Perceptions of African American Women About Professional Positions They Have Served in, Challenges They Have Experienced, Mentoring Characteristics and Experiences, and the Impact of Mentoring on Becoming a Chancellor or President in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of African American women who were serving as a chancellor or president in higher education about the professional positions they had served in, the challenges they have experienced, their mentoring characteristics and experiences, the impact of mentoring on becoming a chancellor or president in higher education, and the most critical elements to include in a mentoring relationship. Ten African American women serving as chancellors or presidents in two-year community colleges across the United States participated in the qualitative study. Four major themes were identified from the analysis of the data: professional positions participants served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president, the challenges experienced prior to becoming a chancellor or president, challenges experienced as a chancellor or president, and mentoring. The participants had served primarily in academic affairs positions before their appointment to serve as a higher education chancellor or president. The most common challenges study participants experienced prior to becoming a chancellor or president included racism, sexism, and having to prove themselves beyond the work experience and qualification expectations of their White counterparts. The challenges the participants experienced as they became chancellors or presidents. Most participants served as a chancellor or president at campuses with multi-campus locations. Some participants perceived they were assigned to the campus with the most challenges, while others felt they were appointed to their leadership role because it would be a good look for the institution. All participants shared how their mentoring experiences helped them become chancellors or higher-education presidents. Six subthemes were identified within the mentoring theme:

mentoring characteristics; informal and formal mentoring relationships; spiritual, psychological, and career-related mentors; differences between career path mentoring and mentoring related to the role of chancellor or president; same ethnicity, same race mentors; and same sex mentors. The findings of this study support the need to provide mentoring to African American women who aspire to become chancellors and presidents in higher education.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my son William Eric Hillman, Jr. you are my everything and the sole purpose of why I work so hard to accomplish the goals that have been set before me. To my dad Leroy Williams, even at this stage in my life, I am driven to seeing you smile and making you happy, because I am daddy's girl. To my bonus mom Doris Williams, thank you for being there. To my spiritual mentor Elder Fran Cary, who has been my guide in my adulthood and through the completion of my dissertation. You supported me in a time where I wanted to give up early in the program and for your unwavering encouragement, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. To my family and friends who believed in me and supported me throughout my educational journey. Your words of encouragement helped me persevere through some of the perplexing times in my life. I also dedicate this study to the African American women teachers in my church who taught me the importance of education in my formative years. To my beloved mother, the late Mabel Williams, my heart, oh how I wish you were here to experience this moment. To my mother-in-law Kathryn Hillman and my best friend Rhonda J. Porter, thank you for being my guiding angels who have helped me navigate through the challenges. I could hear your heavenly voices cheering me on!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Leadership in higher education requires two kinds of preparation: expansion of intellectual knowledge, and development of personal and behavioral skills (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Intellectual preparation involves developing a clear vision about the leadership role and responsibilities including decisions and actions that might be required. Personal and behavioral skill development involves engaging in learning experiences that promote the development of quality leadership traits like courage, passion, confidence, flexibility, resourcefulness, and creativity (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Merton (1969) suggested successful leaders possess characteristics that include competency, listening skills, and expectation and acceptance of negative as well as positive feedback. In addition to reiterating Merton's leadership characteristics, Cangemi (1975) stated that successful leaders maintain a positive rapport with team members and use power sparingly. According to Cangemi, other attributes of a successful leader encompass effective communication and providing the necessary resources to comply with directives that align with the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

Rath and Conchie (2008) echoed Cangemi's (1975) characteristics of a successful leader. According to Rath and Conchie, effective leaders consistently invest in team members' strengths and understand their followers' needs. Rath and Conchie indicated that to understand the needs of team members, an effective leader must hone the ability to listen, develop rapport, and communicate effectively. For leaders in general these characteristics align with Northouse's (2019) concept that leadership is defined by "intrinsic motivation, creative thinking, strategic planning, tolerance of ambiguity, and

ability to read people" (p. 14). Most importantly, leadership involves the ability to influence followers to accomplish a common goal (Northouse, 2019). According to Northouse, "Leaders and followers collaborate to create real change" (p. 13).

The pathway to a higher education chancellorship or presidency typically starts with an individual serving as a professor and developing teaching and research experience (Bok, 2013). According to Bok, usually there is a progression of leadership roles that lead to a college or university chancellorship or presidency. This progression includes serving as a department chair and then dean of a school or college, followed by a vice-presidency for academics, finance, or student affairs. When selected to serve as a chancellor or president, an individual expects to influence "matters of administration budgeting, planning, and construction. A president's voice carries more weight than others" (Bok, 2013, p. 50). A chancellor or president expects to create a vision for the university he or she serves, raise funds for the university, and oversee a staff that manages other people. In addition, a chancellor or president "represents the institution before alumni, legislators, government agencies, and local officials (Bok, 2013, p. 48).

According to Parker (2015), women began serving in leadership positions in higher education beginning in the 1800s. Between 1836 and 1875, a total of 50 women's colleges were established (Parker, 2015). Women were the leaders of The Seven Sisters and other women's colleges during this historical time (Parker, 2015). In the 1890s, the dean of women was the first administrative position created for and held by females in coeducational institutions. By the 1940s, the dean of women role was well established in higher education administration and paved the way for other women to follow.

Although women have been appointed to higher education leadership positions as early as the 1800s, males have dominated the roles of chancellors, presidents, vice presidents, deans, and other top administrative positions on college campuses (Parker, 2015). According to Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016), during the past three decades, more women have pursued leadership positions in higher education. In 1990, the percentage of female community college presidents was 21%, in 1994 27%, and in 2000, 39% were women. Parker (2015) indicated that in 2002, women were presidents at 19% of U.S. two- and four-year higher education institutions. Bryant (2022) indicated that in 2020, women accounted for just 32% of all university presidents and earned $0.91 for every $1.00 male university presidents earned. According to Parker (2015),

> U.S. higher education institutions have capable, successful women who serve as presidents and provosts of today's public and private coed institutions. They enjoy leading some of the most prominent institutions in the country. The women who dedicated their lives to higher education in the 1800s and 1900s played a vital part in paving the way for today's female college leaders. (p. 12)

Although women have made great strides in attaining leadership positions in higher education, African American women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education. Soares, Gagliardi, Wilkinson, and Hughes (2018) provided insights from an American Council of Presidents study conducted in 2017. These authors found that 7% of college presidents were Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American women. Parker (2015) stated that community colleges generally have a larger percentage of female minority representation in chancellorships and presidencies than four-year institutions. According to Lederman (2022), women who were hired in

higher education from June 2020 to November 2021 were more racially diverse. Sixty-two percent were White, 27% Black, and 8% Latina, compared to 72% White, 21% Black and 4% Latina in the earlier period from December 2018 through May 2020. Women of color made up 13% of all presidents hired from June 2020 to November 2021. Lederman indicated that women in general are making strides in leadership positions in higher education. However, there is still a sizeable gap between African American women and their White female counterparts in obtaining the chancellorship or presidency at a college or university (Lederman, 2022).

According to Lederman (2022) diversity among college presidents is on the rise. There is intensified external pressure on colleges to diversify because of the Black Lives Matter and racial justice movements. The pipeline of minority candidates has increased due in part to the creation of new programs aimed at preparing new higher education leaders. In addition, there has been a shift in the traits and competencies institutions are seeking in leaders as well as changes in how and where colleges and universities search for presidency candidates (Lederman, 2022).

Background

Since the early 1800s males have outnumbered females in higher education leadership positions (Parker, 2015). According to Alexander (2010), the likelihood of an African American woman serving as a president in a higher education institution during the first decade of the current century was dismal due to the lack of diversity in the presidential position (Alexander, 2010). Soares et al. (2018) reported there were 211 African American college and university presidents in 2017. Sixty-seven of those institutions were led by African American women. According to Soares et al., African

American women only occupied 5% of the presidential roles throughout all higher education institutions in the United States in 2017. Soares et al. (2018) reviewed a 2016 study conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE) that examined American college presidents' views about who will assume college presidencies in the future and concluded that higher education has an unprecedented opportunity to diversify the college presidency. For an African American woman to serve as a president, provost, or vice-president, there must be an increase in the number of African American women completing a doctorate to take advantage of the potential opportunity to advance diversity in the American college presidency (Alexander, 2010).

Over the last 20 years, the percentage of female college presidents has increased. However, the representation of female college presidents remains significantly low. Researchers have consistently supported the view that mentorship is a significant contributor to career development in higher education. According to Brown (2005), mentoring has a positive influence on a women's career development, and its impact has been confirmed by research on mentoring relationships across various disciplines (Brown, 2005). Hill and Wheat (2017) defined a mentor or role model as "an individual whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others" (p. 2092). According to Hill and Wheat, women college presidents used an array of words to describe the influential roles others provided throughout their ascendancy to a higher education leadership role including "*mentor, role model, coach, advisor, sponsor, encourager, counselor, and supporter"* (p. 2092). According to Hill and Wheat (2017), "Primary career mentors are more experienced individuals "who provide guidance, assistance, and support to help pave the path for mentees in achieving their goals" (p. 2092). Furthermore, "Mentoring

involves a developmental relationship and sustained interaction between the mentor and protégé. A protégé may consider her mentor to also be a role model" (Hill & Wheat, 2017, p. 2092). The authors stated, "On the other hand, a role model may be an individual who is observed at a distance without being aware they are a role model. A non-traditional mentor is an individual with informal or unofficial influence" (p. 2092). Brown (2005) emphasized the important role of mentorship in assisting women to navigate through their careers as they sought higher education leadership positions. According to Brown,

> Research suggests that primary factors, such as demographic characteristics, career factors, relationship factors, and types of relationships, influence the formation and maintenance of mentoring relationships. Demographic factors, including gender, age, and education, are likely to influence the mentoring exchange between mentors and mentees. In relation to career development, mentors are the people who provide guidance and support to help pave the path for mentees in achieving their career goals. (p. 659)

Brown (2005) stated that mentoring is a vital resource for the enlistment and preparation of women for the college presidency. Mentoring can have a significant impact on the career pathways of women who aspire to advance in leadership roles in higher education and can play an intricate role in helping women navigate through obstacles they will encounter.

According to Soares et al. (2018), it is projected that over the next five years, 50% of college presidents intend to vacate their position primarily due to retirement. According to this statistic, there will likely be opportunities for aspiring women,

especially African American women, to serve in a chancellor or president role. However, to maximize the preparation for such a challenging position, it is vital for African American women in executive leadership roles in colleges and universities to understand the impact of mentoring. The consequence of not preparing women for the presidency will be a lost opportunity and it is likely that most of these positions will continue to go to men (Brown, 2005).

According to Brown (2005), preparation for higher education administrative positions typically does not happen coincidentally. Therefore, mentoring can have an impact on aspiring female college chancellors and presidents. Maxwell (1995) "emphasized the importance of leaders developing other potential leaders through mentorship by arguing there is no success without a successor" (Brown, 2005, p. 660). According to Maxwell (1995), women serving in administrative positions should take the initiative in preparing other women aspiring to be leaders in higher education by serving as mentors and to endorse mentorship. Another aspect of interest for women and mentoring is that women should be receptive to having several mentors but in different types of mentoring relationships. Hansman (1998) suggested,

> Diverse mentoring relationships can address women's psychological, career, and personal development needs. Psychological mentors can enhance mentee's self-confidence and provide emotional support. Career-related mentors can provide career advice, recommend mentees for key positions, and give mentees exposure and visibility, whereas peer mentors can offer collegiality, friendship, and emotional support. (p. 661)

Although there is abundant research on mentorship among various disciplines, there is limited research on mentorship of women college chancellors and presidents. One reason for the limited research on this subject is due mainly to the small population of female college presidents to study (Brown, 2005). As higher education is poised to experience a significant number of individuals leaving chancellorships and presidencies, this is an opportune time to "contribute to the evolving body of literature on the female college presidency because researchers have shown that advancement to the college presidency is more likely if candidates receive mentorship" (Brown, 2005).

Brown (2005) supported the importance of mentoring and indicated that most female college presidents had a primary mentor who played an intricate part in helping them to advance in their career. Over half (54.1%) of the presidents with primary mentors were in their first term serving as presidents. Less than one-fourth of the participants in Brown's study (21.4%) had no mentors; the majority (63.1%) had one to three mentors, and (15.5%) had four or more mentors. "The findings that a majority of college presidents in this study had received mentoring suggest that mentorship played a critical role in advancing female college presidents up the administrative ladder" (Brown, 2005, p. 663).

It is essential for aspiring female leaders to understand the importance of mentorship. Cultivating a mentoring relationship with a current college chancellor or president is essential for the aspiring female leader to advance in her career. Having a mentoring relationship can help support aspiring female leaders to navigate through barriers in her career as well as acquire knowledge and skills like emotional-intelligence

and decision-making skills required to attain a position as a college chancellor or president.

Statement of the Problem

According to Amey (2006) and Townsend (2020), a primary issue of leadership literature in higher education is that it has been centrally focused on chancellors and presidents - positions primarily held by older White men. Amey indicated that research focusing on White women and women of color who are chancellors or presidents has been stagnant. Although women had made great strides in attaining leadership positions in higher education by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, African American women were significantly underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education (Smith-Ligon, 2011). Townsend (2020) echoed the sentiment that there is a small representation of African American women in leadership position in higher education. Townsend shared that lack of institutional support, the shortage of African American women in entry-level and mid-level positions, and African American women leaving higher education after completing their doctoral degrees have contributed to the absence of African American women in college and university work roles. These factors also contributed to the diminished growth in the number of African American women ascending to upper-level administration positions within higher education.

