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Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

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Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

by

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Abstract

This research study explored the experiences of African American women as they navigated challenges along their pathways to the position of president of colleges and universities. While there has been an increase in the percentage of women of color serving as presidents, the number of African American women holding these positions still needs to be higher. Therefore, this study focused on African American women as presidents in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). I conducted a narrative inquiry designed to encourage participants to share their stories. I explored two research questions: 1) How have African American women navigated the administrative labyrinth to the presidency of colleges and universities? 2) How have race and gender affected African American women's pathways to their institutions' presidencies? The following five themes emerged from the analysis of the data: Breaking with traditions, The desire for success, Professional and personal support, The desire to be president, and Finding one's way through the labyrinth. The findings show that African American women were steadfast, resolute, and determined to succeed despite the many challenges and barriers along their pathways to the presidency. In addition, the findings revealed that both private and professional mentoring helped the participants and that it was significant for their early aspirations for the position of president.

Keywords: African American women, higher education, narrative research, stereotypes, mentoring, educational leadership

Dedication

In memory of Mrs. Fatmata Alpha (nee Jabbie: Mama Fatu), my mother-in-law, who passed away on August 3rd and was buried on August 4th, 2022. May her soul continue to rest in perfect peace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In many countries, women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions. In the United States, women have remained in the lower rung of the employment ladder or at the middle level of the organization's structure in many workplace settings, even though they are 50.8 % of the U.S. population (Johnson, 2017; Warner et al., 2018). In the last three decades (1992 to 2022), there has been a significant increase in women's enrolment in higher learning institutions, and some women are now in significant leadership positions. According to the American Council on Education (ACE) (2019), some women are serving as presidents of colleges and universities. However, the percentage "has slowly increased over the last 30 years" (para. 2). Johnson (2017) asserts that the phrase "the higher the fewer" is used to recognize the fact that even though women have higher education attainment levels than men, this is not reflected in the number of women holding positions with high faculty rank, salary and prestige" (p. 6). According to ACE (2019), "78% of women presidents are serving their first presidency, and remarkably, "32% of women presidents altered careers to care for others" (para. 3).

Significant gains have occurred as women of color now hold faculty and top administrative positions in higher education (Wollen, 2016). However, the rate of advancement to full professorship and executive-level positions has not been equivalent to white women and men of color and is extremely far off when African American women are compared to white men (Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011; Lederman, 2022; Owens, 2004). Women of color are 39 percent of the U.S. female population and 20 percent of the entire U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Women of color "constitute 38.3 percent of the female civilian labor force" (Warner et al, 2018, p. 4). Sanches-Hucles and Davis (2010) assert that "there are thicker barriers

posed by racism combined with sexism that women of color encounter" (p.171) that stifle their growth to top leadership positions such as the presidency.

Background of Study

According to the American Council on Education (2017), white women hold 83% of women in leadership positions in higher education, while women of color account for only 17%. Thus, "the percentage of minority college presidents has slowly increased over the last 30 years. Women of color are the most underrepresented in the presidency" (p.1) of higher learning institutions. For instance, a study conducted in 2021 showed "there were 124 presidents at these R 1 institutions, seventeen percent (17%) were white women, but there were only six women of color, two each representing Asian, Black, and Latinx women" (p. 3). Herder (2022) revealed that searches for presidents were not picking candidates in earnest, especially as few women candidates succeeded irrespectively of the increase of women in finalist pools. In the article by Herder, Dr. Roslyn Clark Artis states "if no one on your rank committee or search committee for the dean is a woman or a person of color, you tend to get a homogeneous pool" (p. 2). Black women or African American women, irrespective of their educational credentials and experience, remain underrepresented in the position of president of colleges and universities (Glover, 2012). According to Herder (2022), sometimes, "institutions will choose to hire their first female leader during a time of crisis" (p. 5), known as the "glass cliff," with a high probability for female leaders to fail. Thus, the metaphor refers to the risks associated with the likely hood of the leader to fail. Also, when women shatter the glass ceiling, the shards come raining down on them, with board members offering little support.

Statement of the Problem

There is a paucity of research on African American women's experiences as presidents of colleges and universities. While there are studies on women's progress in the labor market and leadership positions, women's individual experiences of navigating the leadership labyrinth, especially in higher education, are scanty (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Many scholars have attributed the lack of significant representation of African American women in leadership positions to structural and social barriers, such as the lack of hiring many women of color who can serve as role models for students of color (Glover, 2012; Harley, 2007; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011), stereotypes that impact their performance and morale (Baron, 2020; Moody, 2004). According to Moody (2004), minority professors are often vulnerable to unfair evaluations of their worthiness and work, because of negative stereotypes associated with their gender and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Also, limited mentoring experiences pose severe problems for the growth of African American women faculty (Glover, 2012; Mainah & Perkins, 2015; Moody, 2004), and racism and sexism are prevalent on campuses (Bynum & Stordy, 2017; Moody, 2004). Thus, diversity initiatives or policies about inclusion and discrimination should not only be on paper but in practices that could ensure equality and social justice.

Daut (2019) shared her experiences on her path to gaining full professorship "from the classroom to the conference room, and from the publishing house to the foundation world" (para. 5): when her career was threatened, there were no policies to mitigate her situation. According to Daut (2019), many African American women experience macro and microaggressions that are "launched by students, professors, and administrators alike" (para. 6). Black female full professors are about 2 percent in the United States. According to the American Council on Education (ACE), women of color often outnumber men of color in lower-ranking faculty

positions. Still, men of color hold full professor positions more often than women of color. As they move through the ranks from assistant professorship to full professorship, many professors, administrators, and colleagues stymie women of color with negative comments in evaluations or delay their promotions along their pathways (Daut, 2019; Young & Hine, 2018). African American women often report gendered racism experiences from white students as they challenge their authority, competency, and qualifications (Howard-Vital, 1989). According to Scott (1977), for many years there was a void that existed

> Despite the fact that Black women have important roles in American society, they have been almost totally ignored by students of American society and human behavior. From reading the literature, one might easily develop the impression that Black women have never played and role in society, and that they represent only a minute percentage of the total American population. The experiences of Black women in both a historical sense have been discussed from a very narrow perspective. (p. 864)

Howard-Vital (1989) asserted that there was not a "great deal of research on African American women in higher education" (p. 180). According to Davis and Maldonado (2015), even though "the amount of literature on women's leadership has increased; however, few studies explore leadership development of African American women in academia" (p. 48). Therefore, this study may provide insight and opportunity for African American women to give narratives about their experiences in getting to the presidency of their institutions and share their experiences as presidents.

Navigating the Labyrinth

Before the 1970s, many women could not make any headway in career growth due to several reasons, such as perceived socialization and the lack of policies against discrimination based on gender, sex, and national origin. Women did not have protection by law for many years, and organizations could practice gender-based discrimination with little or no ramifications (Grana, 2002; Howard-Vital, 1989; Wollen, 2016). Thus, discriminatory practices made career and societal advancement impossible for many women in the public sector, and higher education institution was not unscathed. Many people devised metaphors to describe the position of women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). One of the first metaphors was the concrete wall; it described the situation that rested on a division of labor that maintained a natural order of things in nearly every society. With this metaphor, many women worked predominantly in the private spheres, and, the few in the public sphere either occupied lower levels or middle levels of their organizational structures. The next metaphor was the glass ceiling. The idea became prominent by Hymowitz and Schellhardt in 1996, who stated that women could rise through the ranks but would inevitably hit an invisible barrier that kept executive roles outside their reach (Eagly & Carli, 2007a). The U.S. Congress acknowledged the public's interest in the glass ceiling assessment of women by establishing a commission. Eventually, the U.S. government enacted a law, the Glass Ceiling Act, to protect women in organizations. In 2004, the Wall Street Journal published a Special Section Edition titled "Through the Ceiling" about fifty highly successful women, noting that the barrier was a thing of the past. The glass ceiling was deemed an invisible barrier that hindered the advancement of women in their professional lives.

In a critique of the widely accepted glass ceiling metaphor, Eagly and Carli (2007b) coined the metaphor of the labyrinth containing the many barriers women must navigate, some

subtle and others obvious. According to Eagly and Carli (2007b), “passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct but requires persistence, awareness of one’s progress and, a careful analysis of the puzzle ahead” (p. 3). Some women may be overwhelmed by the many challenges as they seek to move to leadership positions. Eagly and Carli also stated that “marriage and parenthood are associated with higher wages for men but not for women” (p. 5). Eagly and Carli (2007c) point to many examples of qualities women possess, such as being more transformational than male leaders, having the ability to function well at home and the workplace but still experience discrimination and condescending evaluations that continue to make it very difficult for them to get to leadership positions. Fitzgerald (2014) states that women usually “encounter the power of male hegemony” (41), and that there is an illusion of inclusion for minority women on campuses.

Another metaphor added was the “Glass Cliff.” The term “Glass Cliff” was coined by a social and organizational psychologist named Michelle Ryan at the University of Exeter. Thus the “Glass Cliff” describes the willingness of boards of organizations to appoint women of color to lead with the probability that they will fail. According to Contessa (2021) “the impact of the coronavirus on the economy coupled with companies’ push for diversity means women and people of color are more likely to experience the Glass Cliff” (p. 2).

According to ACE (2017), the path to the presidency for many women is usually very convoluted and even more intricate or impenetrable for women of color. Women typically start as faculty, chair of the department, chief education officer, provost/dean/other senior executives in academic affairs, other senior executives in higher education, outside of higher education, interim president, and then president. According to Bridges and colleagues (2008), “women and candidates of color continue to be underestimated for their potential to lead” (p. 5). Washington

(2006) suggested that department reviews usually fail to take into consideration "ways in which a faculty member's race and gender may impact student teaching evaluations" (p. 3). As a result, African American women experience biased perceptions from others, a lack of apathy about diversity, and limited opportunities for leadership training and practice (Bridges et al., 2008). The workplace culture of higher education still limits the potential of African American women, so many of them develop "several effective strategies for negotiating the cultural workplace" (Owen, 2004, p. 87).

Purpose of the Study

The study's significance of African American women as presidents at institutions of higher learning cannot be overstated. First and foremost, African American women have been in U.S. institutions of higher education "for more than a century" (Harley, 2007, p. 21). Still, only a meager percentage is at the top of leadership positions, especially in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Glover, 2012). According to Glover (2012) "Black women continue their struggle to acquire positions of leadership within the academy" (p. 4). Therefore, this study aimed to explore and examine the experiences of African American women as presidents. Specifically, I explored the strategies African American women utilized in navigating the labyrinth to leadership positions and their experiences as presidents. The study examined racism, gender, mentoring, profiling, familial roles, and policies. Although people used the glass ceiling metaphor to describe the ascension of women to leadership positions, Eagly and Carli's (2007a) metaphor of navigating the labyrinth will offer accurate descriptions of the challenges or maze that the research participants went through to assume the leadership position of the presidency. The study also explored participants' experiences as presidents of the institutions. The study also incorporated Black feminist thought, with intersectionality as the fundamental element of it.

Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2000, 2016, & 2020) advanced that African American women's academic experiences are shaped by the intersection of racism and sexism.

Research Questions

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), research questions "are developed at the start of a project, and these become modified as the research process proceeds to address emergent issues" (p. 123). This study's guiding question is: how have African American women navigated the leadership labyrinth to the presidency in colleges and universities that are predominantly White institutions (PWIs)?

The study explored the career paths, challenges, and biases that minority women experience and overcome to become presidents of colleges and universities and their experiences as presidents. Questions guiding this study were based on the phenomenon, principles, and metaphors presented by Eagly and Carli (2007), navigating the labyrinth, Black Feminist thought (Collins, 2016), and intersectionality (Crenshaw (1989). Consequently, the central research questions were:

1) How have African American women navigated the labyrinth to administrative leadership to the presidency of colleges and universities?

2) How have race and gender affected African American women's pathways to their institution's leadership positions?

Data Gathering and Methodology

I used a qualitative interpretative approach to explore the meaning of things, situations, and conditions for the people involved (Maxwell, 2013). According to Watson (2018),

qualitative research methods are “best for researching many of the why and how questions of human experience” (p. 1). Patton (2015) further states, “indeed, any and all of human experiences are given meaning by those involved. Interviews and observations reveal those meanings and their implications” (p. 13).

The study was a narrative inquiry project in which the researcher explored and examined African American women’s pathways and lived experiences to the college and university presidency and their experiences as presidents. Using the conceptual framework of navigating the labyrinth in higher education, the researcher sought to find meaning in African American women’s experiences navigating the labyrinth to reach the top leadership positions in various institutions and as presidents of their institutions. Also, the study utilized intersectionality and Black Feminist thought. Women have made significant moves in shattering the glass ceiling, but for African American women, advancing to leadership may connote perseverance and overcoming the many challenges. Indeed, African American women’s experiences as presidents of colleges and universities in the United States may be relevant to other regions in the world.

Delimitations/Limitations

The study explored the lived experience of approximately four African American women as presidents of colleges and universities. I used purposive sampling as the case selection was strategic in “alignment with the inquiry’s purpose” (Patton, 2015, p. 265). The study participants provided an information-rich case for an in-depth study (Patton, 2015). Generally, qualitative research is limited because of its subjectivity and small sample size that may not be representative (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Patton, 2015). Consequently, the study findings may not be generalizable or transferable to other populations. Irrespective of the study being qualitative

research, the study will add to the current literature on the experiences of African American women as presidents in predominantly White institutions. The study also generated hypotheses that may be useful for further qualitative and quantitative inquiry, that will further illuminate the themes that the researcher identified in the study.

Definitions

The concepts and terminologies defined below are relevant to this study. They give an understanding of the context of the study.

Glass Ceiling: The metaphor of the glass ceiling was popularized by two Wall Street journalists Hymowitz and Schellhardt, in the 1980s to describe the "invisible and artificial barriers that block women and minorities from advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions" (Johns, 2013, p. 1).

Labyrinth: Eagly and Carli (2007) believed the glass ceiling metaphor used to describe women's ascension to leadership roles was wrong on many levels. The labyrinth is a better metaphor as it encapsulates the barriers and challenges women navigate to get to the top.

Leadership: Leadership in higher education refers to the individual at the institution's helm..

Predominantly White Institutions (PWI): These are colleges or universities with predominantly white student populations.

