chair and the vice chair. And that meant that we got to shape the appointments of the committee chairs, and those started to be more diverse. And, so, that changed. And at least from my perspective, it seemed like the board was a little bit more open, there was more room to be more progressive. But then again, I was part of that change. So what would I know? Maybe it didn't feel like that to others. Maybe they felt like they were suddenly on the other side? I don't know. So. So there's the board culture…I remember a commissioner once told me that the minute there's a new commissioner, the board changes, like the culture changes of a board. And I've thought about that since then. And it's true. It doesn't matter if the board is 5, 12, 20. When you see a new member, it changes the board dynamic.

This participant went on to tell me about the Governor who appointed her to her term,

> The governor appointees [I came in with] were very different from traditional appointees. And that changed the culture of the Board, because the governor appointed people who, who were not all super wealthy, or who came from

> government, or who were just people he knew… it was really interesting. That was the watershed change on the Board. When my class ascended into leadership, it really changed things.

Her story speaks to the responsibility of governors to make well-thought-out appointments rather than selecting political plumbs and reinforcing the culture of whiteness and "the boys' club' I delineated when I discussed access earlier in this chapter. It also reminds us of the power that chairs and vice chairs hold on governing boards and how those positions can grately hinder or advance diversity efforts. There is a cascading effect that can occur as diversity in leadership increases. We hear the impact of leadership and DE&I in another participant's story.

This participant comes from a private higher education board that has seen an increase in diverse members over the last few years:

> ….don't get me wrong, we haven't got a fix, we still got issues, like we're still working through them. But I think there have been a number of leaders, particularly in the last two board chairs–and a board chair can spend a nice amount of time. So, this is probably like the last decade of leadership, who got it right, and who were intentional about getting it and understanding how our alumni body was evolving. Because [our university] has been more than 50% Students of Color now for [over a decade]. And so, our alumni body is browning very fast, our alumni body's starting to look very different. And you had leaders sitting on this board who recognized that there needed to be diversification in many ways–not just race and ethnicity. Gender has always probably been there.

> But in many other regions of the country, backgrounds, and perspectives– like all of that. And you had a series of committed board chairs that were very intentional to work with the university, I think, to identify a pipeline of leaders. And so, we still got work to do, I don't want to paint a picture of, like, how we got it. But what I will say, is that the commitment is real–and you can see it manifested in how we look, and who's on our board, and what that looks like today. And that is also one of the reasons why yep, I take the time. And I'm willing to serve at this level, with that level of time, and pull and draw. Because I do believe that [the trustees] are serious about the commitment, and helping to make the institution better and reflective–even if we don't always get it right.

Her story exemplifies how self-perpetuating boards can be intentional about representation and board diversity. Leadership on her campus worked together to identify the racial, gender, and professional gaps on her board, ensuring that they represented their student body and alumni base. She recognized that having a representative board that mirrors the student and alumni body is essential because trustees can better understand issues impacting their stakeholders. She adds that the board chair and vice chair greatly influenced the outcomes of DE&I goals due to their leadership.

> Lastly, a participant also articulated the impact of diversity on her board's culture: So our culture right now, I think, is one that is changing. So we are really not who we were, but not who we want to be yet. So, we are transitioning into a new culture…we are a board that's really trying to affect change. We are trying to be transparent and accountable. We are trying to be honest with everything that we

> do, trying to you know, sometimes put aside our own feelings and desires for the greater good…I think that the culture of our board is one where we are trying to re-identify ourselves so that people can respect the Board of Trustees again and have confidence in us…. The board recently changed–diversified–so the culture of the board changed… I don't feel like the board culture is static. I believe that if it feels like the board culture changes, it shifts based on who's on the board. So, when I first started, I think it was a different board than it is now. And, you know, five years from now, or it will, it will change that again, based on the constituents.

This last participant discusses how the board's culture has changed to become more accountable and transparent. The board's diversity had a positive impact on the collective values of the board. In other words, diversity changed the organizational culture for the better.

Diversity was crucial in improving the experiences of Women of Color trustees. Not only did they benefit from increased representation, but so did their board and institution. The impact of diversity was a theme found across all interviews, which is why it is essential for governing boards, state representatives, and those with the voting power to elect and appoint governing bodies to pay close attention to diversity efforts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the results of this study: The experiences of Women of Color trustees in the U.S. and the impact that identity and diversity of the board had on those experiences. As a collective, Women of Color described that boards' internal environments match their outside: they operate under a culture informed by the lens of

men and whiteness. I presented how microaggressions, stereotypes, tokenism, and an absence of representation impact Women of Color as they navigate the trusteeship. Participants felt the impact of race and gender from their appointment process until the end of their tenure. Women of Color, however, engaged in survival strategies that contributed to their success as leaders and ultimately positively impacted their board, institution, and stakeholders. Although participants shared the commonality of marginalization attributed to their racial and gender identity, their unique perspectives were relative to their myriad identities.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This dissertation examined how the organizational culture of higher education boards impacts 18 Women of Color trustees with terms that span one to thirty years as trustees. These women serve across 10 four-year public and four 4-year private boards spanning eight states, including system boards, single-institution boards, and state boards. The sample also incorporated participants that served on boards that governed Predominantly White Institutions and Minority-Serving-Institutions. I used Critical Race Feminism, Intersectionality, and Organizational Culture Theory to demonstrate how Women of Color experienced their tenure as trustees. To fill the theoretical gap pertaining to race, gender, and the trusteeship, I proposed three research questions for this study: (1) How do intersections of gender, class, race, and other identities of Women of Color's influence their experiences on higher education governing boards? (2) How do Women of Color contribute to higher education governance? And (3) What, if any, are the challenges Women of Color face as board members in higher education? Through counter-stories, participants were able to diagnose conditions from within the board that resulted in privileging maleness and whiteness. Participants' counter-storytelling shed light on how U.S. higher education boards have inculcated behaviors that marginalize Women of Color trustees and how other aspects of Women of Color's identity are also marginalized. Moreover, their stories problematize the decision-making power that boards have in higher education and how, if unchecked, the behaviors of trustees can negatively impact a wide array of students, staff, and faculty affected by policy decisions. In this final chapter, I revisit the findings presented in Chapter Four. I discuss the

findings in relation to the existing literature and expand on the theoretical contributions of this study in higher education governance. I follow the findings with the implications of this research and recommendations for policy and practice. I conclude with suggestions for future research.

A Discussion of Race, Gender, Identity, and the Trusteeship

It is not new that race and gender share an interdependent relationship which can cause further marginalization and social disadvantages for Women of Color in higher education (Tate & Linn, 2005). However, the interlock of gender, race, and other identities in relation to the structure of the trusteeship and the experiences of Women of Color trustees has been grossly unexplored in governing board research (Rall et al., 2022; Rall & Orué, 2020). This study was significant because it addressed a theoretical gap in governance literature and provided insight into the experiences of Women of Color trustees. For the first time, Women of Color trustees were centered within governance scholarship and were contributors of knowledge in research historically informed through the lens of White men. Participants were able to diagnose the board's conditions from their perspectives as "outsiders within," and they provided much-valued information, candor, and care. Their stories were powerful individually and collectively because their narratives were uniquely positioned to highlight issues overlooked in governance research within and across contexts. Women of Color's stories as a collective also painted a clear image of patterns of exclusion embedded within the board's practices common to boards in different states, structures, and compositions.

In this section, I present patterns in the data that require further discussion, such as (1) the trusteeship as property rights, (2) converging power relations on the board, (3) the challenges of Women of Color trustees, (4) impact of diversity on higher education boards, and (5) the power and possibilities of having Women of Color trustees. Through the discussion, I tie how the findings relate to the existing literature and how they add to governance scholarship. The discussion will then frame the recommendations and future scope of research that can be added to the field of higher education governance.