According to Howard and Gagilardi (2018), women are likely to serve as chancellors or presidents at educational institutions where they are responsible for managing educational outcomes for disadvantaged students, including adult learners and students of color. Although women in chancellor, president, and vice-president roles have increased in number during the past three decades, there is still a need to encourage

and actively recruit women of color to executive leadership positions in higher education. (Howard & Gagliardi, 2018). Soares et al. (2018) shared results from an ACE study conducted in 2016 that indicated most women who were college presidents in 2016 (83.2%) were White compared to (7.9%) who were African American, Hispanic (3.9%), Asian American (2.3%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.7%), Middle Eastern (0.6%), and multiple races indicated as others (1.4%).

The limited number of African American women in higher education leadership positions provides a reduced number of mentors of color for aspiring African American women. While research has documented the percentage of African American women who serve in executive leadership positions in higher education, there is limited research focusing on the professional roles African American women have occupied prior to becoming a chancellor or president in higher education, the challenges experienced in their leadership progression, the mentoring they participated in as they sought a chancellorship or presidency in higher education, the impact of mentoring in their current role as a chancellor or president, and the elements that should be included in a mentoring relationship. There is limited literature regarding African American women in leadership positions, and a disproportionate amount of literature regarding African American women who serve as chancellors or presidents in higher education. There is a need to investigate the perceptions of African American women higher education chancellors and presidents about their ascendency to the highest leadership role in a higher education setting, the challenges they experienced, the impact of mentoring on their success, and their perceptions about elements that are important in a mentoring relationship.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to examine the perceptions of African American women who serve as chancellors or presidents in higher education about the professional roles they served in and the importance of mentoring as they progressed in ascendency to a chancellor or president position. The first purpose of the study was to examine the professional roles African American women who are chancellors or presidents have served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. The second purpose was to study the perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the challenges they have experienced in becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. The third purpose was to identify perceptions of African American women who are presidents or chancellors about mentoring experiences that supported their becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. The fourth purpose was to ascertain perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the mentoring they received once they assumed a chancellor or president position. The fifth purpose was to investigate the perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the literature on the leadership path and experiences of African American women leaders serving as a chancellor or president in a higher education setting. The results of the current study may be of interest to African American women serving as chancellors or presidents and how they can provide mentoring opportunities for women aspiring to be leaders in higher education. The results of this

study may also be of interest to colleges and universities that have leadership training programs. Higher education institutions and organizations that recruit persons of color for senior higher education leadership positions may also be interested in the results of the current study as they pursue opportunities to provide networking opportunities for African American women leaders, offer mentoring programs for the purpose of career advancement, develop diversity and inclusion training for women aspiring to serve in leadership positions, and offer professional development programs to advance the recruitment of more African American women for leadership roles.

Delimitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), "Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (p. 134). Two delimitations were noted for this study. The participants included in the study were African American women serving as a chancellor or president in a U.S. two-year or four-year higher education institution. All participants had served as a chancellor or president in a two-year or four-year higher education institution for at least one year prior to participating in the study.

Assumptions

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), "Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research" (p. 135). The current study was based on the following assumptions:

- All participants understood the interview questions and answered to the best of their abilities.
- All participants participated in mentoring experiences.

• Data analysis accurately reflected the perceptions of the participants.

Research Questions

Creswell (2009) stated that research questions "shape and specifically focus on the purpose of the study" (p. 132). The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the professional positions they have served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the challenges they have experienced in becoming a higher education chancellor or president?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about mentoring experiences they have participated in that supported becoming a chancellor or president in higher education?

RQ4. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the impact of mentoring in their current role as a chancellor or president in higher education?

RQ5. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship?

Definition of Terms

This section offers terms and definitions used throughout the research study to provide the reader clarity and understanding.

Chancellor. Duesterhaus (2022) identified the president as the chief administrative officer of institutions of higher education. According to Duesterhaus, another title comparable to president at many higher education institutions is chancellor.

Formal mentoring. According to Quinn (2012), formal mentoring occurs when a higher education institution (HEI) recruit's participant to a mentoring program with varying degrees of support from the institution throughout the partnership in terms of management and training. At some institutions, the HEI assigns mentors while in others, the mentees select who they would like to have serve as a mentor. Some institutions also designate the location, duration, and frequency of meetings (Quinn, 2012). Some professional organizations also incorporate mentoring into training programs that lead to a chancellorship or presidency.

Informal mentoring. According to Hill and Wheat (2017), informal mentoring occurs when an individual with informal or unofficial influence serves as a mentor.

Mentee. Hill and Wheat (2017) defined a mentee as a person acting in the role of protégé or person being mentored.

Mentor. Hill and Wheat (2017) defined a mentor as a person acting in the role of a role model, coach, teacher, and counselor.

Mentoring. Brown (2005) stated that mentoring is a voluntary learning relationship that offers personal development for the mentee.

Peer mentoring. According to Hill and Wheat (2017), peer mentoring occurs when the mentor works at the same level as the mentee to support new employees either in a formal or informal capacity.

President. Duesterhaus (2022) identified the president as the chief administrative officer of institutions of higher education. According to Duesterhaus, another title comparable to president at many higher education institutions is chancellor.

Primary career mentors. Brown (2005) indicated that primary career mentors are more experienced individuals "who provide guidance, assistance and support to help pave the path for mentees in achieving their career goals" (p. 659).

Two-Year institution/community college. Bok (2013) indicated that two-year institutions (also referred to as community colleges) primarily accommodate students who want to pursue a bachelor's degree but need a lower-cost school in close proximity to home that they can attend for two years before transferring to a four-year college. "Community colleges offer a variation of vocational degree programs along with shorter courses, often developed in cooperation with nearby employers, that train students for specific jobs" (Bok, 2013, p. 11).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided the introduction, background, and statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, and definition of terms for the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the history of higher education and higher education leadership. The importance of having people of color in the roles of chancellor and president is discussed. Data summarizing African American women who are higher education chancellors and presidents are reviewed. Challenges African American women have experienced as they progressed on their journey toward becoming a chancellor or president are described. The importance of mentoring African American women who are pursuing a leadership role as a

chancellor president is addressed. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to conduct the current study. This chapter includes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study. The results of the qualitative data analysis are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a study summary, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 provides an historical overview of higher education and higher education leadership in the United States. This chapter also addresses the importance of having people of color serve as chancellors and presidents. Data related to African American chancellors and presidents are presented. Challenges African American women have experienced as they ascended to a chancellorship or presidency are explained. Finally, the importance of mentoring women who are pursuing a chancellorship or presidency is addressed.

History of Higher Education in the U.S.

Geiger (2016) offered a detailed summary of the history of higher education, highlighting early leaders in colleges and universities. According to Geiger, the first generation of American higher education is referred to as the Reformation Beginnings circa 1636 to the 1740s. During this era, the first three colleges founded were Harvard College, the College of William and Mary, and Yale College. The colleges were established as adjuncts of their respective churches and were inherently connected to the colonies' civil governments (Geiger, 2016). "Harvard was chartered in 1636; it evolved in the eighteenth century into a more cosmopolitan and tolerant institution" (Geiger, 2016, p. 38). According to Geiger (2016), The College of William and Mary was initially associated with the Church of England. James Blair, the founder, and his successors were official heads of the church in Virginia. The college only offered collegiate courses in the 1730s. Yale was the only college that "preserved and cultivated the sectarian zeal of the Reformation era into the middle of the eighteenth century"

(Geiger, 2016, p. 38). By the end of the eighteenth century, Harvard had re-imagined the role of a Reformation college by creating two professorships, one in divinity (p. 1721) and the other in math and natural philosophy (p. 1727). The adoption of the professors ushered in a new generation of learned professors and tutors the colonial colleges would seek, which accompanied the second generation of American higher education, the Colonial Colleges which were created between 1745 and 1775. The founding of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University) in 1746 deterred the mold of the Reformation Colleges. According to Geiger (2016), Princeton University encompassed Presbyterians, and the colony of New Jersey produced a board of trustees having 12 ministers, 10 laymen, and the governor of the colony serving as ex officio presiding officer. Four additional colleges were established during this era and included King's College, the College of Philadelphia, the College of Rhode Island, and Dartmouth College. The colleges followed the same pattern Geiger identified as "toleration with preferment" (Geiger, 2016, p. 40) although for various reasons. According to Geiger, King's College (now referred to as Columbia University), was established in 1754, and "as an Anglican founding, had to assuage fears of institutionalizing a state religion" (p. 40). The College of Philadelphia (now called the University of Pennsylvania) was founded in 1755 as the successor to the academy that Benjamin Franklin helped establish and continued the tradition of toleration in a sense of considerable religious diversity. The Baptists also believed in tolerance while vying for control over the College of Rhode Island created in 1765 (now called Brown University). Eleazer Wheelock founded Dartmouth College in 1769.

Geiger (2016) indicated that generations three through eight included Republican Education (1776-1800), the Passing of Republic Education (1800-1820s), Classical Denominational Colleges (1820s-1850s), the New Departure (1850s-1890), and the Growth and Standardization phase that began in 1890 and extended to World War I. During this seventh era, higher education experienced an increase in enrollment that integrated women into higher education (p. 53). Generation eight was known as the Hierarchical Differentiation between the wars and extended from the 1920s through the 1940s.

According to Geiger (2016), generations nine and ten provided the segue for today's higher education landscape. Generation nine, The Academic Revolution (1945-1975) was the hallmark of higher education and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill for veterans, which resulted in a mass arrival of community college students in the early 1970s. Geiger (2016) noted this period was the most expansive in American history. College attendance tripled from 15% to 45% from the 1940s to 1970 (p. 59). This mass entrance of students occurred when returning veterans took advantage of the GI Bill in record numbers. According to Geiger (2016), in 1947, 1.1 million veterans utilizing the GI Bill enrolled in college, compared with 1.5 million total students before World War II. This phenomenon changed the trajectory of higher education, forcing institutions to run year-round and offer short-term courses. During generation ten, known as the Privatization and the Current Era (1975-2010), a change in the relationship with the federal government occurred (Geiger, 2016). Federal funding in higher education increased considerably in the 1970s, with new funding initiatives through student financial aid. In 1972, the Higher Education Amendment mandated the

government's regulatory control over higher education. Also, during this era, Title IX provided the means for legal enforcement, which Geiger noted, "It was perhaps the most significant of a number of measures by which federal regulation became an inescapable presence in higher education" (p. 62). After implementing Title IX at the beginning of the 1980s, higher education ushered in a new era of privatization. According to Geiger (2016),

> Higher education now began to extract a growing proportion of revenues from the private sector. The most prominent manifestation was rising absolute and relative levels of tuition. From the 1950s to 1980s, average tuition in both the public and private sectors had been stable, as a percentage of median family income. These figures both doubled in both sectors by the late 1990x and then rose steeply again after 2001. These increases made possible higher levels of spending in colleges and universities, but they also shifted the burden for these expenditures to the students and parents. (p. 62)

During this era, private institutions adopted a strategy Geiger (2016) referenced as "high tuition-high aid," which resulted in significant tuition increases accompanied by financial aid for students with financial need. The increasing availability of federal student loans after the Middle-Income Student Assistance Act (1978) kicked off the development of a loan culture that has grown exponentially since. According to Geiger (2016), the next generation in higher education will be charged with the task of sustaining the immeasurable contributions that colleges and universities make to American society, let alone improving on them.

Higher Education Leadership

Since the creation of higher education institutions in the U.S., men have dominated and continue to dominate the roles of president, vice president, dean, and other higher education leadership positions on college campuses (Bok, 2013). Gender expectations have played a key role related to women pursuing leadership roles in higher education (Parker, 2015). In the 1830s and 1840s the aspiration of women to attend college was a controversial topic debated for a century (Gordon, 1997). According to Gordon, conservatives believed women attending college would destroy the fabric of womanhood and cause conflict in women being homemakers, wives, and mothers. Liberals claimed that women seeking a college education would be better homemakers, wives, and mothers (Gordon, 1997). Women's colleges were established in the 1800s to advance education for women who were not allowed to attend most higher education institutions. In 1861, during the Civil War, two private colleges, Oberlin, and Antioch, allowed coeducation. Oberlin College was the first to admit women and men of all races in 1837 (Minnich, n.d.). Clearly defined gender roles mandated men to study Greek and Latin and prepare for the ministry, while there were four areas of study open to women: the Female, Teachers, Collegiate, and Theology. In addition to attending classes, the women students performed domestic duties such as cooking, washing, and cleaning. In 1837, Oberlin's policy required women to be dismissed from classes on Monday so they could do the male students' laundry (Tuttle, 2004).

According to Bok (2013), women were appointed to higher education leadership positions as early as the mid-1800s. Starting in 1836, seven women's colleges were founded. According to Parker (2015), The 'Seven Sisters' were independent private

colleges like men's Ivy League schools. Fifty women's colleges were founded from 1836 to 1875, but the initial seven had distinction. The Seven Sisters had monetary resources the other colleges lacked, and they provided high quality academic programs. Another characteristic that made these seven institutions distinguished was that they were able to recruit and maintain a high percentage of female faculty members (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997). The Dean of Women was the first administrative position offered to women in coeducational institutions. Women served as Deans of Women as early as the 1890s (Schwartz, 1997). Alice Palmer was the first Dean of Women at the University of Chicago (Schwartz, 1997).