President: University presidents come from different backgrounds. Depending on the state, there are usually other names for the president, such as chancellor. According to Freeman and Kochan (2012), "Presidents in higher education come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are from the corporate world, some from public service and some from the academic realm" (p. 2). For

example, the president of a university is responsible to the Board of Trustees, serves as the chief executive officer (CEO), and has general authority and responsibility for the university. In addition, university presidents develop external relations, engage in fundraising activities, and interact with appropriate external bodies.

Women of Color: Women of color are non-white women in higher education institutions. Women of color constitute any other race than white women in predominantly white institutions. Mainah and Perkins (2015), note that "identifying aspects of women of color in higher education are black, African American, Latina, Hispanic, or African" (p. 5), Asian and Asian American. According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW), women always have a race and ethnicity, which institutions should consider when discussing leadership experiences.

Organization of the Study

The study comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the problem, background of the study, statement of the problem, navigating the labyrinth, the purpose of the study, research questions, data gathering and methodology, delimitations and limitations of the study, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 reviews the literature, a historical overview of women's access and experience in higher education, African American women's education, the representation of women as presidents in higher education, intersectionality, Black Feminist thought, leadership, and leadership programs for women. The chapter also examined identity and leadership, mentoring, family responsibilities, policies, harassment/violence, stereotypes, navigating the labyrinth, the concept of the labyrinth within higher education, and the conclusion. Chapter 3 presents the study's methodology and the rationale for qualitative research. It also discusses narrative research, sample design, sample size, recruitment of participants, research instrument,

data collection, interview guide, protection of human subjects, data analysis, and coding the data. Chapter 4 is about data analysis and findings. It presents the data collection procedures, the interview process, data analysis, participants' summaries, and the description of themes. Finally, chapter 5 presents the summary, findings, implications, and recommendations. It summarizes the research methods, the research questions, the implications of the findings for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of African American women as they moved along the path to becoming presidents in colleges and universities in the United States and their experiences once they became president. This chapter provides an overview of the literature contributing to the existing knowledge base on women's leadership roles in colleges and universities. The literature review highlights and emphasizes women, especially African American women, in academia and how they navigated the labyrinth and other challenges to get to where they are now. Further, the literature review will encompass strategies that African American women have adopted to reach the echelons of higher education leadership and their different experiences leading institutions. The literature review will also include the conceptual framework of Eagly and Carli's labyrinth. In the literature review, I will give a historical background of women's access to and progress within higher education in the United States. I will also discuss some of the federal government's policies to promote and ensure women's rights within institutions as leaders and the study's theoretical and conceptual framework.

Historical Overview of Women's Access and Experience in Higher Education

Higher education in the United States has been dominated by men since its inception, with the founding of Harvard University (1663), William and Mary (1693), and then Yale (1701) (Bates, 2007; Brubacher & Rudy, 1958, 1999; Church, 1976; Grana, 2002). According to Brubacher and Rudy (1999), "ancient barriers due to sex" (p. 64) and gender roles prevented women from gaining admission to the early institutions of higher learning (Church, 1976;

Kellerman & Rhodes, 2014). According to Thelin (2011), “there is no record of a woman of the colonial period having received a degree” (p. 55). However, from 1800 to 1860, some institutions enrolled women in advanced studies (Thelin, 2011). In 1821, Emma Willard founded a seminary for women in Troy, New York (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999; Church, 1976). Later, other academies and seminaries for women that opened designed their curricula based on Emma William’s institution (Brubacher & Rudy,1999; Church, 1976; Nash, 2005). In the antebellum era before the American Civil War, only two private colleges, Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, and Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, provided co-education, allowing women to enroll with men (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999; Grana, 2002; Nash, 2005). Brubacher and Rudy (1999) posited that “the first women’s colleges arose in the South, [when] in 1836, the Wesleyan Female College of Macon, Georgia made history by becoming the first educational institution in the country to confer higher degrees on women” (p. 65). The Georgia Female College opened on December 23, 1836, with the aim of “granting the power to confer all such honors, degree, and licenses as they are usually conferred in colleges or universities” (Wesleyan, 2023, p. 1).

According to Brubacher and Rudy (1999), by the start of the Civil War, “182 prominent colleges and universities had been founded in the United States” (p. 59). Oberlin was the first to grant women admission in 1833, although it gave women degrees much later than the Wesleyan Female College. Oberlin College admitted all students regardless of race or sex. However, Oberlin College confined female students to a new curriculum “to help them develop and refine special skills, specifically cooking, cleaning and serving” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999, p. 59). The college (Oberlin) wanted to train women to be better wives and mothers (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999; 1958; Church, 1976; Grana, 2002). According to Church (1976), many of the schools “taught subjects likely to improve their performance as housewives, mothers, and elementary

school teachers" (p. 25). Girls were discouraged from studying science and math, which were deemed boys only (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999; Church, 1976; Grana, 2002).

Within the coeducational institutions of higher learning, women and men were segregated socially and in the classroom (Church, 1976). Church (1976) also posited, "contacts between the sexes, inside or outside of class, was minimal or at least was supposed to be minimal" (p. 25). There was deep-seated public skepticism for women's access to higher education. "It was feared that such training would raise women above the duties of her station" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999, p. 65). At the time, some men believed that advanced training for women would hurt women (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999). In the book, *Sex in Education, or a Fair Chance for Girls*, published in 1874, Edward Clarke brought about consternation from many when he asserted that the biological and physical makeup of women made it difficult for them to "survive the prolonged intellectual effort" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999, p. 65). In addition, women's education was uneven. Women experienced "discrimination from other students, faculty, and administrators" (Goodchild, 2007, p. 42). However, higher education in the first half of the nineteenth century marked a significant improvement for women. According to Goodchild (2007), "in the 1869/1870 academic year, 11,000 women attended institutions of higher learning" (p. 42). Thus, the increase in admissions "gave thousands of young women destined to teach the elementary grades some post-elementary school training" (Church, 1976, p. 26).

Before the end of the 1800s, seven significant colleges for women opened nationwide. The "Seven Sisters" were independent private liberal arts colleges: Barnard College, Bryn Mawr College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, Wellesley College, Vassar College, and, Radcliffe College (Chamberlain, 1991; Martinez-Aleman & Renn, 2002; Parker, 2015). Many women campus leaders such as M. Carey Thomas, Alice Freeman Palmer, and Elizabeth Cady

Stanton were determined to provide quality education (Goodchild, 2007). Remarkably, some of the Seven Sister colleges provided the model for public normal schools to train teachers. Many public normal schools provided opportunities for women to acquire teaching qualifications (Bates, 2007).

Although the administrators expected women to study specific disciplines, "a total of 50 women's colleges were founded between 1836 and 1875" (Parker, 2015, p. 7). The lack of many girls in secondary schools made many female colleges in antebellum days lower the admission age and, "standards had to be sacrificed to attract paying students" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958, p. 65). Mount Holyoke, for instance, lowered their fees so that more women could afford the cost of college (Nash, 2005). However, by the 1930s, the Seven Sisters colleges "had acquired a collective reputation as the alma maters of the talented, privileged elite of American women" (Thelin, 2004, p. 227). The Seven Sister colleges provided quality education for women comparable to or equal to the male dominated Ivy League institutions. The increase in coeducational institutions also paved the way for many women to gain higher education access and enjoyed numerous diverse opportunities with time. However, women could not attain leadership positions in key areas "such as the editor of the student newspaper or president of the student body" (Thelin, 2004, p. 228). This trend remained for many years, and as many co-educational institutions opened in the country, women were in the minority in leadership roles.

African American Women's Education

According to Bates (2007), many "early laws prohibited African Americans from learning to read and write" (p. 373). The struggle to access education was almost insurmountable for African American women. Thus, the institution of slavery forestalled African American

women from opportunities to seek formal education (Collins, 2000; Glover, 2012). Glover (2012) points out that

> prior to the Civil War, it was illegal to educate enslaved individuals of African descent. These men and women learned how to read and write in secrecy through the assistance of religious leaders, abolitionists, their slave owners, or freed Blacks who had already mastered these skills. (p. 6)

Oberlin College in Ohio was an exception as it admitted African American women to pursue "ladies' courses" that led to a literacy degree. Thus, in 1862, the first African American woman graduated from Oberlin. African American women such as Mary Jane Patterson, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mary Bethune paved the way for women of color in higher education (Bates, 2007). Their gains were newsworthy as they "crushed the myth that the ivory towers of the hallowed hall of academe were the exclusive domain of White men" (p. 374). These women established the legacy of erudite women of color in leadership positions in higher education institutions. Another pioneer was Mary Church Terrel, who graduated from Oberlin College and served on the Board of Education in Washington, DC (Smith-Adam et al., 2020). Bates (2007), further notes that Cooper and Bethune were the "first African American woman to lead major universities as presidents, not only at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) but also traditionally white institutions" (p. 374). Since the 1970s, African American women have assumed the position of president in some universities. Thus, after the pacesetters of Cooper and Bethune, Dr. Mable Parker Lewis became the first woman president of Barber-Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina (Bates, 2007). Dr. Parker Lewis became president in 1975 after over 108 years when the institution was founded "in January, 1867, by Reverend Luke Dorland, who was commissioned by the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A to establish in the South an institution for

the training of African-American women" (Barber-Scotia College, 2013, p. 1). It was not until 2000 that Ruth J. Simmons became the first African American woman to head an Ivy League Institution (Jackson & Harris, 2007). Since then, there have been other notable appointments of women of color as presidents of colleges and universities across the United States. Irrespective of the seeming conspicuous presence, women of color "continue to be underrepresented in higher education leadership roles" (Jackson & Harris, 2007, p. 119). In the case of Black or African women, their numbers are meagre.

According to Mainah and Perkins (2015), many "women in academic leadership positions, especially women of color, have experienced exclusion, condescension, isolation, dismissal, communication challenges, lack of validation or appreciation, and failure to receive due credit" (p. 7). Wilson (1987) observed four barriers that usually inhibit African American women from assuming leadership positions in academia: "the wage gap, institutional kinship, the old boy system, and the role played by prejudice" (p. 1). Wilson further asserts that all these factors that prohibit women of color are not new as it was not until 1862 when the "first African American female completed a college degree in America and graduated from Oberlin College" (p. 1), and the problems persist today. According to Smith-Adams et al. (2020), "African American females continue to find themselves achieving mid-level of the ladder in positions in which they are responsible for simply implementing policies and programs" (p. 235).

Thus, opportunities for African American women to lead colleges and universities are limited, especially regarding the institution. Therefore, this study explored their pathways to leading predominantly White institutions and their leadership experiences once they became presidents.

The Representation of Women as Presidents in Higher Education

Eddy (2002) states that the "college presidency represents the pinnacle of leadership in academic institutions, with men traditionally holding this position of power" (p. 498). According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (2016), women have made significant advancements in education and the workplace. However, "men greatly outnumber in leadership, especially in top positions" (p. ix). The leadership gap between men and women is prevalent and systemic in higher education. Women's experience of leadership cannot be quickly divorced from gender, race, and ethnicity, "so a discussion about gender without reference to race and ethnicity (or vice versa) is simplistic and can be misleading" (AAUW, 2016, p. ix). Leadership roles give power and control to the holders, and the exclusion of women from leadership positions is tantamount to the denial of authority.

The American College President Survey conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE) (2018), in 2016 reported that women comprised only 30% of college presidents. Still, only 5% of female presidents were women of color. In addition, Moody (2008) asserted that there needed to be more diversity in hiring practices, bias, and family life that continue to prevent women from leadership positions in higher education. Thus, despite the rise from 10% in 1986 to 30% in 2016 of women as university presidents, women remain underrepresented (Seltzer, 2017).

There has been an increase in the number of women serving as presidents in the United States, with 78% serving in their first presidency. Alice Freeman was the first woman to serve as president of a higher education institution in the United States when she was appointed to lead Wellesley College (Eddy, 2002). Academics and researchers have advanced many reasons for the underrepresentation of women in higher education, such as a "lack of self-confidence or

ambition" (Shepherd, 2017, p. 84). The entrenched patriarchal culture on campuses and many other problems impinge their growth to the rank of college or university president (Marbley et al., 2011; Seltzer, 2017). For example, women often alter their career progression to care for family members, and only 8% of women presidents lead doctorate-granting institutions (ACE, 2018). Providing care and other responsibilities in the home usually impede the career progression of many women in higher learning institutions.

According to the American Council on Education, in their eighth edition of the American College President Study published in 2018, the findings showed that the representation of women as presidents have nearly tripled since 1986. Thus, "about one-third of college and university presidents in 2016 were women, and only 5 percent of all presidents were women of color" (American Council on Education, 2018, p. 2). One participant in a study by ACE: *Voices from the Field: Women of Color as Presidents in Higher Education* remarked that irrespective of her academic qualifications, people express their shock that she is very articulate and even goes to the extent of saying that she contributes intelligently to conversations. Another participant noted, "there is a perception that there are certain characteristics that define women. Particularly women of color, that may not necessarily be accurate, but people hold those perceptions" (p. 3). According to Marbey et al. (2011), women of color struggle to combat their identities as they are usually departmentalized by their gender, ethnicity, and race. African American women's infinitesimal number could be attributed to race and the pervasive lack of equity, inclusion, and diversity in predominantly white institutions. It is essential to state that once Mary McLeod Bethune became president of Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona, Florida, other notable African American women became presidents of colleges and universities by overcoming the many challenges that precluded them from the presidency.

Intersectionality

People have credited Kimberle Crenshaw as the first user of the word intersectionality. Intersectionality denotes the "various ways in which race and gender interact" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244) that have malleable descriptions of Black women's experiences. Crenshaw asserts that just using race and gender was evident and, looking at the experiences of Black women along these lines, could not capture their experience wholly. Thus, race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and symbolic aspects of violence against women of color. According to McChesney (2018), "intersectionality refers to the combination of discrimination or biases experienced by individuals with overlapping identities associated with discrimination on its own" (p. 3). Thus, "Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the intersection of race and gender" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

Crenshaw (1989) asserts that "intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account" (p. 140) will fall short of doing a compelling analysis of Black women's subordination. Crenshaw also points out that discrimination against a White woman could be classified as a legal claim of discrimination, but in the case of Black women, it may stem from other things like race. Crenshaw, in her work (1989) cites multiple court cases to espouse "how Black women are treated in antidiscrimination law" (p. 149), as the courts rejected their claims by failing to acknowledge "that the employment experiences of Black women can be distinct from that of White women" (p. 149).