The Trusteeship as "Property Rights"

When Cheryl Harris introduced the notion of "whiteness as property rights," she did so to discuss how racial exclusion and domination have prevailed in the U.S. despite judicial reforms aimed at racial inclusion (1993). Going back to colonialism, racial classification granted White people dominance over Black and Native American people who were labeled "as forms of property and property rights" (Harris, 1993, p.1714). Therefore, just like property was once conceptualized to be a set of rights, so too became the ownership of whiteness (Gillies, 2020).

Harris (1993) theorized that in the modern day, whiteness is used to enjoy privileges, status, and reputation in society. White people use their identity as property to protect their status and exclude others from the societal benefits of whiteness (Harris, 1993). In the field of education, whiteness as property rights has been widely cited to explain racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes for students (Bondi, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Gillies, 2022), educators (Bright, 2020; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2009; Patel, 2015), and administrators (Scott et al., 2022; Wolge & Dilworth, 2015).

However, until now, whiteness as property rights has yet to be applied to theorize racial disparities within higher education governing boards. In the following section, I will explicate how whiteness as property rights translates to White people having a seat at the table, controlling access and power at the table, and influencing decision-making on U.S. colleges and universities.

Throughout Chapter Four, I presented counter-stories that described how White supremacy and the right of citizenship (Harris, 1993) were seen as the norm or the status quo of higher education boards. In other words, White people had the "right" to serve on boards, merely due to a history of White supremacy and the power structures that White people benefit from in modern society. One participant described the culture of her board as "a White man's world," and another said she emulated a "White guy resume" to build her professional and trustee career. Multiple Women of Color referred to the social, economic, and political structures that have long privileged White men and reported that "that's still the game" in the trusteeship. These statements allude to a normalcy of White supremacy within the trusteeship that has been reinforced through a history of social exclusion and power relations. Despite laws that have banned racial discrimination in the U.S., the trusteeship has maintained homogeneity in demographics by masking racial domination and exclusion within its organizational structure.

The Right to Enjoyment

The ideology of whiteness as the norm on the board contributed to the belief that trusteeship was a right that could be earned or bought by White people. In other words, the "right to enjoyment" of the trusteeship was evident when White people claimed a seat

at the table without prior knowledge or training in higher education or any related professions. Instead, notoriety related to wealth, power, and opportunity placed White people on the Board of Trustees. Think back to Participant Four's story about how a board member was elected because of his father's previous service as a trustee. In his case, the property was passed on, or inherited through familial capital.

Multiple counter-stories also supported the passage of property rights between White people who were "political plumbs." Political plumbs were trustees with monetary ties to governors or state legislators that allowed trustees to "earn" or "buy" the right to serve. In those cases, the trusteeship extended as property passed on between White people in positions of power. Historical trends in higher education have shown that White governors appoint White trustees, who appoint White chancellors, and so forth, therefore, property rights are passed on through a history of racism and White supremacy that contributes to Whiteness as the norm. The exclusion of People of Color in the trusteeship becomes normalized because "the way you [get on the board] is the way we've always done it," as Participant Four disclosed.

The Right to Exclusion

As a reminder, Women board members were absent for the first 240 years of U.S. higher education (Glazer-Raymo, 2008); therefore, the "right to exclusion" of the trusteeship was first demonstrated in the laws that prohibited access to the trusteeship for Women of Color. Today, the right to exclude is inculcated within the environment of the board. It became evident when Women of Color disclosed that they felt they were seen as affirmative action appointees by their peers or that they could be "tallied" to meet a

diversity quota of the board, as Participant Five and multiple others stated. Women of Color's appointments were thus believed to go against the "norm" of whiteness and the trusteeship. In other words, they did not belong or feel their identities as Women of Color were welcomed on the board. The right to exclude explains that for Women of Color to gain a seat at the table, their access relies on the interest-convergence of White men on the board. In other words, Women of Color must prove they have something to add of value to the board that will benefit their White counterparts.

For example, Blanche's counter-story detailed how she felt she felt valued by the board because on the one hand, she could be counted as a "twofer." On the other hand, she said her expertise was the most salient identity of worth to the board. Both statements speak to how a predominately White board could benefit from a Woman of Color's expertise and diversity "tally," not from how a predominately White board could benefit from Women of Color as people. The inclusion of Women of Color thus comes not from the board's belief that Women of Color make esteemed trustees, but that Women of Color can benefit the board's diversity goals or add to their lapse in expertise. The addition of Women of Color is limited and at the interest-convergence of the dominant group.

The Right of Disposition

Some Women of Color chose to navigate White supremacy and position themselves as proximal to whiteness to gain access to their roles. This meant building up a professional resume that imitated a White man's or choosing to disclose parts of their professional identity that more closely aligned with White, male-dominated fields to gain

voter support. The cultural practice of conforming to White norms is explained by how Whiteness is transferable through "rights of disposition." However, navigating professional identity does not come easy for People of Color because racism is so entrenched in society that access and opportunity to take on specific professional roles are often limited. Moreover, the idea that a White man's resume is more appealing for the trusteeship poses a deficit framework of People of Color. Therefore, Women of Color also had to learn to navigate racism and exclusion through the survival strategies I presented in Chapter Four.

Impact of Whiteness in Board Policy

As Harris described in 1993, whiteness as property rights can be theorized to explain racial disparities within the trusteeship. Historically, whiteness has been the baseline for property or ownership of the trustee role, and it has granted White people the ability to exclude access for People of Color. Beyond limiting access, however, whiteness also grants trustees the ability to control property through rules, policy, and discourse within the trusteeship. White privilege is so normalized and embedded within the dominant ideology that it controls racial discourse within organizations (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015), further impeding progress for People of Color. In Chapter Four, I presented counter-stories in which Women of Color felt the need to form coalitions on the board to ensure that Trustees of Color could gain control over racial discourse, such as the case of Tiara. Her coalition came about because of the policy implications her board's discussions had on Communities of Color within her institutions. Trustees of

Color attempted to leverage some of the power their White counterparts permanently enjoyed on the board by forming social groups.

Because White people control discourse and power on boards via their numerical representation and historical domination, board policies reflect the values and morals of the dominant group (Chesler & Crawfoot, 1989). Chesler and Crawfoot (1989) argue that "racism mutes and sometimes obliterates the voices of People of Color in two ways; directly, by denying them access to the institution or institutional platforms for self-expression; and, indirectly, by having White "experts" on People of Color speak for them" (p. 951). In the case of governing boards, White trustees make up 70% of all public seats and 83% of all private seats, despite Students of Color making up 49% of the total undergraduate student population in the U.S. (AGB, 2022; NCES, 2023). Even in Kiana's case, who served at an HBCU, she claimed that "half of these HBCU boards are White." This means that White "experts" make policy decisions and speak on behalf of People of Color in higher education daily. As a result, the few Women of Color on boards have come together to form allyships to ensure their voices are not lost in the dominant discourse or learned the power of exerting and using their voice. We saw the latter through Rachel, Ana, and Blanche's counter-stories.

The findings suggest that White supremacy not only limits the diversity of the board but also impacts diversity efforts and outcomes for People of Color in higher education more broadly. Therefore, governance scholarship must continue challenging the race-neutrality of higher education boards by naming new realities of historically excluded perspectives on boards, such as Women of Color. Moreover, White supremacy

inculcated within the trusteeship must be identified and called out, along with other power relations, so that the dominant group of trustees can recognize how they contribute to exclusion.