A vast population of men served in World War II, which allowed women to serve in administrative and faculty roles in higher education institutions. From the late 1800's through 1945, the same year World War II concluded, the Deans of Women had accomplished several objectives. They "established foundations of practices for students and administration, developed professional associations, conducted research, improved college environments, and developed a body of literature in journals, reports, and books" (Parker, 2015, p. 8). By the 1940s, the Deans of Women had firmly established themselves in higher education administration and provided a path for other women to follow (Gordon, 1997). In 1945, when World War II ended, the women who had filled the gap in higher education had made significant accomplishments (Parker, 2015) while the men were at war (Parker, 2015). According to Schwartz (1997), immediately after World War II, when men returned home as heroes, women were terminated from their jobs and comprised 60% of all workers released from employment. Women were terminated from employment at a rate 75% higher than men (Schwartz, 1997). In the

1960s and 1970s the advance toward equality in the workplace and educational institutions was the flame that ignited the changing roles of women in higher education administration and faculty with the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act focused on equal treatment of minority groups and the elimination of sexual discrimination. Another landmark law was the 1972 Title IX of the Education Amendments which was passed by Congress to protect employees and students in educational institutions (Schwartz, 1997).

While more women have been appointed as chancellors and presidents of higher education institutions during the past three decades, most presidents and chancellors continue to be male. Stripling (2012) reported that in 2012, 86% of all presidents and chancellors were male, and 75% of full professors were male. Summarizing the ACE's 2016 American College President Study, Soares et al. (2018) reported that seven out of 10 college presidents were men, and fewer than one in five college presidents was a racial minority. Lane (2017) reported the average college president in 2016 was a 62-year-old married white male with a doctorate. According to Lane (2017), 11% of presidents were over 71. According to Silbert, Ghoniem, and Punty (2022), in 2021, 55% of Ph.D. earners, 39% of academic deans, 38% of provosts, 22% of presidents, and 10% of system presidents were women. Although there have been numerous changes in higher education since the 1980s such as technology, social media, and the internet, the profile of the college president has remained the same (Lane, 2017). The majority continue to be White males.

Soares et al. (2018) indicated that the presidents surveyed by the ACE in 2016 indicated they intended to leave their current presidency within five years. That will provide higher education institutions the window of opportunity to bring new talent and

diversified experiences into these leadership roles (Soares et al., 2018). According to Lane (2017), we need leaders in higher education who are forward-thinking, forward-looking, responsive to the ever-changing environment, and willing to engage in meaningful change. In the past 50 years, there have been transformative changes to the role of the presidency. According to Bok (2013),

> College presidents today face vast challenges in higher education. Presidents have far less authority than their predecessors, who had no unions to contend with and minimal interference from state legislation. College presidents today manage more prominent and complex institutions than a century ago. The responsibilities of a president have extended considerably. There are many expectations of a college president. They include developing a vision for the college, increasing buy-in from faculty, and raising large sums of money for the institution. While organizing and overseeing a staff that often includes several hundred to thousands of employees; building relationships with alums and external influencers such as legislators, government agencies, and local officials; chairing and speaking at numerous engagements; and resolving a never-ending cycle of crises, great and small that materialize every academic year. (p. 48)

Trustees typically select an individual for a college presidency who started their academic life as an instructor and has had years of administrative experience as a president, provost, or dean (Bok, 2013). Often, the individual has moved from one college to another to gain more experience. The candidate generally can balance the budget and manage the institution reasonably well. Most serve for six years or less (Bok, 2013). Bok (2013) revealed that influence is an attribute that a college president should

possess primarily. According to Bok (2013), a successful presidential candidate should be an individual who can best influence the institution's trajectory because they have the most comprehensive knowledge of the institution.

Trajectory to a chancellorship or presidency. Most chancellors and presidents have earned doctoral degrees (Parker, 2015). According to Parker (2015), historically women, compared to men, have exemplified a lower proportion of college instructors and administrators in higher education. The trend has existed since the evolution of higher education in the United States in the early 1800s and continues to be prevalent today.

According to Lederman (2022) historically many presidents have been hired after previous experience as a president, and the provost's role has also been a gateway to the presidency. According to the ACE (2017), in 2016, three-quarters of presidents followed a traditional path to the position and had been either a president or a provost or other senior academic administrator in their previous role. Lederman cited an Inside Higher Education article published in 2021 that that indicated in 2020-2021 about a third of current presidents had previously been a provost or other senior academic leader. According to Lederman, more than a third (125) of hired presidents had previously been a president at another institution. More than 50 of those presidents, however, had been an interim president at their own institution. Lederman (2022) indicated there was an increase in hiring of presidents with a non-traditional background in student services and student success. According to Lederman, from December 2019 to May 2020, colleges and universities in the Inside Higher Ed sample hired about 20 presidents whose previous job had been a vice-president for student affairs or student success. Compared to 2020-

2021, 25 presidents came directly from senior student services positions (Lederman, 2022).

Silbert et al. (2022) stated that 7% of women followed a nontraditional path to the presidency while 93% followed the traditional path. According to Silbert et al. (2022) in 2022, males comprised 61% of academic deans, 62% of provosts, 78% of presidents, and 90% of system presidents. Twenty-six percent of male presidents followed a nontraditional path to the presidency while 74% followed a traditional path (Silbert et al., 2022). Although more women than men follow a traditional path to the presidency, they still occupy fewer leadership roles in higher education. Silbert et al. (2022) raised the question, "Is it a glass or concrete ceiling when it comes to women in leadership roles in higher education?" (p. 22).

The Importance of Having People of Color in Chancellor or President Positions

Hussar and Bailey (2016) attested that with increasing diversity in the student population in higher education, the lack of minorities represented in college presidents has a significant way to go in representing the students they serve. Hussar and Bailey (2016) cited U.S. Census Bureau data to project that by 2024, 44% of college students will come from communities of color, with the most significant growth occurring within the African American (28% growth) and Hispanic (25% growth) populations. The ACE (2017) stated, "As we continue to see more students from communities of color access and progress through higher education institutions, the higher education field must provide pathways to leadership for men and women of color" (p. 33).

Lederman (2022) stated, "The underrepresentation of minority leaders has drawn significant attention for many years, especially amid growing recognition of the

significant equity gaps in student access and success in U.S. higher education" (p. 3). In the article "Diversity on the Rise Among College Presidents," Ledermann asked, "Why does a university's governing board, administration, or faculty need to reflect the increasingly diverse student body at colleges and universities?" (p. 3). According to Lederman, the answer to this question is simple in nature but may be complex. Since the student body in higher education is becoming more diverse, so should the representation of higher education leadership be diverse. Representation ensures that diverse perspectives are taught, represented, defended, and considered in higher education leadership decisions (Lederman, 2022). The stagnant progress toward diversifying the college presidency has continued regardless of the number of programs designed to increase the pipeline of minority candidates. In the last several years, discussions about colleges and universities hiring their first minority chancellor or president appeared to increase (Lederman, 2022).

According to Lederman (2022) data gathered from Inside Higher Education (2021) provided information regarding whether those appointments represented a trend of hiring more diverse individuals as presidents and provosts between December 1, 2019, and November 30, 2021. Lederman (2022) reported that higher education institutions hired 329 leaders of colleges in 2019-2020. Two-hundred and fifty-six or 78% were White, 14.6% were Black/African American, 4% were Latino or Hispanic, and 3% were Asian, which represented a modest diversity increase from the last ACE (2017) American College President study in 2016, when 83% of presidents were White. Lederman (2022) shared that 2020-2021 reflected a dramatic change, particularly in hiring Black/African American presidents. According to Lederman, of the 336 presidents hired from June 1,

2020, through November 30, 2021, 25.3% were Black, and 6.8% were Latino. Less than two-thirds (64.6%) were White, a decrease from the 78% in 2019-2020 to 83% of all presidents employed by colleges and universities in 2017. Additionally, Lederman (2022) reported that public two- and four-year colleges hired the most diverse leaders. According to Lederman (2022), 33% of presidents hired at two-year higher education institutions and 28.7% of those hired at four-year institutions in 2020-2021 were Black/African American. Lederman (2022) indicated that 58.3% of two-year and 56.3% of four-year presidential hires during 2020-2021 were White.

Valverde (2003) offered a broad historical context of the challenges people of color encountered in K-12 and higher education. According to Valverde, it is no surprise that there has been a gap in higher education between people of color and White Americans in the past three decades. Valverde reported that in the 1960s there were two American societies - one White and the other Black/minority. One group was financially well-to-do, and the other group was predominately living in poverty. One group was advantaged and the other was disadvantaged. Due to the desolate situation, in the 1960s the federal government took an aggressive approach to alleviate poverty by implementing the affirmative action program (Valverde, 2003). The program's purpose was to address several societal ills, including financial, unemployment, housing, and racial and educational inequities. During this era, minorities were plagued by low test scores, high dropout rates, minimal college admission, and lower graduation rates. President Lyndon B. Johnson, in collaboration with Congress, executed major programs such as the Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title VII, and Headstart (Valverde, 2003). At the post-secondary level programs such as Title III which focused on developing

historically Black colleges (HBCU's), Upward Bound, Talent Search, and student support programs were authorized by Congress (Valverde, 2003). By the late 1960s these programs merged and became known as TRIO. "All these efforts were designed to bring more economic resources and new strategies to reverse the negative educational outcomes faced by Blacks and other colored students" (Valverde, 2003, p. 21). Three decades later, minimal strides have been accomplished to bridge the gap between Whites and Black/minorities in entering and attaining a higher education degree.

The underrepresentation of Blacks/minorities in higher education also still exists in the number of people of color in leadership positions in colleges and universities. Valverde (2003) shared that people of color participate less and are less successful in higher education due to the lack of faculty as role models. According to Valverde, "There is a lack of professional staff who recruit and counsel students, a limited number of administrators to voice the circumstances and difficulties students of color face, and minimal representation on governance boards where policy is formulated" (p. 32).

Valverde (2003) reported that the lack of minority trustees in colleges and universities also contributes to the lack of minority representation in chancellorships and presidencies in higher education. According to Valverde, in 1997, the demographic of college trustees for public higher education institutions was 82.7% White, 11.7% African American, and 3.1% Latino. In private higher education institutions, the demographics of college trustees was 89.6% White, 6.5% African American, and 2.1% Latino. A significant responsibility for a college trustee is to select the president of the college, evaluate the president, and help the president be successful. In addition, trustees review the college's budget, set policies and procedures, and advocate for the college. Silbert et

al. (2022) also investigated the minority representation of board of trustee members. According to Silbert et al., in 2022, 47% of trustees were White men, 22% were White women 22%, 7% were African American men, 4 % were Asian men, and 2% were Hispanic men. Five percent of the trustees were African American women, 2% were Asian women, and 1% were Hispanic women. The Silbert et al. study also revealed an additional lack of minority representation among the Board chairs. Sixty-three percent were White men, 21% were white women, 4 % were African American men, 4% were Asian men, 1% were Hispanic men, 3 % were African American women, and 1% were Asian and Hispanic women. With a limited number of minority college trustees, advocacy for minority candidates for chancellorships and presidencies is limited.

African American Women Chancellors and Presidents

Jackson and Harris (2005) reported that in 1999, out of 3,075 college presidents countrywide, 89% were White, 6% were African American, and 3.8% were Hispanic. According to Jackson and Harris (2005) while more African American females were being hired into the presidency, they were still underrepresented in the presidential population. The overall synopsis indicated that even though there was an increased number of African American women appointed to the presidency, the percentage was much lower in comparison to White women.

According to the ACE (2017) American College President Study conducted in 2016, there has been minimal change in the number of minority college presidents. In the 2016 survey, the racial/ethnic group participation included 8% African American, 4% Hispanic, 2% Asian American, and 1% Middle Eastern, American Indian, or those who identified as multiple races. The ACE (2017) in summarizing the results from the 2016

American College President study reported that 30% of presidents in 2016 were women. Inside Higher Education (2021) reported that higher education institutions hired roughly the same number and percentage of women in the two 18-month periods studied, approximately 35% overall. However, the female presidents hired in the 2020-2021 academic year were more likely to be minorities than their male counterparts. Additionally, at the community college level, White women represented a minority of those hired, 41.5%, narrowly followed by African American women at 39% (Lederman, 2022).

According to Silbert et al. (2022), "When you observe those who wield power at the most prestigious institutions, there is a high probability you will see the all-too-familiar image of a White man" (p. 3). The Silbert et al. study illustrated the proportion of underrepresented groups among presidents relative to the general population. Silbert et al. reported that in 2021, White women comprised 16.9 of all presidents, African American women 1.6 percent, Asian women 1.6 percent, and Hispanic women 1.6 percent of the presidents in the dataset. According to Silbert et al., of the 55% of women who earned a Ph.D., 22% became a president. For women of color, 19% earned a Ph.D. and five percent became a president of a higher education institution. Silbert et al. (2022) reported that public institutions outpaced private institutions when it comes to the diversity of presidents. Private institutions account for 14 % of White women, three percent of women of color, and five percent of men of color.