In the public arena, Black women are prone to experiencing discrimination in multiple ways. Crenshaw states:

Black women sometimes, experience discrimination in ways similar to

> White women's experiences: sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double discrimination- the combined effects of practices that discriminate on the basis of race, and on the bases of sex. And sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women. (p. 150)

In an interview with Aldo Ocampo Gonzalez, director at the Center for Latin American Studies of Inclusive Education in Chile, Collins stated that intersectionality was a "form of critical inquiry and practice that scholars and activists have used to develop more complex understandings of social inequality and social injustice" (2019, p. 154). Women of color could experience discrimination as women, being a person of color and their national origin (Marbley et al, 2011; Townsend, 2019). Thus, they experience workplace discrimination differently (Cox et al., 2019; Mainah & Perkins, 2015) in comparison to their White female colleagues. Cox and colleagues (2019), therefore assert that the work environment can set the "stage for discriminatory actions and prejudicial attitudes" (p. 297).

Mainah and Perkins (2015), reiterated Crenshaw's viewpoint that discrimination against women of color is legally invisible due to its insufficient legal definition. There is much saliency of negative stereotypes with controlling images that demean African American women or make them look inferior to women and men of the dominant culture or at least incapable of their roles. Marbley et al. (2011) state that "women of color within academia are confronted with many obstacles" (p. 166), especially as the academy is either resistant to change or change is usually slow-paced. Marbley et al. (2011) assert that "women of color, unlike their White counterparts "face pre-existing societal stereotypes, biases, and discriminations that negatively impact their progress and the image of themselves" (p. 167). Marbley et al. (2011) further state that the

survival of women of color in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) hinges on many creative ways, such as looking for mentorship in other departments or collaborations with other faculties in different universities. The way minorities experience social reality within institutions makes it clear that the intersectionality of situations is complex. Collins (2020) stated, “intersectionality posits that systems of power coproduce one another in ways that reproduce both unequal material realities (social locations) and the distinctive social experiences that characterize people’s experiences with social hierarchies” (p. 125). Collins (2020) points to the fact that in academia, Crenshaw was the proponent of the term intersectionality. Still, however, prior periods of social movement politics and their social justice projects had features of intersectionality.

In all these, we see much saliency of Black Feminist Thought as postulated by Patricia Hill Collins. According to Collins (2000, 2016), Black feminist thought came into being to challenge the status quo, an oppositional project to the dominant culture. Collins (2016) describes oppositional to the “mean doing serious, diligent, and thoughtful intellectual work that aims to dismantle unjust intellectual and political structures” (p. 134). Collins drew the attention of editors and publishers that it was significant for capitalizing the letter “b” when referring to Black women. Collins (2016) stated, “throughout my publishing career, I have opposed the normative structure of mainstream publications that still refuse to capitalize the term Black, both in reference to African American and people of African descent” (p. 136). Black feminist thought points to the absence of Black women’s exclusion from both the Feminist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement (Collins, 2000). As such, “instead of examining gender, race, and class as a separate system of oppression, intersectionality explores how these interlocking systems build on one another” (Grottis, 2022, p. 63).

Leadership

In the last three decades, universities and colleges have become complex organizations of people, departments, and many types of students attending their institutions. Leading or managing institutions is now very challenging. Drastic cuts in government subventions and introducing policies designed to promote inclusion and diversity pose many difficulties for colleges and universities (Freeland, 2001; Kezar, 2014). According to Freeland (2001), college or university presidents must now deal with external pressures such as "competing campuses, changing student markets, the academic professions, donors and legislators, public policies, neighboring communities, economic conditions, intellectual and technical change" (p. 258). College or university presidents now have to deal with shared governance. Thus, for many decades prior, the leadership of colleges and universities was an exclusive position for men. Janes et al. (2020) stated "for many years, the literature on leadership is connected principally to the world of business" (p. 34). Therefore higher institutions did not pay much attention to training leaders for institutions. Now that diversity and inclusion have been ingrained into leading colleges and universities, many women are serving as the first women or people of color as presidents of their institutions.

Women have made many strides in higher learning institutions as heads of departments, deans, and presidents; however, their numbers remain small compared to men (Locket et al., 2019; Seltzer, 2017; Wollen, 2016). In the 2017 American College President Study, less than 30 percent of college presidents are women. The statistics are lower for minority serving institutions. According to the Center for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and the University of Pennsylvania, "within the Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) sector, the numbers are even smaller" (p. 1). Gagliadi (2017) "in 2016, 33 percent of presidents of MSIs were women and 36

percent were members of a racial/ethnic minority group" (p. 18). The numbers are even lower for women serving as presidents in predominantly White institutions. After many decades of having male presidents some institutions now have women presidents (Grottis, 2022; Seltzer, 2017). A White House project in 2009 reported that despite the different leadership that matters, most women did not hold leadership positions in higher learning (University of Denver, Colorado Women's College, 2013). Women comprise an average of 24.53% of positional leaders in academia. Women lag significantly behind men in status, salary, and leadership in academia. Regarding enrollment, women students "comprised 57% of all enrollments and received 59 percent of all degrees conferred in 2009-10" (NCES, 2012, p. 289). Nevertheless, they were still less than a third of college presidents in 2016. Less than a "fifth were members of a racial or ethnic minority group" (Seltzer, 2017, p. 1). Women must navigate many challenges to lead institutions of higher learning, and even when appointed to lead, they experience challenges. They usually deal with issues both in the private and public spheres of their lives. In 2016, out of the 81 public universities classified as Doctoral Universities: Highest Research, 11 were led by women presidents (Reis & Grady, 2018). Fitzgerald (2014) observed that "while there has been some shift in numbers of women at senior levels, in the main, women remain overly represented at lower levels" (p. 56).

Getting to leadership positions is problematic for women, as they must navigate a labyrinth, unlike their male colleagues, who may have a straight and narrow path. Eagly and Carli (2007) postulated that "three types of barriers that have obstructed women's advancement: the concrete wall, the glass ceiling, and the labyrinth" (p. 2). The concrete wall barred women from occupying positions considered trades dominated by men. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), "The concrete wall rested on a division of labor dictating that men should be

breadwinners and women should be homemakers" (p. 3). As a result, some jobs were not open to women based on the dominant gender roles in society. As a result, few women could make headway and assume leadership roles. According to Maranto and Griffin (2011), "the professoriate is a highly gendered occupation" (p. 140). It is even more glaring for women with family obligations and responsibilities (Fitzgerald, 2014; Hervey &Wooten, 2004), as institutions do not have policies or facilities that help ameliorate these women's situation.

In contrast, others accepted the so-called norm and "accepted the absolute barriers" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 3) that hindered their progress. Eagly and Carli (2007b) further noted by the 1970s, women made headway into positions of authority. Still, this period became known as the glass ceiling, which implied an "absolute barrier, a solid roadblock that prevents access to high-level positions" (p. 13). This invisible barrier continues to hinder "African American women from obtaining the same freedoms, contingencies, and connections to progress in executive level positions" (Reed et al., 2022, p. 133). Eagly and Carli (2007) believe that times have changed, and the metaphor of women shattering the glass ceiling no longer holds much weight. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), "A better metaphor for what confronts women in their professional endeavors is the labyrinth" (p. 65). The passage or how women get to leadership positions is usually difficult, like a maze that needs to be unraveled. Women can attain high positions, but "finding the pathways demands considerable skills and some luck" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 8). As a monolithic group, men still benefit from higher wages and faster promotions than women (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Men stay longer as presidents than women (ACE, 2017). Seltzer (2017) reported, "almost a quarter of presidents, 23.9 percent, had held presidential or chief executive officer position in their job before their current presidency" (pp. 1-2).

Many people attribute leadership qualities and capabilities to traits in men, not women. The early "trait approach theories were called "Great Man" theories because they focused on identifying the innate qualities and characteristics "that was seen in great early leaders, and this was often inherited" (Northouse, 2012, p. 2). Irrespective of traits, a person with leadership ability can be a leader, and the individual will acquire the skills needed to do the work later. Northouse (2012) asserts that leadership is a skill that an individual acquires and develops with time "even without natural ability, people can improve leadership with practice, instruction, and feedback from others" (p. 5). Leadership is also a behavior demonstrated by the person leading. Leadership is a relationship experience that individuals can develop through collaboration with others, and it is not one-way dimensional but somewhat interactive. Northouse (2012, 2016) posited that leadership is an influence process as leaders affect followers in many ways. Here achieving a common goal is pivotal, and many people expect the leader to be ethical in leading others.

Drawing from Brown's (2006) analysis of the state, the leadership role of women in academia resembles this analysis "there is no single thread that when snapped, unravels the whole of the state or masculine dominance" (p. 194). Men dominate nearly every ambit of departments and programs as deans and as presidents of higher learning institutions. Fitzgerald (2014), therefore, posits that "despite the rhetoric of inclusion that circulates in higher education, women are repeatedly cast as the 'other' and outsiders in this dominant male world" (p. 60). According to Marbley et al. (2011), there is resistance to change as institutions use:

> Eurocentric and male lenses frame standards and dictate certain cultural, behavioral, and professional norms, these women of color, devoid of their culture and identity, often find themselves not fitting in and not able to

climb the academic ladder to success. (p. 166).

Remarkably, many college or university presidents enter the academy as assistant professors and move up the ranks to full professorship. However, according to Lederman (2022), "some of the traditional pathways to the presidency remain dominated by white men, particularly research vice presidencies, which have historically been filled by scholars in physical science fields where people of color and women remain underrepresented" (p. 6). Lederman further notes that the search committees and hiring firms do not enthusiastically search for minority candidates. In the past few years, candidates with student services backgrounds have been hired as presidents (Lederman, 2022), and this has been a slight change in the tradition. For many women, specific women of color, their paths to the presidency were "not always one that was planned, even though these women certainly had a professional plan" (Center for MSIs, p. 2). The Center for Minority Serving Institutions state, "many individuals saw more leadership ability in them than they could see within themselves" (p. 2). Thus, the presidency is not an initially desired path for many African American women entering academia as they work toward promotion and tenure. Therefore, the experiences of African American women cannot be described as monolithic (Eberhardt, 2019; Grottis, 2022). Many African American women will experience all of the following or some as they build their careers in higher educational administration: discrimination, microaggressions, racism, sexism, and stereotypes (Collins, 2000, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989; Eberhardt, 2019; Grottis, 2022; Marsiglia & Kulis, 2016).

Leadership Programs for Women

There have been some leadership programs for women planning or currently in leadership roles in higher institutions of learning. For instance, Higher Education Resources Services (HERS) is dedicated to creating and sustaining a diverse community of leaders. HERS

was founded in 1972. According to Chamberlain (1991) “the three HERS organizations carry out research and action programs to improve the status of academic women in administrative positions” (p, 305). HERS maintains a roster of qualified women and offers “seminars and courses for training in administrative skills to strengthen the qualifications of women candidates” (Chamberlain, 1991, p. 324). The American Council on Education (ACE) offers the national women’s leadership forum every two years. This forum targets senior level administrators who wish to move up the career ladder (Tindle, 2017). In addition, the ACE Women’s Network facilitates networking for women interested in pursuing leadership in higher education. According to Janes et al. (2020), however, “many leadership programs are based on competency frameworks, which generally do not emphasize context” (p. 35) of leadership skills. Citing several works of literature, Janes et al. (2020), note that institutions should not standardize leadership programs but tailor them based on the individual. This observation about standardization becomes very credulous as Gagliadi et al. (2017) observed that “each individual journey to the presidency is different” (p. 20), so it will also depend on the person’s experiences seeking the position.

Pathways to the Presidency

According to Wollen (2016), the “traditional” route to the presidency usually entails a linear fashion, meaning that the president moves through every level. Thus, institutions hire women as faculty members (assistant and then associate professors), department chairs, deans, and, then provosts. Wollen (2016) asserts that it needs to be clarified if moving through the ranks could lead to effective leadership. Men and women usually follow the traditional path as they may engage in robust teaching, research, and serve on committees as they aspire for leadership positions, but the preparedness does not put men and women on an equal level to get

to the presidency (Mainah & Perkins, 2015; Marbley et al., 2011). Also, many women may alter their pathways to care for family members and the lack of many women occupying senior-level positions may impact their aspirations in the curved pipeline to leadership (Marbley et al., 2011; Wollen, 2016). Besides, "there is numerical dominance of men at senior levels, women appear out of place, strangers in the landscape" (Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 60). Therefore, it is conspicuous that "leadership in universities continues to be male-dominated" (Janes et al., 2020, p. 33). Usually, many women hold doctoral degrees, but search committees do not consider them for presidential searches because of the lack of career histories that could support their academic qualifications (Wollen, 2016). In a study, Wilson (1989) found that many participants meander through paths that last for years as faculty members, administrators, and then presidents. Thus, the long routes make many women older than their male counterparts when they are appointed presidents and even worse off for women of color (Wilson, 1989). Bynum and Stordy (2017) identified five key factors attributed to the advancement and success of women of color "access to formal education and training, mentorship and strong relationships, supportive workplace environments, individual attributes and, self-directed learning and spirituality" (p. 3).

Many African American women's path to the presidency tends to be blurry and covertly prevents them from getting to the top (Glover, 2012; Marbley et al., 2011). In their findings, Marbley and colleagues stated that they have "heard many colleagues over the years say things like: We can't find any qualified minority candidates, or we will only hire the most qualified" (p. 171). Thus, for them, it is a way of refusing to hire educated and highly qualified African American women as they search for white candidates. Mainah and Perkins (2015) found that female "faculty of color have unique challenges compared to their white and or male peers" (p. 8). Higher education has its own culture in many ways, and "culture shapes everything, including

but not limited to governance, programming, leadership, decision-making processes, administrative practices, and strategic planning" (Center for MSI's, 2019, p. 3). There is a culture of male dominance, discrimination, microaggression, and stereotypes.