Converging Power Relations

Women of Color navigated multiple systems of power as they traversed their trustee roles and their everyday interactions on the board. Participants disclosed that race, gender, sexuality, professional roles, caretaking roles, socio-economic background, first-generation status, immigration status, culture, and marital status all contributed to their position within converging power relations. While some identities were leveraged in ways to privilege Women of Color and gain the support of their stakeholders or peers, many of the participants' identities marginalized them as trustees. Privileged identities often had proximity to whiteness (i.e., professional roles, wealth, non-immigrant status), reinforcing that the trusteeship valorized whiteness and that power at the hand of those who possessed whiteness as property. Some identities were also more salient than others (i.e., race).

In contrast, other identities were not hyper-visible but remained significant to the experiences of Women of Color trustees and their work on their board. For example, Black women were more likely to experience blatant racism, whereas Latinas were more likely to experience marginalization for their gender or sexuality. This does not mean Latinas did not also experience racism; however, Black women were far more likely to be subjected to discrimination based on their racial and ethnic identity than Latina, Asian and Indigenous trustees.

Although participants saw their identity as a source of strength, at times, Women of Color felt they needed to adapt their behaviors to meet the board's culture. As Ana stated, "I never adapt my identity to anything. But we always adapt our behaviors to survive. That is what we do as Women of Color, as LGBT people. We always adapt…How else do we survive?" Participants resorted to this form of adaptation as a survival strategy to retain power within the social hierarchy of the board. Women of Color who had several years of tenure on their board or were new to the board but advanced in their careers felt less inclined to adapt their behaviors, relationships, and voice because they had gained respect as senior members or experts. However, Expertise and tenure add to notoriety and prestige as value-added qualities to boards instead of focusing on Women of Color as an added value. This notion of notoriety poses additional challenges for a young, Black, or Indigenous trustee like Kiana and Sofia, who must work harder to showcase their expertise and contributions because their age, novelty, and lack of wealth compared to their counterparts further marginalize them. The theme of "expertise" was repeated throughout each interview as I asked participants whether they "felt valued by their boards." This was concerning, given that value and expertise are different concepts. For example, Women of Color can add expertise to a Board of Trustees, but still not feel or be valued by their peers or institution, as Shannon described in her counter-story.

Although Women of Color recognized that their intersectional perspectives were contributions on the board, most felt their counterparts only saw them for their professional worth. Only three participants were confident that their colleagues

appreciated their holistic identity (meaning all aspects of their identity). The remaining participants noted they were valued, but only concerning certain aspects of their identity contribution. Some went as far as to say that they did not feel their identity valued at all. For those who said that parts of their identity were recognized as important to the board, those attributes were more so related to their professional contributions. In other words, a participant would note that they did feel valued, but that their expertise was the most salient attribute, which poses multiple concerns. First, Women of Color are being held to a double standard of qualifications and service that men, and more so, White men are not. In other words, we heard throughout multiple counter-stories how unqualified trustees sat on boards, and regardless of their lack of expertise in higher education, those trustees held great power. Meanwhile, Women of Color had to showcase an extensive resume or prove their value through professional expertise in ways their counterparts did not, to feel heard. Here is Victoree speaking to how gender and status were added value for men, but not Women of Color,

> … so being in the room with wealthy six-foot men, you know, these towering personalities. I think that's where you really begin to see like, how men are favored, how men of *size* are favored. Charisma, you know, wealth, like, you know, they're like a sports person, who has achieved these high things in athletics. Like… what are you doing on a board of education? Like, okay, football, basketball, baseball, I mean, I guess, but we make all sorts of other decisions on the board that have *nothing* to do with athletics, which oftentimes is a private enterprise. Right? And the trustees actually don't govern that.… But that type of

> notoriety will get you on the board. Okay? There's a man with a [completely unrelated position to higher education] right now on the board, you know, wonderful, wonderful, man, don't get me wrong. There were former actors, you know, CEOs of big production companies, you know. So, I think that that sort of thing is…Yeah, I would say those things are difficult. Like, wealth. Yeah. I don't know…Notability in those ways, [those people] give said board prestige, but really don't necessarily prepare the person to be a better educational advocate or leader. Right. And [with my background], I absolutely felt more knowledgeable sometimes. But, you know, I don't have the glitz and glam to go with it.

Victoree's story ties elitism and status to the role of the trusteeship. Again, she explains how her colleagues were underqualified for service yet were given the opportunity based on their wealth. Even though Victoree had extensive knowledge of higher education, her lack of wealth and notoriety overshadowed her contribution in the eyes of her board.

The second part of the double standard of qualification and service I mentioned multiple times throughout Chapter Four: the lack of formal board requirements to serve as a trustee marginalizes Women of Color. Participants often felt stereotype threat and held back from applying to serve on a board or to take on a leadership role because they were not sure they were yet "qualified" to do so. The stereotype threat that Women of Color felt directly reflected how social structures of power are embedded into the trusteeship and favor men. According to participants' counter-stories, the men on higher education boards did not wait to feel qualified to run, nor were they more qualified than their women counterparts. Instead, men enjoyed the benefits of power relations that

privileged gender identity and reinforced an image of men as better leaders. Whiteness and masculinity prevailed on the board, partly due to the ambiguity of the boards' bylaws and lack of clear policy. Where ambiguity or uncertainty about the trusteeship took place, the established "norm" was followed. In other words, the dominant culture or dominant power structure prevailed because there was no one to challenge what the trusteeship could look like. As Women of Color are vastly underrepresented on higher education boards, it becomes normalized and internalized within society that the underrepresentation occurs because Women of Color are not apt to lead or there is a "pipeline issue". However, as the literature has demonstrated (Women's Power Gap, 2022), and as we heard in the counter-stories I presented, the "master narrative" is flawed. The underrepresentation of Women of Color trustees results from embedded forms of racism and sexism. This leads me to my third concern raised by qualifications and Women of Color's feelings of doubt about their sense of belonging on their board.

I presented a general profile of participants' professional backgrounds and expertise in Chapter Three. These women were highly educated, held prestigious leadership roles in their professions, led in national organizations, held multiple non-profit board roles, and were philanthropists and community leaders. Regardless of their extensive curriculum vitae, Women of Color still doubted how their board and institution perceived them as leaders. Recalling Caitlyn's story, she mentioned that she would look around the room and ask herself, "Which one is not like the other?" because she was one of the few Women of Color on her board and did not possess great wealth. Caitlyn thus would question whether she was a contribution to her board because the absence of others

like her made it clear that the Board of Trustees did not value her identity. Whereas she could look around the room and see White, wealthy men, being sought after and repeatedly appointed to the trustee role, Women of Color like Caitlyn were rare to come by.

Similarly, Daisy had moments of doubt where she questioned whether "[the board] sees me as the leader I see myself?" Daisy's concern was the same as Caitlyn's. Daisy explained that the culture of "giving" and donations made it seem like wealth was the most crucial attribute that a trustee could have. She felt that her other identities were not as important in those moments when donations and status were more sought after. These moments of doubt that Women of Color faced in their trustee role speak to a system of power in which Women of Color hold the least amount of capital. In alignment with one of the tenants of Hill Collins' Intersectionality framework, intersecting power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality shaped individual and group-based social locations for Women of Color trustees (2012), making them feel undervalued and excluded within the culture of the board. The trusteeship is built by reinforcing the identities most valued by the dominant group and recreating conditions in which those privileged identities feel more included.