Although there has been an increase in the number of minority college presidents over the last three decades, women of color are still underrepresented (Oikelome, 2017). According to Oikelome, from 2011 to 2016, women of color serving in a college

presidency significantly dropped from nine percent to five percent. Lederman (2022) reported that women who were hired from June 2020 through November 2021 were more racially diverse than in previous years. According to Lederman, in November 2021, 62 % of higher education presidents were White, 27 % were African American, and eight percent were Latina, compared to 72 % White, 21 % African American and four percent Latina in the earlier period. Women of color comprised 13 % of all presidents hired from June 2020 to November 2021.

Skills African American women presidents embodied included "strategic planning, financial acumen, emotional intelligence, authenticity in leadership, and the ability to be change agents" (Oikelome, 2017, p. 33). Some of the respondents in Oikelome's study revealed the significance of a college president acquiring the ability to merge emotional intelligence into thinking and decision-making, especially as they encountered various constituents daily. Each respondent in Oikelome's study perceived herself as a change agent in their role prior to and leading to the presidency. Respondents believed honing the skills to be a change agent warranted the opportunity and as a result led to advancement in higher education (Oikelome, 2017). In addition, all the respondents embraced transformational and authentic leadership styles (Oikelome, 2017).

Challenges African American Women Have Experienced as They Progressed to a Chancellorship or Presidency

Researchers have identified three major challenges African American women have experienced as they have progressed in leadership roles that have culminated in a chancellorship or presidency in higher education: racism, sexism, and lack of authentic inclusion. Cobb (1969) and DeVries, Webb, and Eveline (2016) indicated that African

American women are exposed to the harsh lessons associated with racism and sexism early in life. Epstein (1973) referred to these actions as the "double whammy" or "double jeopardy" (p. 65). Andrews (1993) stated that barriers associated with race and gender have created professional and personal challenges for African American women for decades. Miller and Vaughn (1997) reported that African American women received indirect messages such as 'You don't belong here', which was associated with racism, sexism, and tokenism, and frequently created an unwelcoming climate for African American leaders in postsecondary institutions. Gewertz (2006) indicated that minority women have been constrained by the plight of sexism and racism as they have attempted to progress in leadership roles in higher education. Smith-Ligon (2011) described the racism and sexism African American women have experienced as they progressed to a chancellorship or presidency. According to Smith-Ligon, racism and sexism are a double divide for African American women. The participants in Smith-Lignon's study shared that race and gender continued to be a challenge even after they were appointed as a chancellor or president in higher education. One participant who was a president indicated that racism "was a difficult task to tackle" (p. 121). The racial challenges the participant encountered early on in her career "proved to be the test of her will and strength to succeed while developing her leadership potential" (p. 122). A second African American female participant in Smith-Ligon's study was a chancellor who started her higher education career when race relations were strained, and segregation was prominent in the United States. The participant shared that she had encountered an act of racism and chose to stand up for her rights. According to the participant, because she stood up for herself, she was perceived as non-compliant. A third participant in the

study, indicated that she had encountered racism earlier in her career as a second-year teacher at a predominately White school where she quickly learned that "teaching at the school was quite an experience, and that the principal certainly demonstrated very strong examples of racism" (p. 163). The participant shared that encountering racism helped her grow and reflect on her family upbringing. Another participant in the study was the president of a college in higher education. She shared that she ascended into leadership at a time when "Society at the time was geared toward the beliefs of the White male majority in the south; the effects of Jim Crow fueled the decision and policy making of the ones in control" (p. 179). Due to the systems in place at the time, she indicated that it was very hard for an African American to hold any sort of power. According to the participant, the challenges were even more difficult for African American women.

Oikelome (2017) provided a narrative about the perception of African American women and their journey to serve as a college president. She used a framework of intersectionality to explore the perceived impact of race, gender, and other identity structures on African American females' progression along the pathway to the presidency. According to Oikelome, "intersectionality is a framework used to explore how the socially and culturally constructed categories of race, gender, and class interact dependently to create a system of oppression" (p. 25). Oikelome (2017) described the perceptions of White and African American women presidents about the challenges they experienced as they progressed on their journey to becoming a college president. Oikelome indicated that White women and African American women experienced "sexism, harassment, or gender-based discrimination in the workplace" (p. 25). Some African American female participants perceived they experienced subtle bias, while

others experienced blatant bias as they progressed to the role of president. According to Oikelome, when the participants were asked to explain instances of gender bias and challenges, "The women related experiences of marginalization, lack of support, and exclusion from informal networks as faculty striving to advance through the rank and file in departments where they were the only person of color" (p. 29). According to Oikelome, an overwhelming majority of African American women agreed that racial bias will continue to exist. Oikelome indicated that the perceived realities of intersectionality of race and gender are compelling in the narratives of the African American women. According to Oikelome, this reality for African American women is highlighted in literature on African American women and their progression to the role of the presidency. Oikelome concluded that race still matters as African American women pursue the role of president in higher education settings. Oikelome also suggested that for African American women, race is imposed externally as a relevant factor in the journey to the role of president. Some participants interviewed by Oikelome were candid about their experienced lack of support from other minority individuals "to serve as role models for information or guidance" (p. 29). This lack of support "led to feelings of isolation and marginalization" (p. 29). According to Oikelome, the most impressive reflection of the respondents was that despite the perceptions of others about their identity, they believed their success in attaining a college presidency was attributed to their knowledge, experience, and leadership skills.

While each participant in Oikelome's (2017) study acknowledged and articulated various experiences stemming from their gender, racial, sexual, or interconnecting factors, there was a consensus among all the participants with respect to the desire to be

defined beyond their various identities, choosing rather to focus on and describe the repertoire of skills, expertise, and proficiency they acquired with each level of advancement, all of which culminated into achieving the pinnacle of their career, a college presidency (Oikelome, 2017, p. 32).

Smith (2020) conducted a study that focused on the challenges and success of African American female presidents at post-secondary educational institutions. Four first-time African American female presidents shared the challenges they experienced in a qualitative study. According to Smith two emergent themes were identified as a challenge for the participants during their journey as these African American women progressed to the role of chancellor or president - race and gender. Gender presented as a challenge as the participants perceived they constantly had to prove themselves to colleagues and subordinates in doing their job sufficiently. Race was identified as a challenge for African American females as they progressed to the chancellorship or presidency.

According to Jeffcoat (2008), African American women in higher education are keenly aware of the double barrier regarding racism and sexism that impacts institutional culture. Regardless of the challenges, African American women refuse to allow discrimination to control their destiny. Instead of focusing on the challenges, Jeffcoat (2008) reported that African American women "continued to stay abreast of political affairs to remain prevailing participatory agents reflecting change rather than being victims. They managed to conquer racism and sexism using peace and compromise" (p. 67). Smith (2020) shared similar sentiments and indicated that the women in her study did not focus on the challenges. The successful strategies that helped African American

women obtain a chancellor or president position included mentoring, spirituality, family, networking, and training.

Valverde (2003) reported that the ultimate goal for women of color and White women in leadership roles in higher education has been and is authentic inclusion. For men at the executive level, inclusion is perceived as more than equality - it leads to empowerment (Valverde, 2003). It is foundationally a fight for power. Women can go beyond men to be higher on the ladder of success and power if they gain equality. Granted, all men at the executive level are not racist or sexist. However, according to Valverde (2003), "Strong vestiges of prejudices by their predecessors are still alive in formal organizations and in particular the academy" (p. 105).

Despite the challenges, even though women of color are getting into more leadership positions, their plight has intensified. According to Valverde (2003), women are sharing their situations, particularly those pursuing the presidency, as being under siege. Their struggle begins in the infancy of the selection process. According to Valverde (2003),

> As a result of a more thorough examination of their candidacy, their 'weakness' is highlighted by mere discussion among search committees. Once in a leadership role, boards vote on selection, but they rarely get a unanimous vote. Once in a role, faculty ask women to state their vision for the institution more frequently than men. Their actions are frequently scrutinized; their decisions are questioned continuously. (p. 112)

According to Smith (2020) mentoring was reported to be a sustainable source for the participants. Also, spirituality was perceived as a reliable source to handle the

injustices and challenges that could have dissuaded the women in the study, but instead helped them to persevere in their journey in becoming a chancellor or president. Additionally, family was perceived as a successful strategy as the women ascended into the presidency and chancellorship. Family was perceived as the support each participant needed to associate with who they were with the work they did and be effective in both. Networking opened doors for participants that otherwise many have not been made available to them in obtaining a chancellorship or presidency. Smith shared, "training was a necessary component to achieve the position and be successful in the position. Training allowed the participants to be better and acclimated with the operations, politics, and better know and understand the institution as a whole" (p. vi).

The Importance of Mentoring Women Pursuing the Role of Chancellor or President

Brown (2005) indicated that research consistently supports the view that mentoring is a significant attribute of career development for women in higher education. Several studies on mentoring relationships across various business, education, and psychology disciplines have confirmed the positive impact of mentoring on career development (Wilson, 2001; Cullen & Luna, 1993; Scanlon, 1997). Hunt and Michael (1983) and Kram (1985) shared that exchange theory provided the groundwork for understanding mentoring relationships. Exchange theory supported the concept that "Mentorship is an exchange of behaviors mutually benefited by the mentor and mentee" (Brown, 2005, p. 659). When it comes to career development, mentors are the individuals who provide guidance and support to help mentees along the way in achieving their career goals. Hill and Wheat (2017) echoed the sentiment that mentoring could be the critical factor in advancement to the highest level within organizations. A

study conducted by Hill and Wheat (2017) on mentoring and female leaders in higher education indicated that many women had mentors and perceived mentoring as a contributing factor to their career advancement.

According to Brown, Ummersen, and Sturnick (2001), mentoring is an invaluable resource for recruiting and preparing women for the college presidency. Brown et al. (2001) attested that even women with impeccable credentials can experience difficulty when rising to leadership roles without the support of a powerful individual in a leadership position. Historically, men have outnumbered women in the role of college president, as men have more opportunities to know the right and essential people and have more access to promotions (Moore, 1982). Consequently, women may be excluded from such exposure (Moore, 1982). Therefore, mentoring can assist women in overcoming these obstacles.

Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016) indicated that even though women outperform men in completing advanced degrees, women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education. The lack of gender diversity at the highest levels of higher education administration has hindered the success of higher education institutions (Hannum, Muhly, Schockley-Zalaback, & White, 2015). With the increase of diverse populations seeking an education, for higher education institutions to remain germane, it is imperative to have higher education leaders that mirror diverse populations. Gardiner, Tiggermann, Kearns, and Marshall (2007), Kosoko-Lasaki, Sonnino, and Voytko (2006), and Quinn (2012) shared the lack of minority representation in higher education leadership roles has contributed to the shortage of mentors. The authors suggested that mentoring can be identified as a solution to the lack of diversity

represented in leadership positions in higher education. In addition to the lack of diversity, Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016) also identified the lack of purposeful mentoring for aspiring higher education leaders who desire to become a chancellor, president, or vice president. Quinn's (2012) research revealed that women desire mentoring. According to Quinn (2012), mentoring can promote benefits including:

- Improved opportunity and success in career advancement.
- Increased institutional loyalty.
- Higher salaries.
- Improved time management and productivity.
- Increased procurement of grants.
- Improved satisfaction with the profession and work-life balance.
- Higher administrative aspirations.
- Improved networking skills (page 307).

Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016) indicated that advancing women in leadership roles benefits both higher education and society. The authors contended that advancement should be conducted systematically, focusing on career trajectory planning, mentorship programming, and support. Mentoring is where different types of role models could be advantageous for aspiring women seeking to obtain a position in leadership in higher education. "The most effective leadership strategies occur when there exists a diverse set of skills and a variety of perspectives represented" (p. 309). Hill and Wheat (2017) proposed that aspiring leaders need mentors who they view as being like themselves concerning features like gender and race to be able to legitimize women in leadership positions.

Dunbar and Kinnersely (2011) indicated that of the 64% of women in their survey who reported having a mentor, 91% of the mentors held a higher rank than the respondent. In surveying 91 female college presidents, Brown (2005) found that female college presidents tended to have career mentors who assisted them in advancing to higher education leadership positions. The majority of the presidents' mentors (68%) were male. Dunbar and Kinnersely (2011) found that most of the female university presidents studied highlighted the importance of relationships with others in their development. According to Madsen (2008), many women believe career achievement is more difficult without role models or mentors. In a study conducted by Steinke (2006), most female college and university presidents spoke about the prominent role of mentors in their advancement to the presidency.

Women mentoring women. Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016) shared the importance of women seeking mentorship from men. However, the authors shared the importance of women seeking mentorship from women who have blazed the path in higher education. Johnson (2016) expressed the importance of having women mentor women who are climbing the higher education leadership ladder, as the work-life balance could be a factor for aspiring women leaders. Johnson perceived that female higher education leaders have different work-life balance experiences than their male counterparts. Additionally, Johnson (2016) stated, "Female University presidents consist of a dismal 26% of the total. Consequently, there might be systemic barriers in place preventing women as a population for advancing" (p. 308). Therefore, women in higher education need to be aware of the obstacles in their institution and be able to process those barriers with women who have navigated similar challenges successfully.