Identity and Leadership

In the United States, employees' identities are conspicuous determinants of higher education. Usually, white men tend to benefit from their identity (Frable, 1997; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) more than white women and women of color. Frable (1997) postulated that identity is the psychological relationship to a particular social category system. These include "gender, race, ethnicity, sexual and class identities" (Frable, 1997, p. 139). Minority women experience subtle race and gender discrimination from their colleagues, immediate supervisor, and the administration "regardless of their qualifications, and are often perceived as tokens" (Jackson, 2007, p. 121). Eagly and Van Engen (2017) assert that prejudice against women is partly responsible for the lack of women in many leadership positions. According to Eagly and Van Engen (2017), "prejudice arises because people's general ideas about what a manager or a leader should be may not necessarily fit their ideas about women as well as men" (p. 6). The prejudice is inconsistent regarding social role expectations that are still prevalent in many societies, even well-developed societies or have laws and policies to provide equal playing fields for all workers (Eagly & Van Eegen, 2017; Lamin, 2007; Madsen, 2006).

It is essential to note that gender roles are socially constructed and tend to create a societal division of labor between men and women (Eagly & Van Eegen, 2017; Lamin, 2007; Madsen, 2006; Martinez Aleman & Renn, 2002). Thus, the socialization process and the campus climate favor men (Martinez Aleman & Renn, 2002). It becomes more disadvantageous for "women of color and lesbian faculty often face greater discrimination and poor working

conditions than heterosexual white women" (p. 373). According to Martinez Aleman and Renn (2002), "colleges and universities influence women faculty through their research and teaching requirements, the hiring process, salary negotiations and the work of unions on the campuses where they exist" (p. 375). Thus, according to Hall and Sanders (1982) women of color experience a chilly climate at predominantly White institutions. According to Maranto and Griffin (2011), a chilly climate includes "informal exclusion, devaluation, and marginalization" (p.141). As a result, many women of color and African American women assume a lack of belonging and little or no social networks (Maranto & Griffin, 2011).

Mentoring

Mentoring in higher education is very significant for women and minorities as many roles are usually new to them. Mentoring is very common on "campuses for new hires" (Boice, 1992, p. 107). However, "few campuses conduct mentoring in any systematic and demonstrably effective way" (Boice, 1992, p. 107) that could benefit all workers irrespective of race and gender. Also, the content of mentoring on many campuses entails "mostly how-to-do discussions" (p. 107) and not about pathways to leadership positions. In a survey, Boice (1992) found the following (1) scholarly productivity, (2) managing classrooms and students, (3) conflict and politics with colleagues, (4) and retention and tenure. There is no mention of leadership from the list, and many topics are predictable, sometimes making it difficult for mentoring to gain much impact on new hires.

Fowler (2019) stated that "women in higher education face challenges, and mentoring may be one way to move beyond the barriers and seek advancement" (p. 51). Meschitti and Smith (2017), reflecting on the situation in the United Kingdom, noted that "mentoring for women academics is widespread" (p. 171). Meschitti and Smith state, "mentoring in principle

provides a mechanism for supporting women's progression and retention along the academic career" (p. 171). Mentoring African American women is vital to their career advancement (Horton, 2020). Horton further points out "that mentoring relationships vary and can be in the form of informal networks that provide Black women faculty with the support needed to navigate the academic environment" (p. 16). Thus, administrators cannot overlook the significance of mentoring if adequately designed and implemented, as "mentorship connected to opportunity is imperative in building the administrative careers of women leaders" (Carlson Reis & Grady, 2020, p. 31). Mentorship also helps women to move up the administrative ladder. The mentor should be a trusted friend mentee can discuss many issues (Carlson Reis & Grady, 2020; StudyCorgi, 2021), especially regarding career development and progression. According to Moody (2004)

> mentors and mentoring programs should be alert to these differences in personality, cultural context, and gender expectations and ensure that all new faculty hires are finding their own effective ways to promote their work and garner the recognition they deserve. (p. 204)

Mentoring can be significant to the career growth of African American women, as the mentor becomes the go-to person for answers to questions and how to navigate the institutional system. Carlson Reid and Grady (2020) describe the mentor-mentee relationship as a dyad.

Family Responsibilities

In nearly every society, women bear the considerable burden of family responsibilities more than men. Often family responsibilities may inhibit women from taking up new challenges like relocation if they have young children or are married to husbands who may be unwilling to relocate if they have new jobs (Brown, 1992; Janes et al., 2020; Lamin, 2007).

Childcare and childbearing have also impeded many women in academia structurally and socially as existing legislation usually disadvantaged women, disproportionately allocating very little paternity and maternity leaves (Grana, 2002). There is a great perception and practice that childcare and childrearing though demanding, are women's roles or jobs. Some women postpone having children as it may inhibit or stifle their career growth. Hochschild (1989, 2012) believed in the prevalence of tensions within American families between the demands of work and chores at home and childcare. Women were responsible for performing these roles in what she coined as the second shift. Hochschild noted that society expects women to spend more time on housework and childcare than men. According to Hochschild (2012), "women more often juggle three spheres-job, children and housework-while most men juggle two jobs" (p. 9). Culturally, in many societies many people expect women to do more work at home than their husbands do. Hochschild (2020) asserted that this has accompanied "a rise in divorce" (p. 9), especially if women are determined to maintain their careers and rise to the echelon of their work.

Women generally shoulder most reproductive, productive, and community management responsibilities, which usually impinges on their career growth. Many women's jobs in private spheres need to be remunerated or reflected in the national statistics (Lamin, 2007). Patriarchy contributes significantly by imposing order and control; conversely, capitalism provides an economic system driven by the pursuit of profits (Walby, 1990). Thus, men, for many reasons, seriously dominate the private sphere in nearly every society. The father figure in the family system is typical, and families cope with such and forge ahead (Lamin, 2007; Walby, 1990). Women lag behind men in the public sector for many reasons (Lamin, 2007). Thus, the "state is neither hegemonic nor monolithic, but it mediates or deploys almost all the powers shaping

women's lives- physical, economic, sexual, reproductive and political- powers wielded in previous epochs directly by men" (Brown, 1992, p. 29).

In many societies, women are in subordinate positions because of their education level, family commitments, single motherhood, sexual harassment, and the lack of equality before the law. They find themselves in "traditional jobs," the state not recognizing their disabilities, and lacking public toilet facilities. In many countries, irrespective of work at home, women must work extended hours when employed in the public domain (Lamin, 2007). Since women usually spend more time working in their homes, they acquire less human capital, which is disadvantageous to many of them. Higher education tends to be a microcosm of job segregation by sex and gender roles in structural societies, as many men are usually at the helm (Walby, 1990). Mothering also traps many women and subjugates them to specific gender-based roles in many communities and societies worldwide for many African American women balancing family and work is strenuous. According to Jones (2013), many African American women "often feel stretched to their limits because they have to balance their time between career, family, and community obligations" (p. 43).

The *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993* guarantees women the right to take leave for up to twelve workweeks during any 12-month for childbirth, adoption, foster care placement, and care for family members. However, new female faculty do not qualify, and many universities need adequate and affordable childcare centers. Paying for childcare remains expensive, and discount is rarely available to women faculty. It is worthy to conclude that, "female leaders often carry heavier family-based roles than their male counterparts" (Janes, et al., 2020, p. 37). It is essential to state that parental leave provides security to women faculty, but the cost associated with childcare inhibits women significantly.

Stereotypes

Kite and Whitley, Jr. (2016) state that the "contemporary model of prejudice, beliefs are labeled as stereotypes" (p. 13). There are several aspects of stereotypes, such as pictures in each individual's head that stems from beliefs. Stereotypes may be accurate or inaccurate and can be prescriptive or descriptive. Kite and Whitley, Jr. (2016) state that people make positive comments about minorities that may have unintended effects. Kite and Whitley, Jr. (2016) stated "stereotypes may be refined by each individual, but there is typically group consensus about the content of those beliefs. People learn stereotypes from the media, peers, parents, and even sources such as classic and modern literature" (p. 13). Although many people in the United States describe society as a melting pot, many minorities still experience stereotypes that may dampen their morale and performance in the workplace. Stereotypes are cultural. According to Kite and Whitley, Jr. (2016), "culture influences stereotyping and prejudice because members of a culture hold sets of beliefs in common, including beliefs about behaviors, values, attitudes, and opinions" (p. 8). Therefore, being erudite African American women do not prevent them from being stereotyped by individuals of the dominant culture. Kite and Whitley, Jr. (2016) also stated, "the cultural aspect of prejudice and discrimination is also expressed through White privilege or the more general concept of group privilege" (p. 9). White men and women generally enjoy group privilege or White privilege. Many African American women experience stereotype activation when they apply for jobs or are at the helm of institutions. Marsiglia and Kulis (2016) state that stereotypes about African American women are not new, as "they have come a long way from the subservient Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben" (p. 44). Therefore, "people can identify stereotypes that society holds about members of their social group" (Kite & Whitley, Jr., 2016, p. 143), whether subtle or conspicuous.

Harley (2007) states, “African American women at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) suffer from a “form of race fatigue as a result of being overextended and undervalued” (p. 19). Harley (2007) further states that white supremacy exists in predominantly White institutions and some people may expect African American women to be calm about their experiences. Thus, African American women faculty often observe that when they “voice their opinions about issues, they are labeled as troublemakers, a special interest group, or as crying wolf” (Harley, 2007, p. 23). Harper (2022), in an interview with Patton Davis, cites Patton that “there have been so few presidents of color at U.S. higher education institutions (most especially research universities like Harvard), Gay’s appointment as President of Harvard is monumental and praiseworthy. But ensuring the “conditions are right for a Black presidential first to ultimately succeed at a place where whites comprise the single-largest racial group among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors is more important” (Harper, 2022, p. 4).

Policies

The early 1970s brought in numerous federal laws and regulations “that were aimed at equalizing opportunities for women in higher education” (Chamberlain, 1991, p. 255). According to Bingham and Nix (2010) “policies and practices in higher education can directly impact faculty members’ career opportunities and advancement” (p. 2). Thus, the aspirations of many women are usually constrained by the way institutions interpret policies or the university administrations to make the institution a conducive place to work for all genders. The federal government has enacted many policies to protect and ensure women’s rights in higher education. According to Mumper et al. (2016), the “federal government, notwithstanding the primary role of the states in our federal system, has played an essential role in shaping the size, scope, and character of American higher education” (p. 212). As more women entered higher learning

institutions, gaining ascendency became daunting for them, especially holding critical positions as heads of departments, deans, provosts, or presidents (Seltzer, 2017). Navigating the leadership labyrinth became another challenge for many women seeking a top academic position. Also, once they were in leadership positions, they experienced some challenges.

As the Federal government started enacting policies to protect women. Landmark decisions like the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 1954 and the *Equal Pay Act of 1963* gave hope to women in academia. Thus, since 1954, the federal government has been "involved with decisions about who colleges can (or must) admit, how they hire faculty and staff, and how they award scholarships" (Mumper et al, 2016, p. 231). The Equal Pay legislation, an amendment to the Fair Labor Standard Act of 1938, aimed at abolishing wage disparity based on sex (Furman & Gibelman, 2013). Despite the protection enshrined in the Act, women generally continue to receive lower salaries than men in the same or similar positions they hold in the public sector. Although universities boast of job security for women in some cases, wages are still paltry compared to the corporate world for similar qualifications. Still institutions discriminate against them in terms of compensation, promotions, and job security. According to Walters and Ridenour (2007), "universities are not unlike the corporate world where women's pay is incommensurate with their job descriptions when compared to men who do the same work" (p. 13).

Thus, the passage of *Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972* and the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974 brought significant changes to women's treatment in higher education (Chamberlain, 1991; Furman & Gibelman, 2013; Grana, 2002; Reis, & Grady, 2018). According to Gangone and Lenon (2014), the enactment of Title IX was to eliminate sex discrimination in education and to "level the playing field among women and men through

educational equity" (p. 4). Even though colleges have long argued that such regulations represent a burden that contributes to the rapid price of higher education. The *Women's Education Act of 1974* provided funds to states to encourage them to develop new and improved curriculums for women, especially those pursuing degrees in higher learning (Blau & Abramowitz, 2014).

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed the *Pregnancy Discrimination Act* as an amendment to *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*. The Act prohibits employers from discriminating against workers based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, as many women experience discrimination by performing their biological and familial roles (Hoefer, 2019; Palley, 2017). According to Palley (2017), before enacting the Pregnancy Act, many women suffered discrimination by merely performing their biological functions in society, such as being pregnant or caring for a child. However, Palley (2017) mentioned the case: *Young v UPS* 2015, in which UPS discriminated against a pregnant worker who eventually took her case to the Fourth Circuit and lost. Even though Ms. Young appealed to the Supreme Court, the Court did not favor her, stating that "UPS could treat people differently if they were acting in a non-discriminatory way" (p. 191). Therefore, one can deduce here that pregnant women still experience discrimination.

In the 1980s, many women's groups popularized the metaphor glass ceiling for the invisible and artificial barriers that blocked women and minorities from climbing the management ladder (Furman & Gibelman, 2016). Thus, *Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991*, known as the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991, specifically addressed concerns about the underrepresentation of women and minorities in management and decision-making positions (Furman & Gibelman, 2016) and the "need to remove artificial barriers to advancement" (p.

156). With the Glass Ceiling Act, some women overcame the obstacles that prevented them from reaching an equivalent at work.

Harassment/Violence

In terms of harassment, Title VII of the Civil Right Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) "state harassment is a form of discrimination and subsequently, unlawful behavior" (Cox et al., 2019, p. 290). The Federal government established The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), in 1965, as the federal agency responsible for enforcing federal laws regarding discrimination or harassment against a job applicant or employee (Cox et al., 2019; Grana, 2002).

Women continue to be harassed or experience violence on campuses (Grana, 2002). Segal (2013), stated "Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 as part of larger crime control and law enforcement legislation" (p. 156). The Act has offered some protection for women on campuses. Thus, creating a conducive atmosphere for women to succeed has been problematic as women experience sexual harassment and other forms of abuse at the workplace, which are not new and tend to continue unabatedly. Walby (1990) postulates that fear, for instance, may prevent some women from "walking in public spaces after dark" (p. 52). In addition, some women may be discouraged from working beyond the regular workday on campuses for safety reasons. Therefore,

> from the Morrill Act, to the G.I. Bill to the Higher Education Act and its many reauthorizations, to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the federal government has played a pivotal role in extending opportunities for higher education to a wider segment of American society. (Mumper, 2016, p. 235)

Navigating the Labyrinth

Eagly and Carly developed the concept of a labyrinth in their 2007 book: *Through the Labyrinth; The Truth about How Women become Leaders.* Eagly and Carly developed the third concept in a row of ideas developed earlier, the concrete wall and glass ceiling. The Concrete Wall consisted of explicit rules, norms, and socialization that prevented women from assuming leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007b). Before women's voting rights in 1920, men were in a considerable majority in leadership roles, and even after that, men continued to occupy top leadership positions in the public sector. Women had little protection for women, and equality was farfetched even after enacting the 1963 Equal Pay Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Remarkably, President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the Civil Rights Act was in 1964, which provided some protection for women (Grana, 2002; Lane et al., 2019). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, and retaliation.