Power relations continuously impacted Women of Color within the trusteeship through board policies and cultures of operation. For example, we heard how, as chair, Shannon changed her board's meeting time to accommodate members of working-class status and those who staffed board meetings. Like Shannon, multiple participants expressed how they needed to navigate meeting times that conflicted with their parental

responsibilities or how participants had to take personal leave from work to attend board meetings during the middle of the work week. The challenges participants faced could have been resolved by a simple policy change that moved board meeting times, or meeting dates, to make the trusteeship more accessible. Instead, the meetings are scheduled to accommodate a trustee who is retired or has ample flexibility in their work schedule. As Shannon disclosed,

> I changed the start time of our board meetings, to a friendlier time in the morning, you know, committee meetings, and that…and I even had employees come to me very quietly and thanking me for that, because if we had to be on campus, at 7am, what time do you think they had to be on campus to be ready for us? You know, so sometimes even the structure of how we meet and the convenience of meeting and, you know, things of that nature, is a slab baked into what some of the challenges are. It's just really, it's a man's world. It's a White man's world.

The exclusion of accommodations thus sustains the homogeneity of boards and reinforces an environment that favors a White man's world.

As Hill Collin's framework suggests, we must focus on the relational process of power hierarchies (2021); therefore, I want to discuss how race, gender, and class impact the decision-making process of boards. For example, the lack of inclusive board policy accommodations raises concern over who is making policy-decision that directly impact students, staff, and faculty in the United States who come from working-class backgrounds and families. Recalling Chapter Four, Lisa and Elsie discussed how their peers engaged in classist behaviors and negatively perceived low-income students and

working-class trustees. In both instances, Lisa and Elsie noted that these individuals were far removed from the average experience of the populations they served. In the case of Elsie, her colleague blamed people on welfare for the state's inability to finance higher education. In the case of Lisa, her colleague felt entitled to her role and could not relate to anyone who did not share the same class status. A lack of social class awareness is one of the tremendous concerns within the trusteeship because one of the primary roles of higher education boards is to make fiduciary decisions on behalf of the institution and its students, staff, and faculty. In these cases, wealth resulted in White trustee's deficit thinking, which impacts the decisions those trustees make relating to student financial aid, campus investments, and employee salary.

Participants' counter-stories described multiple hierarchies of power within the trusteeship and reminded us that power dynamics prevail even in the most prestigious roles. The themes of racism, sexism, classism, and all the other "isms" I presented should be of great concern to anyone impacted by the decision-making of higher education boards. As we celebrate the growingly diverse populations reaching higher education milestones, we are reminded that power dynamics continue to privilege the elite, White, male, ruling class. Until those systems of power are challenged, acknowledged, and dismantled, social justice efforts in education will be impeded. Suppose we have a record-breaking number of low-income families sending their children to college but trustees who believe there should be cuts made to federal financial assistance programs for low-income families. What does that say about those student's future in financing their education? I remind us of Elsie's counter-story about her colleagues' perception of

low-income people in the U.S. For context, this conversation happened as her board was talking about financial aid,

> And so when we were having a budget discussion about tuition and the budget and shortfalls in the state, I think one of my colleagues said, 'Why don't they just take money from welfare and apply it to education?' or something like that.'

As we recall, Elsie had to step in and call out the other trustee's comment for what it was: classist. Elsie countered her colleague's remark by naming her own reality and educating her board about the financial difficulties that her family endured when her mother was a college student. This was just one of many examples of how classism presented itself on boards and how trustees' wealth and social class status were added to power dynamics.

Another example of how structures of power impact decision-making were when we heard Kiana talk about her White colleague saying her HBCU should be "happy" with the one-time funding her institution received from the state or how Sofia was told by her board she should be "happy" that her board listened to a 15-minute presentation on Indigenous students. In both cases, Black and Indigenous populations were receiving minimal resources. Nevertheless, the dominant trustees implied that both groups had "gained" something in the power hierarchy through the board's action. We see, again, how White trustees thus shape DE&I discourse and how that discourse hinders the progress for historically underrepresented groups by claiming "race-neutrality". The culture of boards goes beyond impacting trustees. Instead, it shapes the trajectory and access of other non-dominant groups through the decision-making power and control boards have in higher education.

When systems of privilege and power go unrecognized, neoliberal tendencies follow, and the "underperformance," or the challenges marginalized groups face in education, are blamed on the individual rather than the system as a whole (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001; Ball, 2012). Neoliberalism has restricted researchers from thinking of the trusteeship as a hierarchy of power based on gender, race, sex, class, etc., because disparities amongst groups within higher education have been legitimized through individual achievements (Ball, 2012; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008; Slaughter & Leslie, 2001; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2019). For the first time, this study challenges that the trusteeship is "race-neutral" or "gender-neutral" both in its attainment and within its operation. Thanks to the participant's social location within the board, they provided an epistemological lens and insight that dispels the belief of neutrality within the trusteeship. As a result of the counter-narratives participants provided, we can challenge the neoliberal beliefs that historically marginalized groups are responsible for their achievements in higher education and continue to encourage a Critical Race Feminism approach to call out sexism and White supremacy embedded within higher education governance. Disparities within the trusteeship are the result of policies, practices, and cultures informed by hierarchies of power. Until we recognize, acknowledge, and disrupt how privilege and power create and reinforce inequities in the trusteeship, the homogeneity of boards and the barriers for historically underrepresented groups will remain.

Challenges for Women of Color Trustees

By centering race, gender, and other identities, I intentionally countered how boards have cultivated an environment that centers men, whiteness, and status. This privilege has resulted in inculcated patterns of sexism, racism, and other "isms" embedded in U.S. governing boards' behaviors, interactions, and culture. As a result, Women of Color endured discriminatory workplace acts, negatively impacting their experiences as trustees and self-perception. Participants faced microaggressions, stereotypes, and tokenism. They felt an absence of representation and often questioned their belonging and ability to make an impact on the board. While some participants witnessed blatant forms of racism and sexism, other times, microaggressions were subtle but just as damaging. The stereotype uncertainty (i.e., the inability to blatantly identify stereotypes based on categorical identities) that Women of Color faced on their boards led to a pattern of participants having a difficult time validating microaggressions. However, microaggressions were present across 15 interviews. Additionally, one of the biggest impediments Women of Color faced was a lack of network connections to board members before service. The lack of networks was significant due to the nature of board appointments being at the hands of governors, state agencies, or at the recommendation of boards.

The challenges posited within the environment of the board align with the literature on the experiences of Women of Color in higher education leadership (Brown, 2007; Bowleg, 2008; Davis et al., 2006; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). However, this study's significance and contributions come from the implications of the racism, sexism,

and discrimination Women of Color face. As Hill Collins argues, Women of Color's awareness of their social position within hierarchies of power influences their epistemology (2012). As scholars and practitioners, we must recognize the epistemological contributions of Women of Color because they are uniquely situated to diagnose conditions otherwise lost to dominant groups in society.

Governing boards can support or hinder the progress of historically underrepresented students, staff, and faculty in the U.S. (AGB, 2020). Boards are potent institutional actors that make decisions that impact millions of lives every day, and yet, many engage in covert discriminatory practices amongst their respected colleagues. Moreover, when instances of racism or sexism present in the boardroom, it falls on Women of Color or People of Color to speak out and address them. Which raises the question, what happens when Women of Color are not in the room, and racist or sexist behaviors go unchecked? Or, what damaging impact do inherited beliefs have in influencing decision-making? This study's findings have identified the need for boards to re-evaluate their internal behaviors and assess how their privilege impedes social justice for all members of their respective institutions.

Impact of Diversity on Higher Education Boards, the Institution, and Trustees

Diversity mattered. All but three participants faced some form of marginalization, and those who did not have the commonality of being on highly diverse boards. Highly diverse boards were defined by participants as having gender parity (50% or more women) and around 50% People of Color. More commonly, participants noted a lack of Women of Color, Asian trustees (all genders), and Indigenous trustees (all genders).

Some participants added the component of sexual orientation in their depiction of their board's identity gaps. Others added the component of (dis)ability to measure their board's lack of diversity.