Men mentoring women. According to Davey (2008) mentorship tends to favor males who have more developmental experiences. Women report difficulty obtaining development opportunities, exclusion from informal networks, and lack of fit (Davey, 2008). Warner and DeFleur (1993) maintained that having a male mentor can be particularly advantageous in helping women navigate the power structures, especially the 'good ole boy network'. Due to gender disparities in higher education administration, women typically have greater access to male mentors and role models than female mentors and role models. (Brown, 2005; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Madsen, 2008). Although there may be challenges related to males mentoring females, Hill and Wheat (2017) contended that cross-gender mentoring relationships can have several positive benefits, such as women learning to be more assertive and handling and recovering from a crisis. With higher education being a male-dominated industry, a male mentor can teach ways to navigate an organizational culture subjugated by men. Nevertheless, Brown (2005) shared that women can benefit from male and female mentors. Many authors debate whether a woman aspiring to be a higher-education leader should seek a male or female mentor. Studies show that having multiple mentors is advantageous in assisting women in advancing in their careers. Brown (2005) addressed the benefits of women having 'multiple mentorships' that incorporate various types of mentoring relationships such as faculty and administrative mentorship.

Summary

The literature review provided an overview of the historical context of higher education and higher education leadership in the United States beginning in the mid-1600s, and the establishment of the first higher education institutions in the U.S. For

over 300 years, institutions admitted primarily White men, preparing them for the ministry, or professions in medicine or law. Men did not widely accept admitting women higher education. Conservatives perceived that women attending college would destroy the very fabric of women and motherhood. As a result, women were not allowed to attend most higher education institutions. The pivotal role of women in higher education began in the 1800s when women's colleges were created and a limited number of coed institutions including Antioch College and Oberlin College admitted women. Women's colleges were established during this same timeframe and provided opportunities for women to serve in faculty positions and leadership roles as Deans of Women. During WW II, women were hired to fill faculty and some leadership positions in coed higher education institutions when men were drafted during the war. Since the founding of higher education institutions in the U.S., White males have dominated chancellor and president positions in two- and four-year higher education institutions. Minorities and women in the chancellorship or presidency continue to be significantly underrepresented.

Although the number of women chancellors and presidents have increased during the past three decades, the majority are White. The ACE (2017) reported that in 2016, only 8% of chancellors and presidents were African American women. The majority of individuals who ascend to a chancellorship or presidency have followed a traditional path to the role beginning as faculty followed by serving as deans, provosts, or chief academic officers. The majority have earned a doctoral degree.

African American women have reported experiencing three significant challenges as they ascended to a chancellorship or presidency: racism, sexism, and inclusion (Cobb, 1969; DeVries, Webb, & Eveline, 2016, Oikelome, 2017). Despite these challenges,

African American women have not allowed the challenges to define them. Instead, they have chosen to focus on their skills and abilities, which were pivotal in attaining a chancellor or president position.

The importance of mentoring women who are pursuing a chancellorship or presidency was described in Chapter 2. Researchers (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016; Brown, 2005; Brown et al., 2001; Dunbar & Kinnersely, 2011; Madsen, 2008; Quinn, 2012; Steinke, 2006) suggested that mentoring was essential to women in their career development as they ascended to chancellorship or presidency in higher education. Oikelome (2017) indicated that mentoring assisted African American women in addressing and overcoming obstacles. Madsen (2008) reported that the majority of mentors for women seeking a chancellorship or presidency were men who were chancellors or presidents.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the current study. This chapter includes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis and synthesis. Reliability, trustworthiness, the researcher's role, and limitations are also included in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Methods

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of African American women serving as chancellors or presidents in two-year higher education institutions about their professional experiences and the role of mentoring as they pursued and assumed executive leadership roles in higher education. The first purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of African American women leaders about the professional roles they served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president. The second purpose was to investigate the perceptions of African American women leaders about the challenges they experienced as they pursued a higher education presidency. The third purpose was to examine the perceptions of African American women leaders about mentoring experiences that supported becoming a chancellor or president. The fourth purpose was to explore the perceptions of African American women executive level leaders about the impact of mentoring on their effectiveness while serving as a chancellor or president in higher education. The fifth purpose was to investigate the perceptions of African American women who were serving as a chancellor or president about the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship. This chapter describes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological research design using a social constructivist approach was used in the current study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a

qualitative research design requires the researcher to be objective and impartial while focusing primarily on the shared lived experiences of the participants. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). The qualitative interview used in the current study was adopted to elicit the perceptions of the lived experiences of the participants, African American women currently serving as a chancellor or president in a two-year higher education institution, about the professional roles they served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president, challenges they experienced during their careers, mentoring experiences that supported becoming a senior leader in higher education, the impact of mentoring received while serving as a chancellor or president, and the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship. A social constructivist approach relies on the participants' perspectives of the situation studied while a researcher gathers information during personal interviews. In the current study, the information was gathered by the researcher through a semi-structured interview. The researcher listened to the participants to understand their lived experiences.

Setting

The setting for the current study included higher education institutions throughout the United States where African American women served in senior leadership roles as chancellors or presidents. All study respondents were from two-year community colleges.

Sampling Procedures

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008**),** sampling in qualitative research is almost always purposive. This sampling procedure includes choosing a sample based on the researcher's experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled. All participants included in the study were African American women who were serving as a chancellor or president in a two-year higher education institution in the U.S. All study participants had served as a chancellor or president for at least one year. Along with purposive sampling, snowball sampling was also utilized in the study. According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), snowball sampling involves selecting a few people who can identify other people who can identify other people who might be good participants for a study. Lunenburg and Irby stated, “This approach is most useful when a study is carried out in a setting in which possible participants are scattered or not found in clusters" (p. 176).

Since the location of the participants was throughout the U.S., this approach was an efficient way to identify individuals who met the criteria for inclusion in the study: African American women currently serving as chancellors or presidents in community colleges throughout the United States who had been in the leadership role for a minimum of one year. A total of 10 African American higher education chancellors or presidents participated in the current study.

Instrument

The primary instrument used to gather data for this study was a semi-structured interview protocol that included four descriptive demographic questions and 13 open-ended questions aligned with the research questions. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher asked two external peer reviewers to examine the interview protocol to make

sure the interview questions were aligned with the research questions and were easy to understand. One external interviewer was a faculty member at a Midwestern community college and had experience in qualitative dissertation research. The other external reviewer served as president at a Midwestern community college and had participated as a committee member on several qualitative dissertation defenses.

The four descriptive and demographic questions included the following:

IQ1. What is your current position?

IQ2. How long have you served in your current position?

IQ3. How long have you worked in higher education?

IQ4. What is your highest level of education?

The open-ended interview questions were developed to provide explanations of the phenomena being studied. The research questions (RQ) and open-ended interview questions (IQ) included the following:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the professional positions they have served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president?

IQ5. At what point in your career did you start to envision yourself serving in a higher education leadership position?

IQ6. What professional positions have you served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president?

RQ2. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the challenges they have experienced in becoming a higher education chancellor or president?

IQ7. What challenges did you experience as you pursued your current leadership position?

RQ3. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about mentoring experiences they have participated in that supported becoming a chancellor or president in higher education?

IQ8. Describe the mentors or mentoring you received that helped you to advance to your current leadership position?

IQ9. Describe how your mentoring relationship(s) were first developed?

IQ10. In what capacity did your mentors serve (e.g., spiritual mentor, psychological mentor, career-related mentor, etc.)?

RQ4. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the impact of mentoring in their current role as a chancellor or president in higher education?

IQ11. Describe how you have been mentored in your current role as a chancellor or president.

IQ12. How does the mentoring you currently receive differ from the mentoring you received as you were seeking a chancellorship or presidency?

RQ5. What are the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship?

IQ13. In your opinion, what are the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship?

IQ14. In your opinion, what are the benefits of same ethnicity, same race mentoring?

IQ15. In your opinion, what are the deficits of same ethnicity, same race mentoring?

IQ16. In your opinion, what are the benefits of same-sex mentoring?

IQ17. In your opinion, what are the deficits of same-sex mentoring?

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to conducting the interviews, a request to conduct the study was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on January 10, 2023. Approval from the IRB to conduct the study was granted on January 11, 2023 (see Appendix A). Once approval to conduct the study was received from the Baker University IRB, the researcher submitted an electronic invitation to participate in the study to potential participants who met the criteria for inclusion in the study (see Appendix B). The invitation to participate in the study included information that described the study, voluntary participation, and the length of the interview. The invitation to participate also explained that the interview would be conducted in a virtual setting and would be recorded to provide the opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy. Potential participants were informed about the ability to withdraw from the study at any time and indicated they could elect to not answer any questions during the interview. A description of how interview transcripts and audio recordings would be anonymized to assure confidentiality was stated. In addition, the invitation to participate indicated there would be no risks or discomfort associated with participation in the study and no provision of benefits or compensation would be provided because of participation in the study.

Once an individual indicated willingness to participate in the study, the researcher established a date and time that was mutually beneficial to conduct the interview and forwarded a consent form (see Appendix C) that could be electronically signed and returned to the researcher via email. The consent form included the same information as that detailed in the invitation to participate (see Appendix B) and notified participants that the interview would be recorded via Zoom video conferencing and that the researcher would be taking notes during the interview. A confirmation e-mail was sent to each participant confirming the date and time for the interview.

In preparation for the interview with the participants, the researcher engaged each of the external peer reviewers in a mock interview to provide an opportunity to practice the interview and to provide feedback about pacing, the order of the questions, and potential follow-up questions. Prior to each interview rapport was established with each interviewee through inquiring how the academic year was going and asking questions related to goals for the academic year. The researcher started the interview by asking descriptive and demographic questions followed by the open-ended interview questions. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) suggested that during the interview, the researcher should engage in: "(a) careful listening, (b) observing nonverbal cues of the interviewee, including the participants' body language, eye contact, and facial expressions, (c) monitoring the progress of the conversation, (d) asking questions when needed, (e) taking notes, and (f) not responding during the interview" (p. 91). The researcher implemented all of the strategies suggested by Lunenburg and Irby when interviewing study participants. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher thanked each participant for sharing her time and responses to the interview questions. Each participant was asked

if she knew of other women African American chancellors or presidents who might be willing to participate in the study. If the interviewee responded affirmatively, the name and contact information of other African American chancellors or presidents was requested. The individual providing the contact information was asked to alert the individual being nominated that the researcher would be contacting the nominee to solicit participation in the study. After each interview was completed, a thank you card was sent to each participant.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended five steps for the analysis of qualitative research data. The first step involves organizing and preparing the data for analysis. The application of this step in the current study involved transcribing interviews via Otter.ai and notetaking. Prior to additional analysis, the researcher sent each participant the transcription of the interview and asked the respondent to review the transcript for accuracy, additions, or omissions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) referred to this process as member checking. Respondents did not report any changes to transcripts. Once each transcript was returned, the researcher added observations including sighs, body posturing, and hesitations of respondents that occurred during the interview in the left margin of the transcript. The second step of qualitative data analysis, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is to read through all the data. The purpose of this step of data analysis is to understand the information while reflecting on its overall meaning. In the current study, the researcher read each interview transcript several times to gain a perspective about the leadership journey and role of mentoring for each study respondent. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) the third step in qualitative data analysis

involves conducting a detailed analysis with a coding process. The purpose of coding is to organize the information into chunks or sections of text by giving meaning to the information. To implement this step, the researcher read the responses provided for each interview question and highlighted similar phrases and words that were present across all participant responses for the question. The researcher then grouped similar topics through categorizing the topics into columns, categorizing major and unique topics and topics that may not be included in the focus of the study. Once the coding process was completed, the researcher applied Creswell and Creswell's (2018) fourth step, theme identification. To complete this step in the data analysis, the researcher reviewed and condensed the codes into the most descriptive wording common across most or all the responses for each interview question. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended the identification of between five and seven themes for a qualitative study. Creswell and Creswell's final step is to interpret the data. The application of this step was achieved by asking, "What were the lessons learned?" (p. 189). The same two external reviewers who reviewed the interview protocol examined the interview transcripts and data analysis and concurred with the theme identification. The responses of study participants provided insight into the journeys these African American women encountered, challenges they experienced, and the role of mentoring as they assumed roles as chancellors or presidents in two- and four-year higher education institutions throughout the U.S.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

To establish reliability and trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended “the use of multiple approaches, which should enhance the researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of findings as well as convince readers of

that accuracy" (p. 200). Three strategies were employed to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the study. First, external peer reviewers examined the interview questions to ensure alignment with the research questions and ensured that the participants would understand the terminology used in the interview protocol. Second, member checking provided each participant with the opportunity to review their interview transcript for accuracy. According to Creswell and Creswell, this process of soliciting feedback from one's participants is used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results. Participants were given seven business days to make any changes in responses to interview questions. Finally, the findings of the study were peer reviewed for accuracy. Two external peer reviewers examined the interview transcripts and the identified themes and concurred the data analysis was accurate.

Researcher's Role

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "Particularly in qualitative research, the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study" (p. 205). Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, "Qualitative research is interpretative research; the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants" (p. 183). In qualitative research, the researcher has an intricate role in the interviewing process as he or she is responsible for gathering and interpreting the data. The researcher for the current study is an African American woman employed in a mid-level position at a 2-year community college with aspirations to ascend into an administration position in higher education. As the researcher, I was aware of the possible biases that could occur from personal and professional experiences with issues

related to race and gender in a higher educational setting, as well as my ambition for career advancement. To combat potential personal bias in the current study reflexivity was practiced. I was aware at all times of remaining neutral and unbiased during the interviewing and data analysis process. To avoid researcher bias, the researcher audio-recorded all interviews via Zoom video conferencing and took accurate notes detailing the participants' responses.

Limitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), "Limitations of a study are not under the control of the researcher" (p. 133). The current study included the following limitations:

1. Participants may not have accurately remembered experiences related to their journey to becoming a chancellor or president.
2. The accuracy of the responses provided by the participants during the interview may be limited by the fact that they may not be verified. Responses from the participants must be accepted at face value.
3. The responses of the participants may not be generalizable to all African American women chancellors and presidents.

Summary

Chapter 3 described the methods used to conduct the study. Included in the chapter was a description of the qualitative research design, setting, sampling procedures, instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 describes the results of the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of the study was to obtain first-hand perspectives from African American women serving as presidents or chancellors at two-year community colleges about higher education positions they have held prior to becoming a chancellor or president, challenges they have experienced in becoming a chancellor or president, the mentoring experiences that have supported African American women in becoming executive higher-education leaders, the importance of mentoring in their current role as a chancellor or president, and the essential elements to include in a mentoring relationship. Ten African American women who currently serve as a president or chancellor participated in the study. Chapter 4 includes a summary of the study participants' demographic and descriptive characteristics and the results of the data analysis.

Descriptive Demographics and Participant Backgrounds

Ten African American women serving as president or chancellor at a two-year community college participated in the study. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 were serving as presidents at a two-year community college campus. Participants 2, 4, and 7 were serving as chancellors at a college campus. Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 served at a multi-campus community college, and Participant 3 served at a community college with one campus location. The institutions for participants 6 and 10 were located on the West Coast. Participant 5 served at an institution in the southern region of the U.S. Participants 3 and 8 were leading community colleges in the Southeast region of the U.S. The community colleges for participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 9 were located in the Midwest region of the U.S.

Seven of the study participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10) had served in their current position for fewer than five years. Participants 7, 8, and 9 had served in their current position as a president or chancellor for more than six years. Participant 4 had served in higher education for 19 years. Three respondents (1, 6, and 10) had served in higher education between 20 and 29 years. Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9 had served in higher education for 30 years or more. The highest level of education for participants 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 was an Ed.D. in higher education leadership with a specialization in community college leadership. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 9 had completed a Ph.D. in higher education and global leadership.

The following sections explain the results of the data analysis derived from study participant responses to interview questions. Four major themes were identified from the analysis of the data: professional positions participants prior to becoming a chancellor or president, the challenges experienced prior to becoming a higher education chancellor or president, challenges experienced as a chancellor or president, and mentoring. Direct quotations are included to highlight and describe the study respondents' perceptions and experiences.

Professional Positions Participants Served in Prior to Becoming a Chancellor or President

Each participant in this qualitative study shared the professional roles they served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president. Nine participants indicated they had served in some capacity within academic affairs in higher education. Positions included adjunct faculty, dean of online learning, dean of academic affairs, vice chancellor of academic affairs, vice president of academic affairs, and chief academic officer.

Participant 1 stated,

> It was made evident to her by her previous president, the chief executive officer (CEO), and others early in her career that academic affairs tended to be the pure path in academia to the presidency, traditionally coming from the faculty. So, it was intentional to position herself in that arena to round out her resume and experience.

Participant 5 said,

> I worked in student affairs and academic affairs, and my first teaching experience was the first-year experience. My mentor advised me later in my career to ensure I taught in a credit program. Although my degrees are in psychology and educational leadership, I ended up teaching leadership in business.

Challenges Experienced Prior to Becoming a Chancellor or President

All 10 participants in the study shared their perceptions about the challenges they experienced in becoming a higher education chancellor or president. Participants 2 and 8 shared common challenges regarding having to prove themselves beyond the expectations of their White counterparts. Participant 1 shared supervising people who were once peers was a challenge. Participants 3, 4, 5, and 6 discussed the criticism they received about their experience, qualifications, and their ability to lead. In addition to not being accepted, questions were raised about whether or not they were good enough to perform the job, knowledge and skills were underestimated, and they were perceived as not being smart enough to lead, especially in a predominately White institution, by their counterparts.

Participants 7 and 8 shared their experiences of encountering racial and gender bias internally and externally. Participant 7 revealed,

> I had great experiences and am a firm believer that what doesn't break you makes you stronger. I have worked in a campus leadership role where I reported to the campus CEO. I earned my stripes in that position. While I dealt with a lot of racism those encounters made me stronger.

Participant 8 stated,

> Work-life balance can be a challenge. When it comes to the racial perspective, are you having to dispel a myth about black people? You will be asked, can you lead? And lead with heavy ethical leadership? Can you lead as an African American woman at a predominately White institution (PWI)? Even if you're at a predominately black institution, usually the faculty are predominately white."

Challenges Experienced as a Chancellor or President

All 10 participants shared the perception that they were assigned to the campuses with the most challenges. Participant 9 explained that when she started as president there were multiple challenges. She stated,

> The institution wasn't a welcoming place - it was nasty and raggedy. Faculty and employees were mean not just to one another but to students. I had no files. There was one yellow folder with information about the radiology program that was going through some accreditation issues.

Participant 9 met with each employee for a 30-minute interview, which took the majority of her time during the first 90 days. The result of these meetings was a mini plan for the college to address some of the issues the faculty and staff had identified.

Participant 4 indicated,

> I wondered if people thought I was given the job because I had been with the company for so long or was throwing a fit about not being in a certain position, which wasn't the case. I was the first Black woman chancellor of all 19 campuses, and I wondered if they [constituents] thought it was because it was time and it would look good.

Participant 4 perceived she was assigned to the worst campus thinking that she would fail and then they could say, "Well, we tried. And look what happens when we put a Black woman in charge". To her relief that did not happen. However, she was resolute that may have been the perception that some people had about her becoming a president.

Mentoring

Each study participant shared how the mentoring experiences they have participated in helped support them becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. Six subthemes were identified within this theme: mentoring characteristics; informal and formal mentoring relationships; spiritual, psychological, and career-related mentors; differences between career path mentoring and mentoring related to the role of chancellor or president; same ethnicity, same race mentors; same sex mentors. Each subtheme is explained in the next sections.

Mentoring characteristics. Participants in the study provided varied perceptions on what should be included in a mentoring relationship. Participants' recommendations included trust, honesty, transparency, and constructive criticism, respect, staying connected, being authentic, and establishing a rapport when building a mentoring relationship. Participant 1 and Participant 8 shared similar sentiments. Participant 1

shared, “Trust is essential in mentoring relationships because you do not want anything you talk about getting around.” This participant also indicated that it would devastate the relationship and cause a breach of trust if information discussed were shared with other individuals. Participant 8 indicated that she has to trust that what she shares goes nowhere. She added that she is comfortable sharing business and professional matters but does not share her personal business with individuals who serve as mentors.

Participants 2 and 4 echoed similar perspectives that honesty and transparency are the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship. Participant 2 revealed, “You must be open to hearing and sharing the most troubling things to the mentor”. Participant 4 mentioned it is vital to be open with your mentor so they can best help you or point you in the right direction for resources. When reflecting about mentors, Participant 3 responded, “The more transparent, honest, and constructive criticism person you are, the more I respect you and value you.”

Participant 6 indicated that it is critical to stay connected to your mentors. She suggested a Zoom meeting or quick phone call or text to check or seek advice. She does this with her mentors, and as a mentor, she has the same practice with her mentees. Participant 9 noted that authenticity is the most crucial element of a mentor/mentee relationship. She also added that quality time, honesty, love, and kindness are significant elements to have in a mentoring relationship.

All 10 participants described essential elements that mentors should possess. Participant 10 indicated that the most essential element in a mentoring relationship is taking the time to know one another. The participant also shared that there are different mentoring relationships and discussed sponsorship. She elaborated that mentoring is

excellent, but when the mentor is not in the room when there are projects or initiatives discussed, that sponsor can recommend that the mentor could be involved, where mentoring is more relationship-building and providing advice or counsel.

Participant 2 shared her mentoring experience was encouraging. She was encouraged to pursue her doctorate and apply for the president position. Participants 4 and 5 revealed their experiences were informative and helpful. They were mentored on learning the institution's culture and how they represented it. They were also coached to be conscientious about how they dressed and were advised to know they were always in the spotlight. Participants 6 and 8 shared that their mentoring experience was vital to their ascension to the presidency. They were encouraged to attend leadership and development conferences in preparation for the role of president. Participant 7 summarized her mentoring experience as nurture vs. nature and indicated that women are nurtured, and men receive more direct mentoring. Participant 9 shared that in her mentoring experience, she had to intentionally seek a mentor and reach out to the mentor to ask questions. Participant 10 summarized the mentoring experience as helpful, as the mentor saw potential that she probably didn't see in herself and gave her opportunities to develop. Participants 1 and 3 shared that their mentoring experiences were impactful and valuable.

Participant 1 shared,

> My most impactful mentoring experience was with a woman campus president responsible for bringing her into higher education. Each time my mentor moved to another institution, she called and asked if I was interested in an opportunity to work at the new institution.

According to Participant 1, she talked with her mentor often, and now they bounce ideas off each other.

Participant 3 stated, “Mentoring experiences are the most valuable thing you can have, and it’s the best investment in your career growth.” Participant 3 also shared that some of her mentors were not college educated but had a lot of experience and had been to the college of life. She shared, “They’re just packaged differently. And so, I do not discredit my mentors who have never stepped foot on the college campus. But they have worked in various roles that have been very challenging and very taxing.”

Informal and formal mentoring relationships. Nine participants described how they first developed informal mentoring relationships. Participants 2, 4, and 9 described how mentoring relationship(s) were first developed formally. Mentors took them under their wing, and the mentoring relationships happened organically. Participant 2 indicated, she was at a PWI, where a Caucasian male took her under his wing after their first meeting. While pursuing her bachelor’s degree, he advised and encouraged her to pursue her doctorate. He continually reminded her of that goal to pursue her doctorate. She was a first-generation student and didn’t see what he saw in her, but she revealed how he spoke confidence in her spirit, which assured her she could do this. Participant 4 stated, “My first mentor just took me under her wing from the beginning.” She revealed there was a natural draw between her and her mentor. Her mentor advised her on how to dress the part because she would represent the institution. Her mentor was the one who encouraged her to pursue her current position. Regarding formal mentoring relationships, Participant 9 shared that when she became the Director of Counseling, she asked her dean if she would be her mentor. And the dean said, “Well, you need not ask me that;

mentoring relationships just evolve." The participant shared that their relationship did evolve. Participant 9 shared, "I could start a call right now and say, X, I need to talk to you about something, and she'll sit and make herself available."

While all study participants had informal and formal mentors, they also described mentors who provided spiritual, psychological, and career-related support. Each of these types of mentors is described in the next sections.

Spiritual, psychological, and career-related mentoring. Participants shared their experiences with how their mentors who served in various capacities helped shaped them as individuals and prepared for the current positions in which they serve**.** Participant 3 shared that she has career-related, psychological, and faith-based mentors. Her career mentors are former presidents. Her faith-based mentors remind her of the grit and grind and family where she came from. Her family serves as psychological mentors who encourage her in challenging times, especially when she says, "I'm just going to walk off the cliff and jump." Family remind her of who she is and what she has been through.

Participant 9 referred to her mentors as her "tribe," and indicated each has all the attributes of being career-related, psychological, and spiritual mentors. She shared she can call or text any one of them and talk about anything, whether it's seeking advice or asking for prayer. She never felt she had to be different with any of them.

Participant 4 indicated that she has a psychological mentor. She stated, "My mentor has played a pivotal role in my career - especially in times when I am dealing with challenges on the job and felt like giving up." She revealed her mentor can calm her down and help her get back on track.

Participants 7 and 8 revealed their mentors served more in a career-related capacity. Participant 7 indicated that her last mentor entered her career at a critical moment. She perceived she was disappointing the campus president. Her mentor helped her to see what she needed to do to get back on track. Also, her mentor encouraged her to apply for the position she now holds as campus president. She shared that her mentor has been there in her journey, and now they are co-authors of a book. Participant 8 responded that most of her mentors in higher education were work-related situations. She can run a situation past her mentors and get advice on navigating it going forward. She shared that she never had a mentor that helped her with personal situations, such as providing advice from a family perspective.

Differences between career path mentoring and mentoring related to the role of chancellor or president. All participants in the study shared responses about the mentoring they received during their career path and how it differs from the mentoring they currently participate in as a chancellor or president in higher education. Participant 2 shared that the mentoring she received as she was pursuing her educational and professional career was focused on getting a degree and choosing the right job. The mentoring she receives now as a Chancellor is more focused on self-care and ensuring that she can be the best leader. Participant 3 indicated that good leaders continue to grow. She stated, “You’re always a student, you’re always learning.” The mentoring she received before becoming a president was more focused on “grit and resilience and the ability to overcome the noise”. Now mentoring is about strategizing and how to tap into her leadership team and help them to obtain the skills to move forward.

Participant 7 indicated that becoming a chancellor is a different level of leadership development and the mentoring becomes more applicable to the role. Participant 9 expressed a point of view similar to Participant 7. Participant 9 indicated that mentor conversations are different because she is dealing with a different level of responsibility. She can tap into the skill sets she learned earlier in her career for her position as campus president. Participant 10 indicated that in her current position the individuals she receives input from, community members, are advisors instead of mentors. When she was vice chancellor, she did not have community members mentoring her, as she was working on behalf of the institution. Now it is different being a president. Her role is internal and external and so her mentors represent a broader constituency. Her internal advisors are the stakeholders who represent the college. The external advisors represent the university and K-12.