The next metaphoric barrier presented by Eagly and Carli (2007b) was the glass ceiling coined by "two journalists- Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt introduced the label in the Wall Street Journal" (p. 4). The metaphor glass ceiling soon became popular as it portrayed an invisible barrier preventing women from reaching the top of leadership positions. Thus, the Glass Ceiling Commission, which the U.S. Congress later set up, found the disparaging ways that prevented women from holding top leadership positions such as marriage, childbirth, and childcare. Indeed, the commission concluded that "a glass ceiling exists and that it operates substantially to exclude minorities and women from the top levels of management" (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 7). Women experienced concrete barriers (Herwatic, 2016), which inhibited them from reaching leadership's pinnacle. Evans (2007) found that within higher

education, it was challenging for women of color to shatter the glass ceiling as many of them were “relegated to lower ranks, doing much invisible work such as counseling, coordinating meetings, stretching meager resources and organizing grassroots civil rights campaigns that improved their campuses and communities” (p. 132). Harley (2007) states the playing field has never been level for all women as institutions deprivilege African American women. Harley (2007) asserts “unlike their white female professionals who are daughters of white men and subsequently benefactors of white privilege, African American women at PWIs are overwhelmingly recipients of deprivileged consequences” (p. 20). Evans further advanced that there is a pipeline myth as many women emerged from the academic cadre only promotion committees and authorities dash hopes. Although the U.S. government has passed sex discrimination laws, gender-based discrimination jobs persist (Cox et al., 2019; Grana, 2002), and higher education institutions are no exception. A bedrock of male dominance (Baron, 2020).

Eagly and Carli (2007) used the labyrinth metaphor as a new concept transcending the glass ceiling. The labyrinth concept was more appropriate as women had made significant strides in assuming leadership by the 1990s (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Still, many described their pathways as needing to be clearer, or tackling many challenges to get to leadership positions. Therefore, the glass ceiling did not recognize the various strategies or meanderings women used to get to top positions. According to Eagly and Carli (2007b), the “labyrinth contained numerous barriers some subtle and others quite obvious” (p. 7), which were damaging to women’s growth to top positions. The image captures the myriad of challenges that women often “travel indirect paths sometimes through the alien territory on their way to leadership” (p. 1). Eagly and Carli posited that some women find “roundabout or discontinuous or nontraditional routes to authority” (p. 7); therefore, women have to “demonstrate both agentic and communal skills as well as create social

capital" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 172). Barbers (2016) stated that for women of color it is not even about the glass ceiling but a concrete ceiling, "the difference between the terms is that the concrete ceiling is a term specifically made for women of color" (p. 2). Carli and Eagly (2016), stated that "because metaphors have the power to shape social perception, they can be subtly manipulated to alter attitudes and behaviors toward other people" (p. 515).

Women of color usually must work extremely hard as they navigate the labyrinth to top positions in higher education as they are "marginally represented at the executive level" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 172). According to Hoyt and Goethals (2017), some hurdles women face stem from prejudice and stereotypical thinking. Explicit bias against women of color may have decreased, but subtle biases that work to undermine the tenets of meritocracy and limit their access to power. According to Nichols and Davis (2021) "successful black people often still feel they must work harder than white people to get ahead, and a host of invisible but potent institutionalized impediments block the path of the less fortunate" (p. 175).

The Concept of Labyrinth within Higher Education

Eagly and Carli (2007) applied their coinage of the labyrinth to women's position in the corporate world. However, this metaphoric concept could widely apply to women's ascension to the presidency's highest rank in higher education institutions. Baron (2020) uses the metaphor to describe the situation in higher education in Canada and states "the metaphor of negotiating an environment filled with obstructions and undisclosed pathways strongly resonated with my experience of working as an academic professional" (p. 89). Burkinshaw and White (2017) found that institutions have gendered power relations that stubbornly maintain entrenched inequalities "regardless of measures implemented for and by women" (p. 10). There is also "organizational masculinity" (p. 10) that values external fundraising skills more than a good

array of skills and qualities women possess. For instance, in the United Kingdom, women must follow the traditional trajectory from "lecturer and then progressing through the ranks to senior lecturer, associate professor, and full professor" (p.10). Women usually face precarious career paths stemming from a lack of job security and heavy workloads (Bangilhole & White, 2013). Baron (2020) states that the "obstacles found in higher education are not always perceptible to the uninitiated and can create an impression of unscalable walls that impede progress" (p. 89). Baron further states that jobs and roles in higher education can be confusing, creating tension and bureaucracy. Hill (2020) posits that "gender equality remains a contested issue" (p. 71).

African American women are usually in more complex situations than white women (Kellerman & Rhodes, 2014; Ngunjiri &Hernandez, 2017; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). African American women not only deal with gender-based issues; they also experience race and ethnicity as they climb the leadership echelons of higher education administration. Thus, African American women usually encounter the "concrete wall or the sticky floor." Many factors could inhibit their progression to higher heights. Thus, "gender pervades structures and processes in organizations" (Burkinshaw & White, 2017, p. 11), and higher educational institutions are no exceptions. According to Sanchez-Hucles (2010) barriers for women in leadership positions do not just disappear once they attain the leadership positions. Women must work harder than men to succeed, and in the case of women of color, they "are typically more isolated, without mentors or a network of support" (p. 172).

Eagly and Carli (2007b) postulated that there is a gender bias in higher education. Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) assert that "men are associated with being leaders because they more commonly demonstrate assertive masculine traits that connote leadership" (p. 127). Women of color also experience pay gaps or differences compared to their White counterparts.

They may need to maintain a positive self-image to prevent or challenge microaggression as they seek tenure or leadership positions (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Therefore the intersectionality of experience by African American women and Black feminist thought is very significant when writing about African American women's pathways to and within higher education as presidents. Marsiglia and Kulis (2016) state "individuals hold positions within multiple systems of inequality based on race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, age, and ability status" (p. 52).

Conclusion

Women generally experience many challenges that may slow their pace to leadership positions. Still, there has been progress, and even African American women, have made inroads into leadership positions in higher education. The literature shows how women and women of color have navigated the pathways to leadership positions and their experiences as presidents of institutions. I used the idea of the labyrinth to examine the pathways of African American women to the presidency and as presidents in American higher education to learn from their different narratives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative narrative research aimed to explore the career paths of African American women college and university presidents and their experiences once they are presidents. The study focused on how the women navigated challenges as they worked toward the presidency. This research is likely to add to the existing body of knowledge about the experiences of African American women in navigating challenges, especially where materials are scant or nonexistent. According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (2016), women have made significant advancements in education and the workplace. However, "men greatly outnumber in leadership, especially in top positions" (p. ix). The leadership gap between men and women is prevalent and systemic in higher education. Women's experience of leadership cannot be easily removed from race and ethnicity, "so a discussion about gender without reference to race and ethnicity (or vice versa) is simplistic and can be misleading" (AAUW, 2016, p. ix). Leadership roles give power and control to the holders, and the exclusion of women from a leadership position is tantamount to the denial of authority. There has been an increase in women serving as presidents, as 78% of women served in their first presidency (American Council on Education ACE, 2018). However, women usually alter their career progression to care for family members, and only 8% of women presidents lead doctorate-granting institutions (ACE, 2018; Hervey & Wooten, 2004).

Many researchers have advanced reasons for the underrepresentation of women in higher education, such as a "lack of self-confidence or ambition" (Shepherd, 2017, p. 84). The entrenched patriarchal culture on campuses (Seltzer, 2017) and many other problems impinge their growth to the rank of college or university president. The situation for minority women is different as it only makes a snail-paced progression. According to ACE, in their 2017 report, the

percentage of minority college presidents has increased over the last 30 years. The report states 17 percent of college presidents were racial minorities, with only 5 percent of them being women of color, and 36 percent of minority presidents led associate colleges.

In this study, I explored how African American women have navigated the labyrinth to the presidency position in predominantly White institutions (PWIs). I questioned participants based on the metaphor or concept of the labyrinth by Eagly and Carli (2007). In all the metaphors: concrete wall, glass ceiling, labyrinth, pipeline myth, and the glass cliff, women of color experience negative race-based stereotypes, lack of institutional support, and question their authority and credibility (Mainah & Perkins, 2015). The study examined racism, gender, mentoring, profiling, and familial roles. The central research questions were:

1) How have African American women navigated the administrative labyrinth to the presidency of colleges and universities?

2) How have race and gender affected African American women's pathways to their institution's presidency?

The Rationale for Qualitative Research

Since I attempted to explore the experiences of African American women's path to college and university presidents in the United States, for this research, I selected qualitative research because it seeks to examine the motivations or intentions behind various actions, events, and individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Patton (2015), "qualitative methods permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context and nuance" (p. 257). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) pointed out that

> The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and processes and meaning that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms

> of quantity, amount intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. (p. 10)

Qualitative research provides researchers with an understanding of others' perceptions thereby exploring the meanings individuals give to events in their lives (Berg, 2001). According to Padgett (1998), the qualitative research design should consist of three elements:

(1) investigation of a topic about which little is known.

(2) exploration of an emotionally sensitive and in-depth topic; and

(3) capturing the "lived experience" from the perspectives of those who participate in And create meaning from the environment under scrutiny.

According Gair and Luyn (2017), complex social problems have no easy answers, and for qualitative researchers the focus is on gathering rich narratives framed in the narrative owners' meaning and sharing them in a readily consumable way" (p. 1).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry was the method used for this study. Doing qualitative research helps explore and understand a central phenomenon. Generally, qualitative researchers collect data in various ways, such as in-depth interviews using open-ended questions, direct observations, and documents (personal or public) (Patton, 2002; 2015). According to Muller (1999), narratives are "stories that relate the unfolding of events, human action" (p. 221). Thus, stories are important as people share their experiences with others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Josselson (2011) stated that "stories are played out in the context of other stories that may include societies, cultures, families or other intersecting plotlines in a person's life" (p. 224). Patton (2015) posited that "stories organize and shape experience and also tell others about our lives, relationships,

journeys, decisions, successes and failures" (p.128). Narrative inquiry stresses the importance of an individual's lived experiences, the importance of multiple perspectives, the existence of context-bound, constructed social realities, and, the researcher's impact on the research process (Josselson, 2011; Riessman, 2008; Sheperis, et al., 2010).

Narrative inquiry has a distinctive feature as people like to tell their stories. Thus, they do so in chronological order (Creswell, 2007). In addition, narratives have "structural properties of time and plot" (Muller, 1999, p. 223). According to Muller (1999), when people share their stories, they consist of events sequentially configured in specific patterns. Another characteristic of narrative inquiry is "its contextual focus" (p. 224). They are stories that individuals tell to "transmit or reflect cultural messages about the nature of reality" (p. 224). The stories also act as a guide for others to follow (Leavy, 2017; Squire et al., 2014). Researchers can generate narratives from journals, autobiographies, and transcripts of in-depth interviews (Delve, nd.; Riessman, 2008).

Therefore, I talked with several individuals who narrated their stories about navigating the leadership labyrinth to the presidency at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and their experiences as presidents. The researcher explored the meaning of individual experiences and how the researcher reduced these meanings. According to Holloway and Freshwater (2007 "narrative is linked not simply to individual identity but also to communities, cultures and nations. Gender, power and authority also affects the stories people tell" (p. 49). People construct their realities by narrating their stories (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), "narrative inquiry requires a great deal of openness and trust between participant and researcher" (p. 157). As a researcher, I actively listened to the participants as they shared their stories. According to Leavy (2017) "successful interview research is dependent on

building rapport with your participants through active listening" (p. 140), thereby the participants explained detailed stories about their experiences, especially concerning stereotypes and microaggression.

According to Josselson (2011), "narrative inquiry relies on thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and other frameworks" (p. 226). As a researcher, it is essential to do cross-case analysis or explore the differences "between people in their narrated experiences" (p. 227). Carol Gilligan, in her 1982 book "In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development," made a vociferous assertion that women's voices were necessary as masculinity was perverse in nearly all psychological narratives. According to Gilligan (1982), thus, in "claiming rights women claimed responsibility for themselves, so in exercising their reason they began to address issues of responsibility in social relationships" (p. 129). However, women were missing from discourses about themselves. Their voices were silent in subjects like psychology, sociology, and other social sciences (Belenky et al., 1986) and there was the potential for bias, and men conducted many studies. Thus, narratives from women have shaped history and changed "prevailing practices that were damaging to present and future generations" (p. 129). For many generations, women have struggled "to claim the power of their own minds" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 3). Holloway and Freshwater (2007), "narrative, whilst focusing on the subjective experience of narrators, also takes into account the bigger picture by exploring wider societal and cultural experiences" (pp. 42-43).

This study gave the participants an avenue for them to share their experiences amid challenges such as pervasive stereotypes or discrimination in academia, something some writers have referred to as the chilly climate (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). According to Maranto and Griffin, "exclusion (chilly climate) is influenced by demographic dissimilarity and the perception

of fairness and gender equality" (p. 139). Thus, women's voice is powerful when they share their stories (Belenky et al., 1986). The researcher interpreted and did credible construction of the narratives.

Participants

I used a purposive sampling technique to select participants for the study and collect data. According to Patton (2015), "purposive sampling is strategically selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated" (p. 265). According to Silverman (2017), "theoretical sampling and purposive sampling are often treated as synonyms" (p. 272). Along with this same note, Bryman (1988) postulated that theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study based on their relevance to the research question or theoretical position. In this study, the conceptual framework is from Eagly and Carli's book, *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about How Women Become Leaders,* published in 2007. In addition to the labyrinth metaphor, the study used intersectionality as postulated by Kimberle Crenshaw and Black Feminist Thought by Patricia Hill Collins.