As boards increased in diversity, Women of Color also described their board culture as "collegial," more "thoughtful," and "deliberate." Findings also showed a pattern of the impact of race and gender diversity on Women of Color's experiences on the board. For example, on boards with low racial diversity (three or fewer People of Color), Women of Color felt more marginalization based on their racialized identity. On boards with racial diversity, Women of Color felt more marginalization along gender lines. So, for example, Women of Color often felt marginalized by their White women counterparts. At the same time, Women of Color also felt marginalized by Men of Color. These findings implicate the significance of race *and* gender in cohesion. Simply diversifying along racial lines or gender lines leaves Women of Color at the margins.

The findings also note that measures of diversity are subjective. For this study, I focused on racial and gender diversity. However, there are myriad ways to look for diversity on boards beyond those identities. Furthermore, the findings should not serve as an example of "diversity goals" because there is no magic number. For example, scholars have used the term "dynamic diversity" to explain that reaching critical mass without an examination of the environment, relationships, and overall diversity of the institution, will not produce group benefits (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014). Thus, diversity can be used as a tool to help measure equity. However, it should not be used to quantify a limit or target in racial and gender progress on boards. Instead, I urge that we focus on

removing social, economic, political, and educational barriers that impede board diversity for *all* members of society.

The Power and Possibilities of Women of Color on Higher Education Boards

Documenting the leadership strengths of Women of Color trustees was crucial in this study because governance scholars have not documented the impact of this group within higher education research. I wrote this dissertation with the hopes of highlighting how interlocking identities inform behaviors and outcomes; however I did not want to approach Women of Color through a deficit- minded approach– Women of Color are not only marginalized groups within society and on boards. Instead, I wanted to elaborate on how Women of Color are examples of what the trusteeship should look to in leadership. The strengths I discussed were imperative to highlight because they remind us of the "Power and Possibilities of Women of Color on Higher Education Boards" Dr. Raquel Rall and I posed in our 2020 study.

I first focused on the strengths of their holistic identity and found that Women of Color's decision-making was influenced by their life experiences. The ability to approach decision-making through a lens informed by relations of race, gender, sexuality, class, immigration status, family status, and other forms of power made Women of Color more attuned to the issues that impact today's higher education landscape. Women of Color's epistemology contributes to their ability to approach their work through an equity-minded lens to recognize barriers and systems of privilege. Some participants even tried to teach their colleagues to develop an equity-minded framework and instill a culture through which this epistemology became internalized.

Women of Color trustees were even cognizant of gaps in their knowledge and turned to uplift voices who would otherwise be excluded from decision-making at their institution. Rather than leave "diversity work" to "diverse members," Women of Color vastly educated themselves in topical areas where they felt they could use more training. As we contextualize that higher education today serves one of the most diverse college populations to date (NCES, 2023), we can better appreciate why an equity framework, and extensive knowledge of issues of DE&I, is vital to ensuring that boards make policy decisions that promote social mobility.

Women of Color noted that they were often the most well-versed on issues of higher education, and if they were not, they looked for opportunities to become trained to perform at the highest level of leadership. Compared to their male counterparts, participants' extensive professional backgrounds often made them uniquely positioned as experts in many fields. Although it was a survival strategy, participants prepared themselves for board meetings by reading extensively (which they said their counterparts only sometimes did)—their preparedness then contributed to their sound and thoughtful decision-making.

Moreover, Women of Color positively impacted their board's culture and institution. They were aware of how power relations impacted the experiences of marginalized members on the board and within higher education; therefore, they worked towards dismantling barriers from the inside. Women of Color looked to improve inclusive board policies (Shannon), create a culture of celebration that uplifted members (Elsie and Rachel), and reduce hostile and accusatory rhetoric on the board (Ana). These

were significant leadership qualities because they directly impact not only the experiences of Women of Color on boards but also the experiences of all trustees. Participants also made it a leadership priority to enhance the productivity of the board, accountability, and transparency. These last three have become more crucial to higher education governance, mainly as the U.S. has seen public trust in colleges and universities decrease (AGB, 2018).

Participants also enhanced the shared governance model between the board, faculty, and administration. First, Women of Color improved the relationship between the board and the Office of the President, significantly contributing to the institution's organizational structure. This was evident in Ana, Kiana, Daisy, Rachel, Lisa, and Chelsea's counter-stories. By strengthening the relationship with the Office of the President, Women of Color enhanced communication, transparency, and the board's awareness of issues relating to the institution's management. A strong shared-governance structure and robust communication can reduce issues like the college scandals I discussed in Chapter Two.

Lastly, as Women of Color on boards increase, so does access for historically marginalized groups to governing board spaces. Women of Color actively recognized the connections around shared marginalization, discrimination, and privilege because of their intersectional lenses (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013). Therefore, Women of Color sought out stakeholders that did not commonly have contact with the Board of Trustees to ensure that their issues were brought forward to the board. For example, Sofia and Victoree uplifted the voices of marginalized faculty and graduate students. Ana went out of her

way to call forward the perspective of staff members to the Board of Trustees. Because higher education is predominately governed by White, older men, Women of Color recognized that the voices of historically marginalized groups needed to be centered in discussion to avoid "White experts" speaking for them (Chesley & Crawfoot, 1989). Women of Color trustees also did not want to be the token representatives for all People of Color or marginalized groups–recall Sherry and Lisa spoke to the pressure they felt as tokenized members to be the voice for all People of Color on the board. Thus, Women of Color sought ways to bridge otherwise excluded perspectives to the board.

Women of Color Trustees have the potential to shape the culture of boards, institutions, and outcomes for historically underrepresented students in higher education. The participants in this study showcased the power and possibility of Women of Color trustees on U.S. boards, despite the challenges and marginalization they faced in their journeys. Women of Color have ample leadership qualities that are critical in today's higher education landscape, and they are uniquely positioned to understand how power relations impede access and opportunity for Students of Color. Researchers must continue to center Women of Color in governance scholarship to call to action a disruption of the barriers to the trusteeship. Imagine the force and impact higher education could see if we had more Women of Color trustees and if Women of Color trustees did not have to spend time and effort fighting for their inclusion on boards.

Implications and Recommendations

If governing boards are committed to meaningfully changing their internal organizational culture, diversifying, and becoming more inclusive, they must first accept

that the dominant narrative is deficient. The counter-stories I presented depict a culture deeply entrenched in discrimination. There is work to be done. The only way to dispel the master narrative is by acknowledging the experiences of Women of Color trustees and other marginalized members within their organization.

The omnipresent forms of societal marginalization bring me to my second point: There is no quick fix to address racism and sexism. Today's power structures are built on centuries of exclusion, meaning social justice will not be achieved overnight. Many participants in the study addressed experiencing "quick fix" performative diversity efforts on behalf of their institution that had no meaningful outcomes or impact on improving conditions for marginalized members and, consequentially, students. Performative efforts are dangerous because they create a false sense of accomplishment for the dominant group and yet sustain the barriers for marginalized groups. Instead, boards must accept that race and gender issues have been around since the inception of higher education when "curriculums were oriented to discipline the mind of (White) male students with Christian values and morals" (Duryea, 1973; Wright, 1995). Higher education was built on the premise of exclusion of People of Color and women. Boards must commit to a continual, indefinite effort to disrupt discriminatory practices and pave a path toward social justice reform.