Same ethnicity, same race mentors. All 10 African American women who participated in the research study shared comments about the benefits and challenges associated with same ethnicity, same race mentoring as they ascended into leadership positions as chancellors or presidents in higher education. Participant 1 stated,

> The benefits of having a mentor of the same ethnicity and race are that they can empathize with what you're going through and someone you can commiserate with. Someone of the same race and experience goes a long way in establishing credibility.

Participant 3 indicated that if the mentor is of the same race and same gender, there is increased understanding about the emotional parts of how she feels. She stated that her mentor can sympathize and empathize with her and help her deal with what she is facing.

Participant 6 shared that she has mentors of all races and ethnicities, but the most important mentors to her are those who look like her. She stated, “After all, they can give me information about experiences they have gone through because they are women of color”. She added, “It has helped ensure that my eyes are open to where some pitfalls may lie, but also given me the encouragement and push to keep moving forward through the challenging times.”

Participant 8 acknowledged “When it comes to mentorship, you can learn from anyone”. This participant indicated that her preference is to have someone of the same race and shared that “it is beneficial when discussing issues that we face as Black women”. Participant 9 shared views similar to those of Participant 8 when she stated, “It is important to have same race, same gender mentors because, more than likely, you have gone through some of the same situations and dealt with the same issues.” Participant 6 indicated that she has had great experiences with mentors of the same ethnicity, same race. However, she stated that she has met people who said that their most challenging mentoring relationships have been with people who look like them. Participant 8 stated that her preference is to have a mentor who is of the same race. However, the mentor does not have to be the same gender. Her two previous mentors were African American males, and she had a wonderful experience.

Only one participant pointed out a concern with having same ethnicity, same race mentors. Participant 9 indicated that a deficit of same ethnicity, same race mentoring is receiving a biased response. She stated, “A White privileged male might be able to provide a different perspective from the person who’s the same ethnicity, same race.”

Same-sex mentors. All 10 study participants shared the benefits of same-sex mentors that helped them ascend into the chancellorship and presidency. Participant 6 recalled, “I had an older white female mentor who encouraged and motivated me to complete my doctorate, so that I could be prepared to step into the dean position”. Participant 8 mentioned that she appreciates having women whom she can talk to where the mentoring relationships have morphed into friendships. “We formed a group that has been instrumental in four more Black women becoming community college presidents in Tennessee”. She shared they support each other and help each other by providing advice.

Participant 9 concisely stated that the benefit of same-sex mentoring is that you probably have experienced some of the same, if not the exact same issues. Participant 2 revealed she had just recently had a female mentor. This participant shared that she was very cautious and shied away from having a female boss because she did not want to “deal with moods and all other kind of stuff. But that was my own ignorance.” She continued, “Once I finally had an opportunity to have a female boss, it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful.” She concluded, “So I can’t imagine having a female mentor would be any different if we’ve established a relationship or partnership.

Each of the 10 participants also shared their perceptions about the deficits of having same-sex mentors. Study Participant 1 indicated that having only female mentors may result in blind spots since women tend to view situations differently than men. Participant 6 mentioned,

> The deficits of same sex mentoring is not hearing the perspective of a male in the same or similar role, having someone who is not forthcoming with advice because

> they feel threatened or want to withhold information, and not feeling that your mentor is not someone you can trust or feel that you can confide in makes the relationship difficult to navigate.

Participant 3 indicated, “A deficit of having a same sex mentor can be that women tap into their emotions, and there is a perception of how women feel about something or how people see it, contrary to men”. Additionally, she indicated she wants to figure out “the game behind the game being played and what that means”. She stated women are nurturers, and that we don’t look at the game. She wants to figure out the strategy behind the scenes. She added, “Men don’t think out of emotions. They think about the outcome”. She concluded that you need a balance- both male and female mentors. She recalled that female mentors would tell her when she was wrong. And the men would accede and say, “Girl, you did that right. You did exactly what I would do”.

Participant 8 shared, **“**A deficit of women as mentors is when people are gossipy. They may tell your business to folks and that could create a problem. There can be some envy there as well.” Participant 8 shared a situation that occurred earlier in her career as a faculty member. She was scolded by an older African American woman for wearing jeans and tennis shoes. She indicated that the exchange shook her, and she could barely keep her composure when teaching her class. Additionally, she stated, “You should have someone mentor you who will be supportive and not see you as competition and become envious”.

Summary

This chapter explains the results of the analysis of the interview transcripts for 10 African American women serving as chancellors or presidents in a community college

setting. Four themes were identified after data analysis. Participants described the positions they had served in as they ascended to a chancellorship or presidency. Respondents described both the challenges of pursuing a leadership opportunity and the challenges of serving as a chancellor or president. Study participants described characteristics of mentoring including formal and informal mentoring as well spiritual, psychological, and career mentoring. The benefits and deficits of same ethnicity, same race, and same sex mentors were shared by participants. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, findings related to the literature, and conclusions.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

This study investigated the perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents who serve at community colleges across the United States about their career trajectory and challenges they have experienced prior to becoming a chancellor or president, challenges they have experienced after becoming a chancellor or president, the mentoring experiences that supported them in becoming executive higher-education leaders, and the essential elements to include in a mentoring relationship. Chapter 5 is organized into three major sections. The first section includes a study summary that explains the research problem, purpose statement and research questions, methodology, and important findings. The second section describes findings related to the literature. The final section states conclusions that include implications for action, recommendations for future research, and closing remarks.

Study Summary

This section summarizes the study. Included in this section is an overview of the problem. The purpose statement and research questions utilized in the study are identified. This section concludes with a review of the methodology and important findings.

Overview of the problem. According to Amey (2006), a primary issue of leadership literature in higher education is that it has centrally focused on chancellors and presidents - positions primarily held by older White men. Amey indicated that research focusing on White women and women of color who are chancellors or presidents has been stagnant. Although women had made great strides in attaining leadership positions

in higher education by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, African American women were significantly underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education (Smith-Ligon, 2011). Townsend (2020) echoed the sentiment that there is a small representation of African American women in leadership positions in higher education. According to Townsend, lack of institutional support, the shortage of African American women in entry-level and mid-level positions, and African American women leaving higher education after completing their doctoral degrees have contributed to the absence of African American women in college and university work roles. Hussar and Bailey (2016) attested that with increasing diversity in the student population in higher education, the lack of minorities represented in college presidents has a significant way to go in representing the students they serve. Several researchers have investigated the challenges that African American women experience as they ascend the leadership ladder including racism and sexism (Andrews, 1993; Cobb, 1969; DeVries et al., 2006; Gewertz, 2006; Oikelome, 2017). Other researchers (Miller and Vaughn, 1997; Oikelome, 2017; Valverde, 2003) described the lack of authentic inclusion reported by African American women as they pursued higher education leadership positions. While mentoring has been found to be an important variable in leadership development, especially of women (Brown, 2005; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Smith, 2020), there is limited research related to the mentoring African American women have received as they pursued higher education leadership positions.

Purpose statement and research questions. Five purposes aligned with five research questions guided this study. This study was designed to examine the perceptions of African American women who serve as chancellors or presidents in higher education

about the professional roles they served in and the importance of mentoring as they progressed in ascendency to a chancellor or president position. The first purpose of the study was to examine the professional roles African American women who are chancellors or presidents have served in prior to becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. The second purpose was to study the perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the challenges they have experienced in becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. The third purpose was to identify perceptions of African American women who are presidents or chancellors about mentoring experiences that supported their becoming a chancellor or president in higher education. The fourth purpose was to ascertain perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the mentoring they received once they assumed a chancellor or president position. The fifth purpose was to investigate the perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the most important elements to include in a mentoring relationship.

Review of the methodology. A qualitative phenomenological research design with a social constructive framework was chosen for the study. A social constructivist approach relies on the participants' perspectives of the situation studied while a researcher gathers information during personal interviews. The purposes and research questions focused on investigating the perceptions of the lived experiences of the participants, African American women currently serving as a chancellor or president, about the professional roles they served in before becoming a chancellor or president, challenges they experienced during their careers, mentoring experiences that supported becoming a senior leader in higher education, the impact of mentoring received while serving as a

chancellor or president, and the most essential elements to include in a mentoring relationship.

Upon receiving approval to conduct the study from the Baker University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), the researcher submitted an electronic invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix B) to 37 African American women who were chancellors or presidents in a two-year higher education institution in the U.S. for at least one year. Three African American women chancellors and seven African American women presidents participated in the study. A semi-structured interview with four descriptive demographic questions and 13 open-ended questions was conducted with each participant.

Interviews were conducted from February 2023 through July 2023 using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Each interview was scheduled for approximately 40 minutes. All interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy in the transcription process. The recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai and Zoom. Each transcript was assigned an anonymous code (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) to maintain confidentiality. After the transcript for each interview was prepared, member checking of the transcript was completed by each participant. Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five steps for qualitative analysis were applied in the data analysis. Two external peer examiners who reviewed the interview transcripts and theme identification agreed with the accuracy of the data analysis.

Major findings. Four major themes were identified from the qualitative data analysis:

1. Professional positions prior to becoming a chancellor or president.

2. Challenges experienced prior to becoming a higher education chancellor or president.
3. Challenges experienced as a chancellor or president.
4. Mentoring

Nine of the 10 study participants followed a traditional route to a chancellorship or presidency. They had served as department chairs, deans, and in senior academic leadership roles in higher education. One participant had followed a non-traditional route and served in various leadership roles in student affairs.

All participants described challenges they experienced as they pursued increasingly senior leadership roles in higher education. All participants had experienced three primary challenges: racism, sexism, and lack of authentic inclusion. Several participants shared they were questioned or criticized about their educational and career experience and their ability to lead as a chancellor or higher-education president. They perceived they were not accepted by their colleagues and were underestimated in their ability to perform the job. Other participants in the study shared they perceived from colleagues they were not smart enough to lead at a predominately White institution. Participants also shared their experiences dealing with racism and sexism in their positions as chancellor and president. Several participants who worked at multi-campus colleges believed they were given the campus with the most challenges and felt they were set up to fail.

All participants indicated that mentoring experiences supported their ascendency to a chancellor or president position. All 10 participants reported both informal and formal mentoring experiences. Informal mentors were those who provided

encouragement to pursue various roles in higher education. Formal mentors provided specific recommendations related to work related tasks and actions that would enhance candidacy for increasingly senior higher education leadership roles. Participants also described the need for career, spiritual, and psychological mentors. Career mentors tended to be males who were current or former presidents. These mentors advised study participants about strategies related to pursuing education and choosing and getting the right job. Grit and resilience were key components stressed by mentors during the career path phase of study participants' trajectory to the chancellorship or presidency. These individuals assisted study participants with job related challenges and recommendations for actions to resolve workplace issues. Faith based mentors provided spiritual mentoring. Those described as psychological mentors assisted participants with self-care and continuous growth.

All 10 participants described differences between the mentoring they received while pursuing a chancellorship or presidency and the mentoring they now seek as a chancellor or president. While seeking positions that led to a chancellorship or presidency, career path mentors provided strategies for how to dress, activities to participate in, and work-related problem solving. After assuming a chancellorship or presidency, study participants indicated they currently seek mentors who can emphasize self-care, brainstorm ideas for solving challenges at their institution, and suggest ways to encourage continuous improvement and growth in their leadership team.

Trust, honesty, transparency, constructive criticism, respect, staying connected, being authentic, and establishing a rapport when building a mentoring relationship were included in study participants' responses related to important elements to include in a

mentoring relationship. All 10 participants shared that mentoring was vitally important in the advancement of their careers. One participant shared that her mentoring experience was valuable and the best investment in her career growth. Other participants shared that their mentoring experiences helped them be well-rounded as they learned how to dress for the position they wanted and learned from their mentor's mistakes. Another participant shared that mentoring helped her to learn the institutions' culture. Many participants mentioned their mentors encouraged them to pursue chancellor and president positions.

Respondents described advantages of having mentors who are of the same ethnicity, same race. Advantages to same race, same ethnicity mentors included increased understanding of situations because these individuals have likely experienced similar situations as Black women leaders. Participant 8 stated, "It [having a mentor of the same ethnicity, same race] is beneficial when discussing issues that we face as Black women". Only one respondent described a disadvantage to having a same ethnicity, same race mentor.

All study respondents described advantages and disadvantages to having same sex mentors. All 10 study participants indicated that an advantage to having a female mentor is that they have experienced similar, if not the same issues related to work-life balance and workplace issues. Disadvantages of having a same sex mentor included 'blind spots' because men and women approach problems differently. Respondents suggested that women tend to think about issues from a nurturing perspective while men are focused on outcomes.

Findings Related to the Literature

Parker (2015) reported that most chancellors and presidents have earned doctoral degrees. Six participants in this study had earned an Ed.D. in higher education. Four participants had earned a Ph.D. in higher education.