Eagly and Wood's social role theory postulates that widely shared gender stereotypes develop from the gender division of labor that characterizes societies (Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to Eagly and Wood (2012), "sex differences and similarities in behavior reflect gender role belief that in turn represent people's perceptions of men's and women's social roles in society in which they live" (p. 459). There are many opportunities for men to participate in paid positions of higher power and status in many societies, which applies to higher education. There are many opportunities for men to participate in paid positions of higher power and status in many societies, and the same applies to higher education. Early institutions such as Harvard,

William and Mary, and Yale had two main components of power control: “a professional body giving instruction and resident in the college. The other was a governing body, non-resident, and often composed at least in part of laymen” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958, p. 29). These structures created pathways for men. As such, when coeducational institutions opened, men remained at the helm of the composition of colleges and universities. Social context plays a significant role in many societies as leadership roles are often ascribed to men. As such, I constructed the sample from the labyrinth framework and social role theory. In higher education, social roles still permeate and maintain gender division of roles, with men as leaders and women in subordinate positions. Thus, social role theory allows for non-traditional and traditional behaviors (Eagly & Woods, 2012), which continue to impact African American women in higher institutions of learning. Collins (2020), therefore, state “contemporary intersectionality and social theory are both in flux, with their meanings shaped by how varying social actors use them for varying purposes across heterogenous social contexts” (p. 120). It is important to note that intersectionality is closely related to Black feminism, as social structures have rendered African American women to subordination “within intersecting systems of oppression” (Collin, 2020, p. 127).

The respondents in this study were African American women as presidents of colleges and universities that are predominantly White institutions (PWIs). According to Mainah and Perkins (2015) “identifying aspects of women of color in higher education are black, African American, Latina, Hispanic, or African. These identifiers of women of color present a barrier to social inclusion” (p. 5) even though they are well educated and have the requisite qualifications and experiences for the position of president. Martin (2007) espoused that Eagly, and Carli’s use of the labyrinth is very appropriate to describe “a rigid barrier that blocks women from the top

echelons of power" (p. 1). Thus, African American women's pathways to the presidency and significant leadership roles are even more treacherous. In nearly every situation, African American women are all in their first presidencies and the first to serve in that capacity since their universities were founded.

According to Collins (2020), "African American social and political thought had long analyzed racial inequality as its primary focus, with an eye forward understanding it and dismantling it" (p. 127). Collins then asserts that racial inequality had three focus areas: race, the political organization that promoted slavery, and then racism as a system of power. Thus, neoliberalism also fetters challenges for Black feminism, intersectionality, and similar social justice in the academy (Collins, 2020). Intersectionality, therefore, captures the experiences of African American women as it relates to race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Sample Size

The sample size in qualitative research is contingent upon what the researcher is seeking to uncover, why the study is necessary, the resources and the availability of time, and what the researcher thinks will yield the study's credibility (Patton, 2015). The sample in this study consisted of four African American women college and university presidents in predominantly White institutions in the United States. I identified participants through Internet searches about African American women in higher education administration and institutions information on the respective institutions' websites. Once I identified the participants, I contacted them by sending them formal letters via email to solicit their participation in the study. According to Patton (2015), there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry as "sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 311). I selected participants from different

parts of the country. A Small sample size is a common strategy for selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2016).

In doing narrative inquiry, the small sample size is acceptable as "small samples that are not gathered to be representative" (Josselson, 2011, p. 238). Thus, the respondents were selected based on purposive sampling procedures. Purposive sampling is a technique that seeks out individuals, groups, or settings where the phenomenon or process being studied is most likely to occur (Janesick, 1994; Patton, 2016). The unique thing about narrative inquiry is that it "offers the possibility of exploring nuances and interrelationships among aspects of experience that the reader might apply to better understand other related situations" (Josselson, 2011, p. 239).

Participant Recruitment

Once the Institutional Review Board at St. Cloud State University approved the study. I worked earnestly to compile the participants' names. Next, I sent out solicitation letters (See Appendix A) and the consent form (See Appendix B) to potential participants. The letter briefly introduced the researcher, the purpose of the study, and details of the participation. Getting responses from potential participants was very difficult, so I made several telephone calls to follow up on the initial request. Finally, after several attempts, four presidents agreed to participate in the study. All the participants were given the consent form to sign, which they did and returned to the researcher.

Data Collection

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data once the transcripts are transcribed (Patton, 2015; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Silverman, 2017; Leavy, 2017). The human instrument was the most appropriate for this

study as I sought to explore African American women's experiences navigating the leadership labyrinth to the presidency and as presidents in predominantly White institutions. The instrument in this study was me as a researcher, a digital voice recorder, a writing material (pen/pencil), a notepad, a laptop computer, a self-reflexive journal, and a printer.

Data Collection Procedures

In this section, I discuss how I completed each part of the data collection. Specifically, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) research parameters. My role as the researcher in this study was data collection, analysis, and, interpretation as postulated by (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2015; Silverman, 2017). I collected data for this study, using in-depth interviews on a one-on-one basis (Patton, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Also with the participants' permission, the interviews were recorded. According to Patton (2015), "interviews are interventions" (p. 495). Thus, "a good interview evokes thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience not only to the interviewer but also to the interviewee" (p. 495). Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited that we live in a society where interviewing is ubiquitous, but qualitative interviewing is, greatly different from interviewing for a news article. According to Riessman (2008), "the goal in narrative interviewing is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements" (p. 23).

For this study, the collected data included interviews via Zoom and some online biographical materials. I designed the questions to encourage the participants to narrate their stories freely about navigating the challenges of getting to the presidency and their experiences as presidents. Getting a hold of research participants was challenging, as appointments were scheduled months ahead. The video conferencing platform Zoom recorded the interviews and

generated the transcripts of each interview. All the Zoom links were shared with me by the participants, allowing them to review the transcripts for accuracy.

Therefore, given predominantly open-ended questions, the participants were more willing to talk and interact verbally, bringing in individualized responses (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, Silverman, 2017). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) posited that qualitative interviewing is unique, as it is "nondirective, unstructured, non-standardized, and open-ended interviewing" (p. 77). Qualitative interviewing is also suitable for making life histories, as "life histories stand as a rich source of understanding in and of themselves" (p. 81). As a researcher, making life history captures the remarkable experiences in a person's life and that person's definition of those experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Open-ended questions create situations that result in unexpected or unanticipated answers by the interviewees (Burns, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Silverman, 2017; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). I conducted virtual face-to-face interviews with participants. Here, I made sure the interview's nature was consistent with the research questions, objectives, and purpose of the research. Interviews are verbal questioning (Josselson, 2011; Riessman, 2008). The purposeful interview helped the researcher get valid and reliable data relevant to the research questions and objectives (Kothari & Garg, 2015; Silverman, 2017). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted the interviews through the video conferencing platform Zoom. I also utilized documents such as newspaper articles and materials from the Internet about the participants (Josselson, 2011; Marshall & Rossman,, 2011, 2016; Sheperis et al., 2010).

I took field notes during each of the interviews. Field notes included summaries of the interviews, jottings, and analytic memoing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Corbin

and Strauss (2008), field notes usually contain some “conceptualization and analytical remarks” (p. 124). The interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes.

Interview Guide

I created an interview guide with “a list of questions or issues that are to be explored” (Patton, 1987, p. 111). The interview protocol is outlined in (See Appendix D). According to Patton (1978), an interview guide paves the way for a researcher to obtain similar information from participants by covering the same material. The interview guide helped me stay on track and not digress from pertinent questions (Silverman, 2017). According to Patton (2015), the “use of open-ended questions and probes yields in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (p. 14). Although the pertinent questions were modified with each interviewee, I needed to remain flexible and follow where the participants took me. The interview guide was developed based on the principles and metaphor identified by Eagly and Carli (2007a), which contributed to the women successfully navigating the labyrinth to the presidency and experiences based on intersectionality and Black feminist thought.

The questions for each interview were:

1. Tell me about your formal education.
2. How did you start your career in higher education?
4. What was your most significant experience on the job market?
5. Tell me about your experiences on your journey to becoming the president of this institution?
6. What has been your most significant experience as an administrator and after attaining the position of President?
7. What kind of advice will you give to someone coming up?
8. Who were your role models?

9. What additional comments would you like to make?

The researcher did further probe, asking participants about some of the challenges and barriers they experienced within the institutions.

Protection of Human Subjects

Before the study commenced, The State Cloud State University Office of Responsible Research Practices determined that this study was exempted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review. The IRB approval was granted before the study commenced. Also, as part of the research protocol, the researcher obtained informed consent from each participant. The research participants and their institutions were in no way identified, as I used pseudonyms and removed other identifiers, like names of the cities the institutions are located.

Data Analysis

It is important to note that the participants did the interviews by following the interview guide/protocol. I did not influence the order of the interview. This ensured that interviews had seamless flows that followed a logical pattern for the participants. The interviews were semi-structured and approximately 30 to 45 minutes in length. I interviewed all the participants once as they provided important details that answered the research questions.

Data analysis in qualitative research design "means breaking down the data and searching for codes and categories which are then reassembled to form themes" (Holloway, 1997, p. 43). Flick (2014) stated that "data analysis is the central step in qualitative research. Whatever the data are, it is their analysis that, decisively forms the outcome of the research" (p. 3). Indeed, ongoing data analysis keeps the researcher focused and avoids repetition so that essential papers do not overwhelm the researcher. Data collection and analysis are simultaneous qualitative research activities (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; 2015; Leavy, 2017). Analysis usually begins with

the first interview, being that the participants responded to semi-structured questions; initial data analysis led to refinement or reformation of the questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). An analysis is an interactive process that allows the investigator to produce trustworthy findings. According to Sheperis et al. (2010), in doing narrative inquiry "analysis is conducted primarily by the researcher with continual input from research participants" (p. 160).

Marshall and Rossman (2016) note that the analysis of data falls "into seven phases: organizing the data, immersions in the data, generating case summaries and possible categories and themes, coding the data, offering interpretations through analytic memos, searching for alternative understandings and writing the report" (p. 217). Organizing the data is significant as the researchers need to put materials in a well-structured way. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest that the researcher can write on note cards to quickly identify the data and "perform the minor editing necessary to make field notes retrievable" (p. 217). Dealing with a massive pile of data can be time-consuming and frustrating; therefore, organizing the data to access what you are looking for easily.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), "there is no substitute for intimate engagement with your data" (p. 217). As a researcher, I spent considerable time reading through the data (Leavy, 2017). Patton (2015) notes that the challenge in doing qualitative analysis involves reducing the volume of raw information to identify "significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (p. 521). Patton (2015) also underscores that qualitative reporting is descriptive, primarily as the researcher seeks to "discover common themes through cross-case analysis" (p. 551).

Coding the Data

Patton (2015) recommends that after interviews, the researcher transcribes the transcripts and then seeks to identify codes and categories, classify, and label emerging patterns in the data. As a researcher, I coded the data to identify categories, themes, and patterns (Roulston, 2014). Coding the data is usually "informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meaning made explicit by the participants" (Merrian, 1998, p. 179). Thus, "coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects" (Merrian & Tisdell, 2016, p. 199) of the data. Coding is adding meaning to attributes (codes). Roulston (2014) reiterates this, that "researchers generate assertions about topics by reassembling and recognizing the data, codes, categories or stories" (p. 305). According to Merrian and Tisdell (2016), the researcher begins by doing open coding "focusing on the patterns and insights related to the purpose and questions, guided by the theoretical frame" (p. 208). Marshall and Rossman (2016) reiterate that there are theory-generated codes and in vivo codes. Marshall and Rossman state, "In vivo codes emerge from the actual data as they are collected (p. 218).

According to Marshall and Rossman, researchers must question the data and reflect on the conceptual framework. Once I immersed myself in the data, I sought to generate "names and labels for the phenomena identified" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 222). Here open coding took place (Saldana, 2009). According to Saldana (2009), coding enables the researcher to "organize and group similarly coded data into categories" (p. 8). Open coding is the initial process. It involves "the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 62), as I did the initial coding I was able to see the patterns. I

immersed myself in the data read the transcripts line by line, and came up with categories and themes.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), “writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights are valuable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative” (p. 221). In addition, memos link coding and interpretation and document “impressions, ideas, and emerging understandings” (Leavy, 2017, p. 152).

According to Sheperis et al. (2010), besides focusing on the interviews, “narrative researchers may both examine and create many texts (or data), such as journal entries, field notes, and photographs” (p. 158). In addition, some participants may tell their stories by letters or emails. The documents are usually “produced spontaneously, at the request of a researcher or in collaboration with the researcher” (p. 158). Sheperis and colleagues stated that some participants might have artifacts that hold value to them and to which they have meaning that is used to support their experiences. As a researcher, “any artifacts participants choose to provide will help” (ibid) in making me gain a greater understanding of their experiences. Unfortunately, none of the participants in the study provided artifacts.

In this study, I included writing field notes, and memos, transcribing the interviews, reviewing the transcripts, and coding them. It is suitable for the researcher to remember that analysis is a process that generates, develops, and verifies concepts. The researcher can acquire the necessary data for the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Josselson, 2011; Roulston, 2014). I analyzed the interview transcripts, life history profiles, and some documents of participants on the Internet after my first interview, and the process of analyzing the transcripts continued for all other participants.

Trustworthiness

The researcher ensured Trustworthiness to eventually bring about credibility and subsequently, transferability, dependability, and conformability. The proponents of trustworthiness criteria in qualitative research were Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (Schwandt, 2015). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the "criteria for trustworthiness are internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity" (p. 218). Lincoln and Guba suggested that credibility was consistent with internal validity, transferability was compatible with external validity; dependability was synonymous reliability, and confirmability was analog to objectivity as quantitative researcher do in their research.

The use of terms trustworthiness and authenticity are now widely used by qualitative researchers (Patton, 2015). According to Holloway (1997), credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are elements of the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Trustworthiness includes specific criteria that this researcher met so that people can judge the research findings as credible. According to Booth et al. (2008), "without trustworthy published research, we all would be locked in the opinions of the moment, prisoners of what we alone experience or dupes to whatever we're told" (p. 10).