Revisiting the Mission of Higher Education Boards

I want to revisit some of the literature I presented in Chapter Two and highlight that governing boards are institutional actors responsible to their constituents (AGB, 2010; Barringer et al., 2019; Duryea, 1973; Kaplan, 2006; Taylor & de Lourdes

Machado, 2008). On public boards, it is legally understood that the board "belongs to the state and, by extension, to the people of those states" (Kaplan, 2006, p.219). For all higher education boards, it is their duty to protect the institution's goals (Hendrickson et al., 2013). I remind us of the charges of governing boards because the issues I have presented extend beyond the board members and impact the constituents that trustees represent. Issues of race, sex, gender, class, and other power structures cannot go ignored by a Board of Trustees because it is the board's fiduciary duty to make decisions in the interests of the populations they serve–and hierarchies of power regularly impact those stakeholders. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is a duty of service that boards should incorporate into their daily operation structure because it reflects the needs of increasingly diverse stakeholders in higher education. Governance scholars have been pushing for boards to "accept equity as an indispensable element of the fiduciary duties of care and obedience" (Rall et al., 2020, p.156); however, the counter-stories presented imply that the DE&I efforts of boards need re-evaluation and improvement. There is a disconnect between the outward projection of DE&I efforts by higher education boards (the messaging of DE&I as a priority) and how boards internalize DE&I in practice. For diversity and equity efforts to succeed, boards must be integral actors (Wilson, 2016).

More recently, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges declared that "a paradigm shift in how higher education institutions directly address issues of race and equity has begun" and that boards have a duty to engage in conversations about social justice reform (2020, n.p.). While I disagree that the conversation about racism has now "begun" (for Communities of Color, the conversation

was always there, White people just ignored it), as AGB stated, "national protests over racial injustice have exposed long-standing and too often ignored issues of inequity both on campuses and in communities" (AGB, 2020, n.p.). In other words, racism has become so blatant within higher education that being "race-neutral" is getting harder for trustees to claim. Now, national pressure is being put on Boards of Trustees to adopt diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice into their mission.

Suppose higher education boards are genuinely committed to social justice reform, as AGB declared in 2020. In that case, trustees must first address and dismantle the inherently racist, sexist, classist, and ableist structures within their organizations. Boards should turn to organizations that can provide equity audits and programming specific to the board and the institution. Trustees should also be required to engage in DE&I training so that every member is integral to and responsible for creating a positive cultural climate within the board and at their institution through their decision-making. Social justice reform will also require that power is relinquished by the dominant group and space is made for Women of Color and other historically underrepresented groups to get the opportunity to lead and influence decision-making. I give recommendations for improving access through intentional diversity efforts in the next section.

Secondly, board members must accept that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) work is everyone's responsibility. DE&I work cannot be siloed into committees or assigned to "experts" on the board because racism, sexism, and "isms" exist in each component of our lives. All social, political, economic, and educational structure is built on power dynamics that have consequences that benefit some and marginalize others.

Every decision that governing boards make has a DE&I implication, from endowments to investments, building expansions, allocations of resources, and decisions on leadership structure, tuition, and enrollment. There are ties to equity and outcomes in every breadth of the decision-making power of higher education boards.

How Can Access to The Trusteeship Be Improved for Women of Color?

I provide a few suggestions on how access can be improved for Women of Color on higher education boards. However, I urge caution that boards must first create an environment that will support Women of Color as colleagues. Boards should continuously reflect on their practices, behaviors and inculcated cultures to avoid onboarding members into a hostile environment that does not support new members' success and value.

Mentorship

The first way to improve access for Women of Color on boards is through mentorship. As there are so few Women of Color trustees in the U.S., mentorship is one of the many ways to disrupt the "good old boys" network discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Four and help create space for more Women of Color. Participants shared how they mentored potential trustees and always looked for ways to mentor other Women of Color to make opportunity and access. For example, Tiara, Kiana, and Rachel discussed how they mentored Women of Color who wanted to be a future trustee or advance in higher education leadership positions. Mentorship, however, should not only be taken on by Women of Color. It is also the responsibility of Men of Color, White women, and White men to share their resources and power and expand their networks to include

Women of Color. I think it could be of great benefit if boards required all their members to mentor young alums of their universities who may one day hope to fill a trustee role. This would be especially useful in diversifying the board in age, race, and gender because it would build a pipeline of demographics representative of the changing higher education landscape.

Professional Organizations. Women of Color also discussed the need for more professional support in the form of organizations that center resources on Women of Color. They wanted to see more national efforts directed at recruiting, training, and placing Women of Color in board leadership roles. Higher education organization leadership programs generally focus on diversifying the pathway to the college presidency or senior administration. However, the training should magnify. It is time that organizations expand their breadth and imagine a future for Women of Color in the trusteeship. Professional organizations could also help sponsor Women of Color for elected positions since participants discussed the monetary challenges of financing state-wide campaigns.

Education

As discussed throughout the chapters, governing boards are one of the least understood stakeholders of higher education. Aside from trustees, governance scholars, or professionals directly or indirectly impacted by higher education boards, boards are not well-known to the public. Generally, a lay audience does not know board's role, power, and impact. Victoree talked about the need to educate the public on the role of governing boards. She discussed how civic education instilled at a young age could build a pipeline of young leaders,

I think civic education, first of all, is limited. And often, it's seen as a man's game. So, I think that we have to talk about opportunities to serve, and how you can serve, and how you can be a leader. Starting at your community level…On, I don't know, your housing association, or you know, whatever is local to you, right? You have to start practicing leadership really young. Student government isn't the only game in town… There are community organizations, you know, like parks and rec, boards of education, your PTA… I think getting involved and being a leader has to be instilled in women and girls super young. That [leadership] is possible, that you have something to contribute, that your presence will better the whole… and teach that lesson really, really, really young. Because if you teach that lesson to a little girl, then she'll start looking for opportunities. Like, it'll be a natural instinct. I think some folks don't even look for opportunities, they don't know that they're available, and leadership was never instilled in them–Not to say that they would be bad leaders– they just might not have been given the opportunity or have been made to believe that they have something to contribute. So, I think that those like small minute lessons from kids all the way up– I think all of that is really important. And I think it's challenging not to have a culture where it's facilitated for women to lead, or to seek out opportunities, or to have them be promoted. To have us be a part of associations, right, to have us gather. I would say, if we put those things in place, like, if you see the land, right, then it could be really fruitful. You could have a really good harvest, but you have to see the land.

Victoree's remark about the need for the public to be better versed on issues of civic engagement is an ongoing national conversation. For example, The University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement was established in 2018 for that purpose–to connect scholars, practitioners, and the public and "prepare the next generation of leaders to embrace their role as active participants in a democratic society" (University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement, 2023). Civic education must be bolstered and instilled, as Victoree suggested, from a young age in Women of Color for them to develop a leadership identity. However, that is just one solution to the problem of the public's lapse in board knowledge. A secondary issue arises–the lack of transparency in board recruitment and appointment processes.

Transparency

I discussed in Chapter Two a study conducted by Rall and colleagues (2022) highlights the ambiguity in the requirements and qualifications for becoming trustees. Participants in this study echoed the 2022 findings and shared how they were not even sure if their appointment process was a traditional route because of how opaque it was. Since governing boards are predominately controlled by White men, ambiguity in the election and appointment process is a direct consequence of the gatekeeping of Whiteness as property. Those who hold power restrict access by limiting information on how to become a trustee. Instead, that information is hidden and passed on as property between the dominant group–White males. "Whiteness" is thus maintained as the status quo through the absolute right of exclusion.

Note how participants talked about the need for transparency because the dominant group in leadership will choose members of their group. Tiara spoke to this in her counter-story,

> The reality is that not all processes are as clear, right? And just like in hiring in other pockets, organizations, we know that people hire like–they hire people who are like them. And whether that is gender, ethnicity, or background, or things of that nature… in many ways that is still in most places.

Tiara is saying that whoever is in charge within an organization will hire based on identity. In our conversation, she alludes that on boards, the same occurs. Board members, or governors, recruit those who share similar identity traits to themselves– White, affluent men.