In 2016, three-quarters of presidents followed a traditional path to the position and had been either a president, a provost, or other senior academic administrator in their previous role (ACE, 2017). Bok (2013) and Lederman (2022) indicated that prior to selection as a chancellor or president, the majority of individuals progressed through several higher education leadership roles that included serving as a faculty member, department chair, dean, and vice-president or provost. The ACE (2023) reported that 60% of African American women reach the presidency after serving in leadership positions along the academic affairs pathway. Nine study participants shared they had been selected as a president or chancellor after serving in academic affairs leadership roles such as interim dean, dean of education and human services, dean of online learning, dean of academic affairs, assistant provost, vice provost, associate provost, senior vice president of academic affairs, provost, associate vice chancellor, vice chancellor of academic affairs, or interim president. Lederman (2022) noted an increase in hiring of presidents with a non-traditional background in student services and student success. One study participant's professional background included being a vice president of student affairs, and associate vice president in enrollment management services before becoming a president.

Researchers have identified three significant challenges African American women have experienced as they have progressed in leadership roles that have culminated in a

chancellorship or presidency in higher education: racism, sexism, and lack of authentic inclusion. Cobb (1969) and DeVries et al. (2006) indicated that African American women are exposed to the harsh lessons of racism and sexism. According to DeVries et al., African American women received indirect messages such as 'You don't belong here,' which was associated with racism, sexism, and tokenism and frequently created an unwelcoming climate for African American leaders in postsecondary institutions. Oikelome (2017) reported that lack of support from other minority individuals led to feeling of isolation and marginalization. All 10 participants in this study indicated they experienced racism, sexism, and lack of authentic inclusion as they sought the role of higher education chancellor or president. The participants in the study shared that the challenges they experienced included having to prove themselves beyond the expectations of their White counterparts, their leadership experiences were criticized, and constituents doubted their leadership ability. They were not accepted, received pushback from colleagues, and their qualifications were demeaned. Study respondents indicated their selection as a chancellor or president was questioned and people had negative opinions about them and disputed their ability to lead ethically and with integrity.

Oikelome (2017) reported that the majority of African American women in her study indicated that the perceived realities of the intersectionality of race and gender are compelling in the narratives of the African American women. According to Oikelome, racism still matters as African American women pursue the role of president in higher education settings. Participants in the current study reported being perceived by their constituents as not being smart enough to lead at a predominately White institution. One participant in the study shared that she experienced racial bias from individuals in the

local business community. Another participant shared that as an African American woman working in the South, she dealt with a lot of racism but indicated that those encounters made her a stronger leader. Two participants who served at multi-campus institutions as president perceived they were assigned to campuses with the most challenges. One participant shared she was the first Black woman chancellor of all 19 campuses, and she wondered if constituents thought she was appointed because was because it was time and was a 'good look' for an African American female to be appointed. This study participant perceived she was assigned to the worst campus with constituents thinking that she would fail, and then they could say, "Well, we tried. Look what happens when we put a Black woman in charge" (Participant 4). To her relief, failing in her position did not happen. Participant 9 shared that the campus she was assigned to as president was "Not welcoming. It was nasty and raggedy. Faculty and staff were mean to each other and students."

Several studies on mentoring relationships across various business, education, and psychology disciplines have confirmed the positive impact of mentoring on career development (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Scanlon, 1997; Wilson, 2001). Researchers (Brown, 2005; Hill & Wheat, 2017; Smith, 2020) have supported the view that mentoring is a significant attribute of career development for women in higher education. All study participants indicated the important role mentoring played as they pursued the position of chancellor or president in higher education. One participant shared that her mentoring experience provided encouragement to pursue her doctorate and apply for the president position. Other study participants revealed they were mentored on learning the institution's culture and how they represented it. They were also coached to be

conscientious about how they dressed and were advised to know they were always in the spotlight. Participants were encouraged to attend leadership and development conferences in preparation for the role of president. Nine study participants shared that their first mentoring relationship was informal. One participant revealed she was at a PWI, where a Caucasian male took her under his wing after their first meeting. While pursuing her bachelor's degree, he advised and encouraged her to pursue her doctorate. He continually reminded her of that goal to pursue her doctorate. She was a first-generation student and didn't see what he saw in her, but she revealed how he invoked confidence in her spirit, which assured her she could succeed at any task. A second study participant indicated how her first mentor took her under her wing. She revealed there was a natural draw between her and her mentor. Her mentor advised her on how to dress the part because she would represent the institution. Her mentor was the one who encouraged her to pursue her current position.

Madsen (2008) indicated that many women believe career achievement is more difficult without role models or mentors. Dunbar and Kinnersely (2011) shared that most of the female university presidents in their study highlighted the importance of formal mentoring relationships in their development. Brown (2005) described formal mentoring of women pursuing the college presidency. According to Brown, female college presidents tended to have career mentors who assisted them in advancing to higher education leadership positions. All participants in the current study described the importance of formal mentoring. Study participants shared their perceptions on the benefits of same ethnicity, same race mentors. Participant 1 shared, "Your mentor can often relate to what you are going through and share examples of things they have gone

through while in the same or very similar role." Other participants indicated that you do not have to explain much because the mentee has had similar experiences.

Block and Tietjen-Smith (21016) shared the importance of women seeking mentorship from women who have blazed the path in higher education. Johnson (2016) expressed the importance of having women mentor women who are climbing the higher education leadership ladder. Additionally, Johnson (2016) shared that women in higher education must be aware of the obstacles in their institution and be able to successfully process those barriers with women who have navigated similar challenges. Nine participants in the study shared their experiences and the benefits of same-sex mentoring. Study participants indicated that a female mentor could sympathize and empathize with situations they are facing in their position, as well as understand the emotional part of the position. The majority of study participants indicated that having only female mentors can result in 'blind spots'. Study participants commented that a male mentor may look at the situation and advise from a different perspective than a woman. Where women are more emotional, men tend to stay with the facts. Warner and DeFleur (1993) maintained that having a male mentor can be advantageous in helping women navigate the power structures, especially the 'good ole boy network.' Hill and Wheat (2017) contended that cross-gender mentoring relationships can have several positive benefits, such as women learning to be more assertive and handling and recovering from a crisis. With higher education being a male-dominated industry, a male mentor can teach ways to navigate an organizational culture subjected by men. Study participants agreed with the importance of having both male and female mentors.

Conclusions

This study examined perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents serving at a two-year community college about their professional experiences as they ascended into their current leadership role, challenges experienced prior to and in their role as chancellor or president, and their mentoring experiences. Ten participants responded to the interview protocol questions. This section includes implications for action, future research recommendations, and concluding remarks.

Implications for action. The participant's responses to the interview questions in the study provided comprehensive information about the perceptions of African American women about the professional positions they have served in, the challenges they have experienced as they ascended to and now serve as in the role of a chancellor and president in higher education, and the mentoring they have received throughout their careers. The results of this study have implications for actions that can be taken to support African American women as they pursue leadership roles as presidents and chancellors. Three actions are recommended:

1. Results of this study should be shared at professional conferences that women leaders regularly attend including the Presidents' Round Table or the Association of American Colleges & Universities conferences. In addition, study results should be shared at mid-level leadership conferences or leadership development institutes that focus on African American women leaders in community colleges including the Carolyn Grubbs Williams Leadership Development Institute, Thomas Lakin Institute for Mentored Leadership, and Advanced Leadership Development Institute.

2. African American women who currently serve as presidents and chancellors should be encouraged to actively serve as mentors to African American women who aspire to become higher education leaders. The author of this study will suggest an active mentoring role when the results of the study are shared with study participants.
3. Study participants described the increasing student diversity on college campuses and the lack of faculty and higher education leaders who represent diversity. With the increase in diverse student populations in higher education, it is imperative to have higher education leaders that mirror diverse populations. To promote increased diversity in higher education leadership roles, an executive summary of this study will be shared with faculty who teach in doctoral level leadership in higher education programs with encouragement for them to serve as mentors for African American women interested in pursuing leadership roles as a chancellor or president.

Recommendations for future research. Few qualitative research studies have examined perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about the professional positions they have held, challenges they have experienced, or the mentoring they have received. Future research could significantly increase what is known about African American women who become chancellors and presidents. Seven recommendations for future research are provided:

1. This qualitative research study examined perceptions of African American women chancellors and presidents about professional positions they held as they ascended to the senior leadership role on their campus, challenges experienced prior to

and in their current role as a chancellor or president, and the mentoring they had received. A study could be conducted that examines similar variables in African American males who serve as chancellors or presidents in two-year and four-year higher education institutions.

2. The research and interview protocol questions in the current study were purposefully broad. To examine each component more deeply, specific detailed questions regarding the professional positions African American women have served in, challenges they have experienced in their past and current positions, and mentoring characteristics and experiences, could be designed.

3. A longitudinal study could be conducted to explore the positions, challenges, and mentoring that African American women experience at various points in their careers as they pursue a chancellorship or presidency.

4. This study examined the perceptions of 10 African American who were currently serving as a chancellor or president. The study could be expanded to examine the perceptions of additional African American women who serve as chancellors or presidents using the interview protocol designed for this study.

5. All of the participants in this study were serving as chancellors or presidents at community colleges or in community college systems. A similar study could be conducted with African American women who serve as chancellors or presidents at four-year institutions including public, private, for-profit, and historically Black colleges.

6. Participants in this study indicated that they serve as mentors to aspiring community college leaders. Future studies could examine aspects of the mentoring these institutional leaders provide including how they encourage African American women to

consider pursuit of senior leadership roles, frequency of meetings, topics discussed, and specific leadership strategies recommended.

7. In addition to formal and informal mentoring, all participants in the current study had completed either an Ed.D. or Ph.D. in a discipline related to leadership in higher education. Future research could focus on doctoral programs that prepare higher education leaders. Strategies that focus on recruitment of diverse doctoral candidates, especially African American women, could be examined.

Concluding remarks. According to Jackson and Harris (2005), while more African American women were being hired into the presidency, they were still underrepresented in the presidential population. Townsend (2020) reported a small representation of African American women in leadership positions in higher education. Townsend shared that lack of institutional support and the shortage of African American women in entry-level and mid-level positions contribute to the paucity of African American chancellors and presidents. To encourage African American women to pursue senior higher education leadership positions, it is imperative for them to have mentors who can provide career path encouragement, support to meet work related challenges, and empathy to sustain them through the challenges they will experience as they pursue a chancellorship or presidency. In conjunction with informal and formal mentoring relationships, aspiring African American females should also be encouraged to attend mid-level leadership conferences or leadership development institutes such as the Carolyn Grubbs Williams Leadership Development Institute, which prepares African Americans in community colleges for leadership roles to ensure that the pipeline to executive-level positions is fluid or the Thomas Lankin Institute for Mentored

Leadership, which provides a personal and professional development experience for aspiring leaders to expand their leadership roles in their current or future responsibilities within community colleges. African American female chancellors and presidents should be encouraged to take an active role in identifying African American women who aspire to be in leadership positions and mentor them for those positions by providing access to professional development programs and leadership conferences. These types of actions will hopefully help to increase the diversity of leaders, especially African American women leaders, in higher education institutions throughout the country.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Baker University IRB Approval

Baker University Institutional Review Board

January 11th, 2023

Dear Stacye Williams and Tes Mehring,

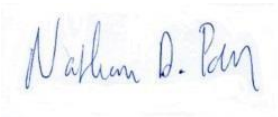
The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,



Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Tim Buzzell, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Scott Kimball, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in a Doctoral Dissertation Research Study

Invitation to Participate in a Doctoral Dissertation Research Study

Title of Study: African American Women in Leadership Positions in Higher Education

Date: _____

Dear: _____

My name is Stacye L. Williams, and I am conducting a qualitative doctoral dissertation research study. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview related to your experiences, including mentoring, as you pursued a chancellorship or presidency in a higher education setting. Participation will require approximately 40 minutes of your time.

Five purposes are guiding my study. The first purpose of the study is to examine the professional roles African American women who are chancellors and presidents have served in before becoming executive leaders in higher education. The second purpose is to understand the perceptions of African American women about the challenges they have experienced in becoming a chancellor or president. The third purpose is to identify mentoring experiences that have supported African American women in becoming higher education chancellors or presidents. The fourth purpose is to examine the impact of mentoring on the effectiveness of chancellors or presidents in their current role. The fifth purpose is to investigate the perceptions of African American women who are chancellors or presidents about the essential elements to include in a mentoring relationship.

Once a transcription of your interview is completed, I will send you the transcript for your review and any corrections or additions you would like to make. Transcripts and

the reporting of data related to the study will be anonymized by assigning a code to each participant (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.).

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from participation at any time, and you may choose to not respond to any survey questions you do not wish to answer. There are no risks or discomfort associated with participation in the study. There is no compensation for participation in the study.

Feel free to contact me or my dissertation major advisor if you have any questions about the study. Contact information is provided below. Thank you for considering participation in my research study!

Best regards,

Stacye L. Williams

StacyeLWilliams@stu.bakeru.edu
913.206.6791

Dr. Tes Mehring (Major Advisor)
tmehring@bakeru.edu
913.485.9087

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any questions without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the transcript will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research. There is no compensation.
- I understand that there are no risks or discomforts associated with participation in the study.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded via Zoom.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially. An anonymous code (e.g. Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) will be used in data analysis, reporting of results, and any presentations that will be made related to the study.
- I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the transcript of my interview prior to the analysis of data.
- I understand that an anonymized transcript of my interview will be retained for two years from the date of the dissertation defense and will then be destroyed.
- I understand that the researcher will be taking notes during the interview.

_____ _____

Signature of participant Date