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility refers to the extent to which findings and interpretation reflect the participant's point of view. Credibility is parallel to internal validity. Marshall and Rossman (2016), therefore, assert that "the credibility/believability of a qualitative study that aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group, or a pattern of interaction will rest on its validity" (p. 261). Marshall and Rossman also state that the researcher should state the study's parameters by "placing boundaries around and limitations

on the study" (p. 261). For this study, the parameters are African American women serving as presidents in predominantly White institutions.

Transferability

Transferability is parallel to external validity. Since it is difficult to determine the study's external validity, this study sought to achieve transferability through a thick description of quotations from transcripts. As a researcher, I provided the relevant data to make transferability judgments attainable by any person desiring to transfer or replicate the findings of this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2016). It is also important to note that the "aim of narrative research is not to generalize" (Josselson, 2011, p. 238) as the sample size is generally small. Marshall and Rossman (2016) postulate that "the burden of demonstrating that a set of findings applies to another context rests more with another researcher who would make that transfer than with the original researcher" (p. 261). However, by using thick descriptions, especially with extended quotations, another researcher can replicate the details to similar participants.

Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is a process of confirming and measuring the accuracy of the data garnered in the study. Two other techniques included maintaining a reflexive journal and an audit trail of the process. In the reflexive journal, I had the researcher's feelings and preconceptions. I maintained the audit trail to document the study's various aspects, such as the letter of solicitation to participants, consent forms, and transcripts.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is parallel to the conventional criterion of reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), for women of color, "there can be no validity without reliability and subsequently no credibility without

dependability" (p. 316). Dependability shows the process of the inquiry. Thus, as the researcher, I described the changes in the settings and how these changes may impact the conclusions of the study. I tried to achieve dependability by providing traceable and logical documentation by maintaining an audit trail of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to using two or more sources to comprehensively picture a fixed reference point (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011, 2016; Padgett, 1998). In this study, I used data triangulation, more than one data source, methodological triangulation, and multiple methods or perspectives to study a single topic (Padgett, 1998; Silverman, 2017). Using a different investigator is advisable, but the researcher did not use another investigator in this study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), researchers can use data from different sources to "coordinate, elaborate, or illuminate the research" (p. 267). However, according to Sheperis et al. (2010), narrative researchers, to a greater extent, "rely heavily on self-reporting from informants and must trust that informants are being honest with them to preserve the research relationship" (p. 159). Therefore, I still searched the Internet for documents about each participant.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is the second technique helpful in establishing credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), peer debriefing "is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and to explore aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). I worked with one of my colleagues to examine the transcripts. This process was mentioned in the informed consent and

check for codes that I arrived at after my coding exercise. I incorporated the feedback into my analysis as I worked on my final report.

Member Check

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define member check as "whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake holding groups from whom data were originally collected" (p. 314). Zoom made it very easy for the transcription of transcripts. All the interviews were conducted on the participants' Zoom platform so they had access to the transcripts. The video conferencing platform Zoom made it easy for the interviews to be recorded and transcripts created. The participants had access to the transcripts and went through them before sending them to me. The participants verified the accuracy of the transcripts. Thus, the participants were able to verify and confirm the data's accuracy. Another form of member checking was that I asked the interviewees if they understood my questions, and, I actively listened to them during the interviews. A member check is beneficial in qualitative research as any participant feedback will help control my preconceived notions as a researcher.

Ethics

Before conducting this study, I applied for approval through my institution's Institutional Review Board. Once the Institutional Review Board approved my research topic, I earnestly began the study. It is also required to maintain the confidentiality of participants' information. Therefore, I used pseudonyms in the final report of my study. For IRB, it is not just confidentiality; also respect, reduction of harm, informed consent, etc. Each participant in this study received the informed consent form that outlined my research's purpose and expectations. Thus, I also explained to the participants that their participation was voluntary, and they could

choose to stop participating at any point in the study without penalty or consequences. However, I remained very attentive to any possible unintentional ethical errors that could negatively affect the participants' professional and personal lives.

Conclusion

In this study, I employed a narrative inquiry methodology as postulated by (Creswell, 1998; Josselson, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 1999, 2011, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Muller, 1999; Roulston, 2014; Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010; Silverman, 2017) to explore women of color leadership pathways to and while as presidents in higher education. In addition, the study focused on African American women as presidents in colleges and universities at predominantly White institutions. Thus, the use of qualitative research methods, specifically narrative inquiry; and data analysis, helped to explore the experiences of African American women along their pathways and as presidents at their institutions.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

The purpose of chapter four is to discuss my findings and common themes related to the research questions among the participants. The chapter begins by describing the basic characteristics of each participant. Next, I interviewed four participants about their ideas and stories about navigating challenges as they sought the presidency of their institutions. Each of the participants holds a doctorate. This narrative inquiry involved 4 participants. The participants were presidents of colleges and universities. In-depth semi-structured narrative interviews lasted from 30 – 45 minutes. All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

The following questions guided the research:

1. How have African American women navigated the administrative labyrinth to the presidency of colleges and universities?
2. How have race and gender affected African American women's pathways to their institution's presidency?

Data Analysis

Table. 4.1

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	**Age Range**	**Marital Status**	**Qualification**	**Years in Higher Education**
Dr. Aminata Peters	55-60	Married	Ph.D.	22
Dr. Mariama Kamara	60-65	Married	Ph.D.	26

Dr. Saran Kabba	60-65	Single	Ed.D.	24
Dr. Sebatu Kposowa	60-65	Married	Ph.D.	32

All the participants have doctorate degree. Each expressed their willingness to be part of the study. All the participants have spent many years in higher education. All the participants in this study identify as African American women..

Participant Summaries

Dr. Aminata Peters

Dr. Aminata Peters works at a two-year community college in a Midwestern state. She has been in higher education for a long time and has been president of this particular college for eight years. Dr. Aminata Peters has a bachelor's degree from Northern Illinois University in the Sociology of health and aging. In addition, she has a master's and a Ph.D. in child and adolescent development. Dr. Aminata Peters stated that she saw her time in higher education as an accident. She had hoped to go into social work, which she did at some level. However, she worked in a group home for a year and realized that the health and human services did not suit her. She then returned to school and got a master's degree in special education on the advice of one of her mentors. With this, she applied for a graduate assistantship in student life and housing, where she fell in love with student affairs and higher education as a career. Dr. Aminata Peters has held other professional appointments, such as associate vice president for student services and assistant vice president for judicial affairs and division planning.

Dr. Mariama Kamara

Dr. Mariama Kamara is the president of a private university on the country's east coast. Primarily she went through the academic rank from assistant professor to full professor. She described herself as a "lifer in higher education." Dr. Mariama Kamara stated that her journey is a trajectory of academia and administration. She is married, has two adult children, and her husband lives in another state. Dr. Mariama Kamara stated that she has a lot of experience in academia as she taught many classes, and published many articles and books. She has secured significant grants, and fundraising and has a vast array of diverse experience. She is the first African American person to lead her university. Before this, she was engaged in student life as an associate dean and eventually served as senior associate dean for student and academic excellence. She has had a robust clinical practice, providing leadership development, education, and training for various companies and institutions. Dr. Mariama Kamara is an active member of several national volunteer leadership organizations. She also serves as a board member of alum associations.

Dr. Saran Kabba

Dr. Saran Kabba is the president of a four-year college in the Midwest. She has been in higher education for many years. After getting her baccalaureate degree in teaching through a full scholarship, she decided to teach at K-12 to give back to her community. Once she finished her teaching time, she pursued a master's degree in education and later enrolled in education and subsequently for her Ph.D. Dr. Saran Kabba explained that while she worked at a community college, the institution grew exponentially from a two-year college to a master's degree awarding and granting institution. She explained that she has been president at her current college for five years. Dr. Saran Kabba was a senior executive leader and served as president at another college

for three years. She was also vice president for student affairs and enrollment management. Dr. Saran Kabba explained that her pathway to becoming president was nontraditional and traditional as she also served as campus operations officer/dean of student development and member of faculty.

Dr. Sebatu Kposowa

Dr. Sebatu Kposowa is president of a four-year private college on the west coast. She has been in higher education for thirty-two years now. She is a trained psychologist and has worked in Student life for a considerable time. She was vice president of student affairs, vice president of student life, and vice president of institutional equity and diversity. Dr. Sebatu Kposowa explained that her pathway to the presidency is unique as she comes from the administrative side and has never taught courses at the college or university levels. She, however, mentioned that she always aspired to be a president as she has good acumen for leadership. Dr. Kposowa described herself as the "first in many ways at her institution. The first person of color, the first woman of color, a first African American woman, and first lesbian to be president."

Categories and Themes

Coding helps to put aside "preconceived notions about what the researcher expects to find in the research and letting the data interpretation of it guide analysis" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 160). According to Corbin and Strauss (2015) categories are the "higher level concepts under which analysts group lower-level concepts that then become its subcategories. Categories are sometimes referred to as themes" (p. 220). Additionally, Roulston (2014) stated that

> qualitative researchers use a wide range of methods to represent data, including themes supported by direct quotations from interview transcripts, descriptions and models of processes that may include diagrams and visual representations of key

concepts and narratives that represent participants' experiences and perspectives. (p. 305).

I identified many themes that describe the participants' experiences in navigating the administrative labyrinth to the presidency of a college or university. Major themes emerged from the participants' experiences:

Breaking with traditions.

The desire for success.

Personal and professional support.

The desire to be president.

Finding one's way through the labyrinth.

Breaking with Traditions

Participants explained that they did not follow the traditional pathways to become presidents. Instead, it was considered a leap of faith into the unknown.

Non-Traditional Routes

The traditional route by which presidents obtain their positions begins with a faculty position, usually as an assistant professor, associate professor, or professor, and moves through the ranks of Department Chair, Dean, and then Provost. However, three participants expressed that they followed the nontraditional route to becoming president.

President Dr. Aminata Peters shared the following:

> I fell in love with student affairs and higher education as a career. I made up my mind not to go back into social services and wanted to stay in higher education particularly, student affairs. Once I left my job as resident director, I went back to university to pursue my masters and Ph.D. On the completion of my Ph.D.,

> I accepted a job as an associate vice president of student affairs. Until I was laid off. I was able to find another college to work as the vice president of student affairs. This gave me the opportunity to work at a community college or even consider working at a community college, and it was the best thing that ever happened to my professional career.

Dr. Saran Kabba explained that she got her baccalaureate degree on a teaching scholarship that paid an entire ride at one of the state universities. Once she finished, she had to give back to the community by working for a year. “I worked in the K-12 in Illinois. Afterward, I took many jobs in higher education. At one of the colleges where I worked, I utilized the tuition reimbursement system to pay for that higher education opportunity.”

Dr. Saran Kabba also explained that she decided to get a doctorate: “In higher education, it is good to take a progressive approach and develop your career. So, I enrolled for a Ph.D., I believe it was a couple of times in the 1990s and finally in the early 2000s. It was difficult for me to start my Ph.D. as I kept getting promoted into these very high-level positions, and because of the duties of the jobs, I did not have time to start my doctorate.”

In the case of Dr. Sebatu Kposowa, she explained:

> It was a little bit of an accident as these things are often are as I did not think to be in higher education, but when I was getting ready to do my pre-doctoral internship, which is the equivalent of a medical residency you do when preparing to be a psychologist. I realized I had an interest in working with college-age students and the best place to do that was at a college counseling center at a university or college campus, so I was never thinking at all but I knew the population that I wanted to work with and so I did my pre-counseling internship at the Bo University at their counseling center and I loved it so I

pursued employment at a counseling center when I was done with my Ph.D. And my My first job was at the University of Bo at their counseling center, and I continued To love being on a college campus, and so 32 years later, I still have.

The Desire for Success

The participants shared their stories about self-motivation and support they received from people to succeed in academia**.**

Extra Effort or Work Harder

Dr. Aminata Peters stated that she has always been a high performer in higher education:

I got this from a lot of notifications from higher education leaders, presidents and chancellors who were my bosses. And they tended to promote me very quickly because of the way I demonstrated my skills. So, I have to tell you that my career just went at a high pace, very high pace I could say.

She further explained that the credentials will get you into the door, but your experience will get you through the door and to whatever next step that you need. Dr. Aminata Peters also explained that as women of color, "we still have to be better than who we are. Still have to make sure we come absolutely prepared." She further recounted:

And so, I think it is very important, which you know someone will say that not really right or that's not fair, but it is what it is, and I am a big believer that I would rather have you know the experiences and skills than I don't need them or do not have them. Right so for me, that was why it was important for me to go out and get my Ph.D. And there are some, you know white men, particularly those who are presidents, who do not have their; am don't require a doctorate but I don't want to run that risk.

President Sebatu Kposowa shared the following:

> You know in general especially for different presidential searches it is always a little bit difficult as a minority am going for a position that has been traditionally held by folks of a particular gender, or a particular race, because people don't know or not used to interact with people that do not fit a particular stereotype. I am also more of a unicorn because I do not come from the academic side of the house, I come from student affairs side of the house and so just another way my credentials, my experiences do not match the traditional path so again something that I am accustomed to. It is not something that I necessarily like but you know you grow with a scare and use it to your advantage, and I think that was what I was able to do in securing this position.

For all four participants, even though senior administrators or colleagues did not question their credentials openly, they had to undertake additional responsibilities. They, therefore, worked harder than people of the dominant culture.

Personal and Professional Role Models

Mentoring was significant to the participants as they moved along their pathways to and within higher education specifically in predominantly White institutions.

Personal Mentors/Role Models

All the respondents reported having mentors in their private lives who motivated them to work harder and be resolute. They all explained their parents' pivotal roles in encouraging them to acquire education and leap into the journey of faith. All the research participants expressed that they were very grateful to their family members for their support during their academic journey. The concept of the strong Black woman was ingrained very early into their minds as all the participants demonstrated strength, perseverance, self-reliance, caretaking, and self-care

(Woods, 2013). All the participants shared their unique experiences, connotative of strength, and utter determination to succeed in higher education.