Marisa agreed, but instead of identity, she used the word network,

> …one [way to improve access] is to make the appointment process more transparent when they're public appointments. Secondly, the networks. If you rely solely on networks, you get more of the same of whatever there is already, right? So you got to just open it up and be open to having people show up that you wouldn't necessarily have thought of on your own.

Marisa's use of the word network has the same meaning as Tiara's use of the word identity since networks tend to be social or professional circles based on similar identity characteristics. Both participants began by saying that if the appointment process was more straightforward, then the cycle of homogeneity could be broken. By making the

appointment or election process more transparent to the public, there can be (1) a wider breadth of applicants and (2) more accountability in the selection method.

(Re)Imagining the Trusteeship

I want to reflect on Chapter Four, Participant Four, whose pseudonym I cannot use because she detailed an election process. Participant Four shared that she got to the board by emulating the resume of a "White guy." As she told her story, she concluded by saying:

> I would argue that the way you [get on the board] is the way we've always done it. And if that's a problem, if that's a barrier for people who are racial minorities, or women, then the barriers are still there. I didn't get there differently.

Participant Four reminds us of the reality of the pathway to trusteeship. The pathway has not changed–it is the way it has always been done– even though it has maintained barriers for minorities and women. Whiteness, thus, persists because it is the status quo. CRF reminds us that whiteness is embedded into our social system and is the accepted and prioritized norm. Therefore, to address the barriers that Participant Four is talking about, we must reimagine what that pathway looks like–and what the trusteeship should look like. Daisy talked about this (re)imagining in her recommendations,

> There's got to be a change in the traditional way in which we think about who should be a trustee… And I know, that's kind of loaded…I'm working to figure out, you know, different pathways, not just for Women of Color, but also younger trustees. Yeah, trustees who we would not traditionally see on boards, and really kind of changing the idea of who needs to have a seat at the table. Again, that's

> kind of lofty. But I think that if each board is committed to saying, 'hey, let's look at some things through a lens that we haven't ordinarily,' then we'll start to see more change and getting more Women of Color and other People of Color on boards.

All participants talked about a pathway that, as it stands, limits access for Women of Color. I argue there are a few ways in which we can (re)imagine access and change 'the way things have always been done.'

For Appointing Authorities. Those with recruitment and appointing authority must reflect on their efforts to increase access. For example, universities often use search firms to reduce bias and find the best candidates in presidential searchers. So too, could governors and self-perpetuating boards use this measure in recruiting new members. This ensures that qualified candidates are selected, rather than those with monetary ties to the institution or appointing authority. A search firm also would help reduce ambiguity in the appointment process and is crucial when you think about the import of qualified appointees, given that trustee can terms extend over a decade at a time.

If trustees and governors want to avoid using a search firm, they could be intentional about creating a diverse candidate pool in their recruitment efforts. For example, Chelsea talked about the challenge for Women of Color to be "seen" by a board,

> I still think if we are seen, and somebody knows us and puts us in front of a board to be elected, I think we would go like that. So I guess what I would say is, it's not the election process, I think it's the recruiting process. And that the governance

> committees, or whoever is in charge of looking for and bringing on new trustees, have to think about how to broaden the pool and broaden the candidates that they look at. Where are they looking? Who are they reaching out to? Should they be reaching out to, you know, organizations? you know, professional organizations that are geared toward Women of Color, for example? So, it's all about increasing the recruiting efforts because I'm a firm believer that once people see you and you're recruited, you'll get elected. I don't think the election is not the problem. It's bringing people to be considered.

It is the responsibility of those who hold the power to gatekeep to re-evaluate their practices and contributions to board homogeneity. I end this section with a few questions for this group to consider:

1) Was the last time (your board or state agency) reviewed the recruitment or appointment processes for new trustees?
2) Is the recruitment or election process clear for anyone who wants to serve in the role?
3) Is (your board or state agency) recruiting members whose work aligns with the institution's mission?

For Stakeholders. Just as students, staff, and faculty are often involved in presidential searches, so too should they be involved in the appointments of new trustees. After all, trustees should represent the voices of those stakeholders. I believe that public pressure should be put on boards to open the recruitment process to their institution's population so that students, staff, and faculty can question potential members and see if

they feel aligned with those representing them. Trustees represent only a tiny fraction of the total higher education population; therefore, I want to call to action for stakeholders to organize and demand that the trusteeship be more inclusive of all voices in the institutional community. Perhaps there must be a shift from gubernatorial appointees to election processes like there are K-12 school boards, or as it is for many community college boards. Alternatively, if not, perhaps the "short list" can be chosen at the recommendations of the university stakeholders.

For now, students, staff, and faculty can place pressure on boards to change their governance structure or pressure governors to diversify the trusteeship through the power of civic engagement. For example, the Campaign for College Opportunity in California releases yearly reports evaluating higher education board diversity across The University of California, The California State University System, and The California Community Colleges. The report ends with a call for action to consider the diverse composition of any new class of trustees. As a result, the Campaign for College Opportunity puts pressure on the governor. The organization also educates California voters on how the governor shapes higher education leadership in the state.

Overall, higher education governance must (re)imagine access and change 'the way things have always been done' if we wish to see more Women of Color trustees and historically underrepresented voices leading higher education boards. Access, however, is not the only challenge that needs to be addressed. Boards must also reflect on their internal organizational environment and work to ensure it is inclusive for all members.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the novelty of this work, there is much room for expansion and future contributions. In this dissertation, I provided a new framework to examine the impact of race, gender, and other identities on the study of higher education governance. This theoretical contribution can be used to study boards in further detail by examining all Women of Color trustees' experiences within the same board. My study did have a few participants who served on the same board; however, they were not the only Women of Color. While this study's findings showed that my study's participants had similar experiences, I cannot speak to the experiences of their Women of Color colleagues, which is why I present this as a possibility for future exploration. The framework I provided can also be used to study other types of organizations. As Tierney suggested in 1988, Organizational Culture frameworks can be altered and modified depending on the institution type, mission, and members and require further development.

Secondly, Critical Race Feminism as a framework to study race and gender does so in a broad sense, meaning it focuses on the commonality of race and gender as points of marginalization. However, other frameworks have been born from the Critical Studies Movement and should be explored in future research. There were instances where participants discussed issues deeply related to their cultural upbringing or issues pertaining to their racialized identity that needed further analysis. Studies that focus solely on the experiences of Asian Women Trustees, Latina Trustees, Black Women Trustees, or Native American Women Trustees are much needed. Those counter-stories

will be able to identify other forms of marginalization and challenges that this study could not address.

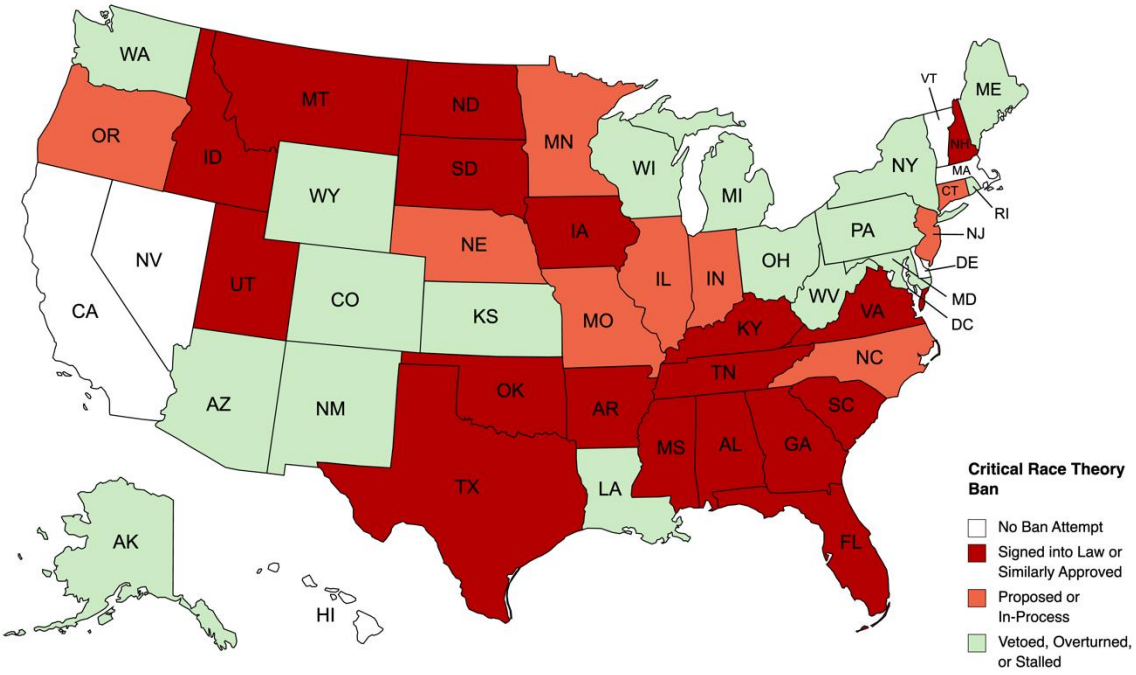
Lastly, since access to higher education governing boards is limited, there may be an added benefit to studying the impact of laws that require gender diversity on corporate boards. As I discussed in Chapter Four, California recently passed a law that requires private boards to have some form of gender parity. It would be of interest to know if "forced" gender representation renders positive or negative impacts on Women of Color and women within organizations.

Final Thoughts

This dissertation is written at a time in history when my research's existence is contingent upon my geographical and political location within the U.S. As of April 2023, (18) states have banned teaching Critical Race Theory in education, with an additional (9) states in the process of moving bills in their legislature banning the practice of teaching CRT (Figure 8) (World Population Review, 2023). My research, like many other scholars in higher education, highlight why conversations about race and racism cannot go ignored. I demonstrated in this study how boards were operating under a "race-neutral" viewpoint and disregarding how their biases were impeding the process of racial minorities around them. We must be honest about the history of slavery and its impact on society today. At a time when politicians are banning discourse of race in education, the voices of People of Color, and more importantly, Women of Color, are needed. It is critical to continue to elevate the voices of racial minorities and challenge the neutrality

of laws and social structures in the U.S. One way to do this is through scholarship, another is through practice.

Figure 8 Map of Critical Race Theory Bans Across the U.S



Note: Adapted from *Critical Race Theory Bans by* World Population Review (2023)

I urge trustees to reflect on their behaviors and internalized beliefs. I also urge them to respect, listen to, valorize, and learn from, the Women of Color on their boards. If DE&I state bans impede boards from "considering race" in their decision-making, I suggest finding innovative ways to measure racial equity on their board and institution. Building diverse, inclusive boards will not happen overnight; however, the first step to getting there is addressing the problem for what it is–a result of sexism, racism, and domination. Boards cannot continue to ignore the racial and gender disparities on higher education boards because today's higher education demographics require Boards of

Trustees to be attuned to and understand the challenges these groups face to aid in their success. As it stands, higher education boards are not maximizing their potential because there are gaps in the scope and knowledge of trustees relative to the issues impacting access, retention, and graduation. Without a critical analysis of higher education, race, gender, and the trusteeship, boards will continue to impede social progress and mobility for future generations.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A – Interview Protocol

Introduction to participant's experience.

Tell me about yourself….

-How do you identify? (this could be race, ethnicity, gender, and/or other roles you occupy that are important to your identity)

-Why did you choose to serve on a board of higher education?

-Why did you choose to serve on this board/ at this institution?

-When thinking about your appointment process… would you say your experience is a typical route to a board position?

-If not, what would you say the typical route would be?

-Have you served on other boards, whether higher education or private?

-How does this experience compare to that?

Identity:

You mentioned earlier about how you identify…

-Do you feel that your identity informs your board work? (e.g., issues important to you, relationships, policies, committee work...) How do you think your identity contributes to your time on the board?

-What are the strengths of your identity as it relates to your work on the board?

-What are the challenges of your identity as it relates to your work on the board?

-Do you feel your identity/ies are valued on the board? Explain

-If not, why not?

-Do you feel that there are identities that are more valued than others on the board? Explain.

-Have you ever had to adapt your identity and/or behavior to meet the culture of the board?

-Are there certain board members, or constituency groups, you socialize with more than others?

Time on Board:

-Did you have a particular role in mind when you agreed to serve on this board? (e.g., a particular committee or topic of interest)

-Have you been able to serve in that capacity? Why or why not?

-Have you served on any special appointments while on the board? (Perhaps chair of the board, or chair of a committee)

-What are some of the accomplishments you've had during your tenure on the board? (this could be a policy)

- How do your own board duties compare to other board members? Are these duties the same, or similar, to other board members? (workload, committee service, etc.)

-Have you ever felt (positive or negative) differential treatment on the board? By peers, by constituents, etc.?

-What do you think is the biggest issue facing women of color interested in a board position today?

-After navigating the appointment process, what are some changes that you think would help bring more Women of Color to board positions?

Board Culture

-How would you describe the culture of your institution?

-How would you describe the culture of the board? Does it reflect the culture of the institution? Why/why not?

-When thinking about your board, would you characterize it as diverse?

-If not, how could it be more diverse?

-Are there specific demographics in which your board is lacking? (E.g., all older, all business, leaders, all White, majority male...)

-When thinking about your board, would you characterize It as equitable?

-If not, how could it be more equitable?

-Does your board discuss issues of diversity and equity regularly? If so, is it only in the confines of one committee (e.g., diversity)? Is it throughout the board's tasks?

-Whose voices are centered in this discussion?
-Would you serve again?

-Is there anything about your time on the board, or your perhaps your journey into this role, that I haven't asked, or you would like to add?

-Do you have a name you would like to use in this study?

APPENDIX B

Appendix B: Recruitment Material

Request to Forward Email

Subject line: Request to Share Opportunity for Women of Color Board Members to Participate in a Study

Dear XXX,

I am emailing you to request that you please share this opportunity to participate in an IRB-approved study with current or former board members in your community. Information for potential participants is below.

Thank you for considering this request and your time,

Sincerely,

Valeria Dominguez

Recruitment Email

Dear College and University Trustees,

My kindest regards, I am Valeria Dominguez, a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Higher Education Administration and Policy at the University of California, Riverside.

As a current or former higher education board member, I would like to invite you to participate in an IRB-approved study related to your experience on the board. In particular, this study aims to help us better understand Women of Color's experiences on 4-year public and private boards in the U.S. This study may help us understand how identity impacts board service and decision-making, as well as ways in which board diversity can improve. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are at least 18 years of age or older, self-identify as a Woman of Color, have past or current experience serving on a 4-year public board of higher education, and speak English.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to do a 60-90 minute interview about your

experience being a board member. The interview can be conducted via video/phone at your
convenience and represents your total time involvement of the study.

If you are interested in participating in this study and would like more information, please click the link below or contact me (Valeria Dominguez) by email or via phone: text/call.

[Qualtrics Recruitment/Participant Interest link]

Thank you very much for your time,

Valeria Dominguez, M.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate

Contact information:

- Valeria Dominguez, M.Ed., University of California, Riverside, School of Education. **Daytime Phone:** (XXX) XXXXXXX **Email address:** XXXXXX
- If you have questions about your rights or complaints as a research subject, please contact the IRB Chairperson at (XXX) XXX-XXXX during business hours, or contact them by email XXXXXX