Dr. Aminata Peters explained that in her journey to be president, she had personal and professional role models. She had this to say:

> First and foremost, my role model is my mother. I am a child of a single mother. In fact, I am about to do a speech tonight for students who are graduating with GED. My mother dropped out of high school because she had me. She was a young parent. But then when I was eight years old, she went back to get her GED and then ultimately went back and got her baccalaureate degree, so was my role model for me because I learned from her experience that it doesn't matter what your circumstances are you can still rise above it and someone who set a goal made it happen. So first and foremost that is my biggest role model and then along the way, there were a lot of people that my mother introduced me to. Well kind of these quiet leaders and then you didn't really know it until later that you know that they had accomplished a great deal in their lives. I remember Dr. John Kposowai., that was the first time I heard about a doctor and a black woman together that wasn't a medical doctor, so, understanding Dr. John Kposowai as a black woman with a Ph.D. okay, and so just hearing these folks and having these people around me it was gratifying.

Dr. Mariama Kamara talked about role models in her family:

> Yeah, I just want you to know, I came from an educated family. My mother was a K-12 educator and my father that I mentioned with the MSW (Master of Social Work) (Sic), was brilliant, he went to college at age 14. But his sister was the first African American woman to get her Ph.D. in our

history and spent the majority of her career at Virginia Commonwealth University, but was affiliated with a variety of universities.

Dr. Saran Kabba explained a different experience that she had:

> Well, I was a first-generation college student. The first in my family to go to college and seek higher education. I grew up in a household where my parents were not educated so most of the stuff I learned to do on my own. So, I just continue to do things on my own. You know, I had the gift of building relationships and communicating well with people and I drew on that experience rather than seeking role models or having anyone to mentor me.

Dr. Sebatu Kposowa spoke highly of her parents and stated that she learned many good things from them as she recounted:

> My parents, I was very blessed. My mom and my dad, they were incredible role models, incredible people. My mom has passed, my dad is still with us. They, none of them attended a college but we always knew we were going to attend college, because they supported us doing that. They had an incredible work ethic. I learned a lot about working and caring for others and doing good job, having provide working with others. They both were in supervisory roles, so I learned how to manage people, and how you do that in ways that are respectful and supportive and they were incredible people, good moral compass, good values so by far the most influential people in my life were my parents.

Professional Mentors/Role Models

Studies show the significance of mentors in organizations, and individuals have benefited from such relationships as they desire to build and advance their careers. Indeed, having supportive colleagues or senior administrators could be essential to the growth of young

administrators. Thus, many people desire to follow the paths of their role models. All 4 participants spoke about their mentors when they started working in higher education. Dr. Aminata Peters said, “when I got into higher education, I had mentors when I was director and a dean.” Dr. Aminata Peters explained, that in some cases, men could motivate women of color to shoot for higher heights. She described an example of her professional mentoring experience by saying,

> My vice president of student affairs, was the one who, when I was seeing things very linearly right and it was really nice from a gender perspective, he kind of let me see how males see things differently, you know, whereas women may not. You know there are studies out there, that say, you know, if we see a job description, it says you have to have these ten things. As a woman, we feel like we have to have all ten. And men are tended to be if it says ten, a man might say, well I have six things, I’m good and they will apply anyway. And it took Dr. Kabia, when I was applying for jobs at the time. I will never forget that. At the time, I was an assistant dean of students. Dr. Kabia told me, to stop looking at the title, look at the job isn’t a job that you can do; is it a job you are qualified for or the job that you want to do? If the answer is yes, then apply and let them decide whether or not you know that. Dr. Kabia was indeed a major mentor and supporter of mine.

Dr. Aminata Peters further explained that she also had a great female role model who continuously motivated her and told her to be ready for career advancement by being determined to rise to the task. She recounted:

> When I got to this college, I had a vice chancellor who was in my corner, and she also knew that living on the West Coast was not just for me personally. And so, she

> was really trying to encourage me to move on, and she was the one knowing I was from the Midwest who put the application to me to serve as president. I was like, no no, I am not ready, I have only been.. you know, vice president, assistant vice president for a couple of years. Give me a couple more years before I can apply for the presidency, and she was like no don't tell yourself no. If there is got to be a no, let them tell you no. Don't tell yourself, no and so because of her, I dug my heels and didn't apply. All of a sudden, I don't remember how much time had passed the job came open again, and she goes Aminata this job, you need to apply for. And I applied and ultimately got it.

Dr. Mariama Kamara was very gracious to her mentors in her professional career and saw them as motivators in her career path. Dr. Sebatu Kposowa explained that having mentors was very significant:

> I have had quite a few African American mentors. I have had White mentors too, but Definitely African American women mentors, you know just having that opportunity to talk with people who have a common understanding, common history, and common culture. I think that is absolutely critical. You don't do this job by yourself, you know and there is only one of you, there is no one out but the president. You don't have people you can talk to about things, because you can't just talk to people. So having those mentors and those relationships and cultivating those relationships. Giving back. I try to help. You know when you called and said can you talk about this, I said yes. You know that is what you have to do. You have to give back to other African Americans. I want you to get your Ed.D. because you will take that and become an administrator and there will be more of us in the pipeline and available. So you have to both seek out the mentorship and then give back.

The Desire to be President

All 4 participants expressed that they aspired to become presidents from the early onset but they needed to figure out the route to take. Dr. Saran Kabba explained that it was challenging being a president or navigating the way to the presidency. She narrated, “as a president, you have to be awake at the moment all the time, I think that’s the downside of being a president because the job starts and it never ends, and trying to find work-life balance in a presidency today is a challenge beyond achievable.” In the case of Dr. Aminata Peters, she stressed the importance of networking and mentoring and that she did all she could to get a terminal degree.

Dr. Mariama Kamara, in a desire to become president was able to get diverse experiences. She explained, “I also built up a diversity of expertise, such as fundraising, finances, understanding human and resource management, all of those types of things, and then having a diversity of people as role models and mentors.” Dr. Mariama Kamara also explained “I know what it’s like to teach in the classroom. I have published articles and published books. I get on the research side very well.”

Dr. Sebatu Kposowa explained:

> Well, you know, I had the aspirations of becoming a president for quite some time. I had held a lot of leadership roles, and I felt as so, I had a good acumen for leadership and had some decent successes, and you know I was vice president, so I started thinking about doing. I want to do that thing that is next which is to be president. So in 2007, I competed for and was awarded the American Council on Education fellowship which is a year-long apprenticeship program through ACE where you shadow a university president or chancellor for a year and it is specifically for people in higher education

> who are already in a leadership role and have the aspirations for the presidency. So really, it's preparing you to be a president. So, I did that. After doing that I realized that I no longer wanted to be a president. I think I already have a better job, I think I will stay in my vice presidency in student life and not the presidency. So, I kind of put it away, the thought of being a president but it was never too far.

Finding One's Way Through the Labyrinth

The pathways to and within higher education were connotative of the labyrinth, very much convoluted as many factors came into play to get to the position of president.

Advice for People of Color Aspiring to be Presidents

All 4 participants in this study provided salient advice to people of color who wish to become presidents of colleges and universities.

Dr. Saran Kabba said:

> The evidence of sitting in this seat as an African American woman means that anyone coming behind me is achievable, all you have to do is to manage your career and pay attention to the jobs that you take. Managing your career and experience that you seek and doing great work that really makes a difference. Have a large-scale impact, not only in your classroom, it has to be outside and more impactful across the institution.

Dr. Saran Kabba, further explained that being that universities and colleges have substructures you have to be in the conversation very early, "where people notice you, you have to manage your career." She further explained:

> Many presidents start very successfully being faculty first. In fact, faculty respect presidents more who have faculty experience so I think if someone wants

> to be president one day and start as a faculty. Then I would say get to know the institution. Take jobs in student affairs, take jobs in academic affairs, learn how to manage budgets, I think right now the financial part of it. Presidents' jobs are probably more prevalent than anything else, and the reason why I say that is you can delegate your academic affairs and student affairs roles to others who are experts or content experts or subject matter experts. But when you look at the balance sheet and all of the finances within the college or university, you have to be in-depth in that area. I think that presidents make their biggest mistakes by allowing the CFO to take total control of the books and not knowing what's going on. Because you are fiduciary, you have a fiduciary responsibility to make sure that everything goes on in this institution is under your control. And when you don't have control over everything in the institution, and I do not mean control in a bad way, but I mean control from a piece of knowledge and skill set way, meaning that nothing gets past you.

Dr. Mariama Kamara explained that she believed that there was another metaphor that African American women usually deal with, the "Glass Cliff." She explained that "when women and minorities get jobs, sometimes the organization is in crisis and it's about to shatter into a cliff. It is like putting them on top of a cliff." According to her, "my most significant experience is leading an organization during the crisis, and what I call the pandemic era, and there are lots of things that happen. How do you lead an organization through COVID-19?" Dr. Mariama Kamara further explained: "How do you have an organization grapple with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion because of the things such as George Floyd and the redefining business model of higher education especially as it relates to tuition-dependent schools."

I have been in situations like this. I had to lead a major curriculum redesign so there had never been a curriculum. When I got to XYZ university, they had three independent business schools and they merged them into one college of business and I was the dean. So, the school that I led was on the public side, and on the private side, I had to build up. Women of color have to be creative and ready for the world with less support.

Dr. Sebatu Kposowa shared the following:

> A person of color. A Black person, be clear on the type of institution you want to look at. I for one would not look at HBCU. I have only worked at PWIs-Predominantly White Institutions. That is my choice. If you are an African American person and work at PWIs you have to be facile in navigating the waters of what looks like or feel like. You cannot come in and expect the institution is going to you knee bend like or transform to you, that doesn't just happen. Because an institution is an institution and things are institutionalized, if you are someone who somehow has thin skin on that or has a knee for that type of bending to the institution to support you as a black person, you are not going to last very long. I often times think about myself as very bicultural, so I understand how to move in white culture, white institutional culture without loosing who I am. But I also know that I would lose people if I am not cognizant of how to be successful in a Predominantly White Institution. So, examining that and be clear, where you want to work. what are you expecting, what are you needing, and then secondarily have mentors?

Challenges African American Women Experience

Thus, African American women experience significant challenges along their pathways.

WEPAN's (Women in Engineering ProActive Network) framework for promoting gender equity suggests that institutions should help develop women to be at the helm of their institutions. One of the frames is "Equip the Woman/Prepare Women for Success;" here, the goal is to minimize differences in expertise, academic, and business socialization between women and men. Thus, all the participants worked on their own before the positions. None of the women received leadership training from the universities they are working at. Dr. Aminata Peters explained that dealing with stereotypes was challenging for women of color. There is usually consternation from people:

> As a woman, as a person of color, as a black woman, you know that intersectionality comes into place. I often joke, when I first got here and people would ask like oh you are the president, and I would always say what's the Oh!, what's the surprise? Is it because I'm a woman; is it because I'm black? You know what is it and you know for some people, I look younger than I am and so, therefore, is it that what is it, you know, but what I can always be confident in, is being able to say, but here are my credentials, here are my experiences, here are the things that I've done so that if anyone ever wanted to question me. Because I am a true believer that I'm going to get questioned a lot more then, what them, my white male counterparts right or wrong or indifferently, it is the the reality that it is, and I think that unless and until things change in this country. It's always going to be a double standard, and so I think it's just important to come with your "A" game, I know that when I interview people for positions, it's really interesting to see that it's usually the people of color or the women who really come, you know, with their "A" game and, unfortunately sometimes people in the majority, which happens to sometimes be white men very skilled or whatever, but for whatever

> reason, they are so used to socializing. To not have to say all of the wonderful things that they have done because it's just a given, whereas women and people of color were used to having to explain ourselves to people and so that's not, but you have to come and so actually sometimes it bothers me when a woman or person of color comes to the interview and they are not prepared, I'm like, really you know. Like we can't, we have to be better and maybe I would say too, so like I think we have to surround ourselves with all kinds of people, as I say, you know my mentors they weren't all women.

Women of color aspiring to become president must deal with stereotypes such as not being very capable to do the job of a president. Thus, the expectations within and outside of the university are very high.

All the participants noted that they always have to prove themselves capable of doing the president's job. Dr. Aminata Peters stated

> Yes, some things have changed but a lot of things have not, and I still believe that , particularly for women of color. We still have to be better than others. We still have to make sure we come absolutely prepared. And so, I think it is very important. I am a big believer that I would rather have you know the experiences and skills and that I do not need them than to need them and I do not have them. Right so for me, that was why it was important for me to go out and get my Ph.D. And there are some you know white men, particularly who are presidents (of colleges or universities) who don't have their doctorates, right, but I don't have that luxury, so yes.

The number of women leading institutions of higher learning has increased, but males still dominate the positions of chancellor, board of regents, and board of trustees. Therefore, men

still have tremendous power and control. Some women sometimes face challenges as they do not have ultimate power and control. Dr. Aminata Peters explained this in the excerpt below:

> Sometimes it is important to know your why, why you want to be president, and why you want to be the senior leader, because, I believe that there are some people who have had challenges. In the presidential space, because I believe that there, why is faulty. I think that there are some people who want to be president because they want to be the boss, they want to be in charge. And I hate to break it to a lot of people in many, many ways yes, you are the boss, but in a lot of ways, particularly in places where you have unionized environments, you have political pressures. You are not necessarily as boss as you think, you are right, and so people who have had challenges, when you see people who have struggled in the presidency. It is because they are trying to maintain this absolute level of authority that they may not have to depend on the structure of their institution. So, you got to know your why, so if you are someone who absolutely wants and needs to be the final say, end of the story. Then, make sure you pick your college very carefully so I will give an example of my last institution. That I was a president at, yes, I was a president at my institution, but we were within a system where the Chancellor had the final say, so there was only so much money, I had leftover it went back to the system. When I got ready to hire people, I needed to run it through that chancellor, that right, and so, for me, as a new president, as someone who was still feeling like they were relatively new. That didn't bother me so much because it allowed me time to do some other things, whereas I had other colleagues who struggled with that. But now here I'm in a place where I get to decide on my budget, I get to hire whom I want to hire, I get to have those kinds of things and at the end of the year, you know we

> have money left over, we get to keep it, and I get to decide what happens. There are still some things that I don't have ultimate control over because I'm part of a state system. So, again my hope these are just examples of understanding of what. I am not caught in being able to say I am the final authority per se, so understanding why, for me, I want to be able to impact the lives of our students and our employees that we serve. And so, being able to do whatever, I need to do to be able to do that and to position myself, so that I can be a change agent for those folks, that my why. It's not power right and I don't even necessarily say that the desire for power is a negative thing so it's not designed to be pejorative in any way, but just to know what your why is.

Many universities and colleges only sometimes prepare individuals for the presidency as they hire people who have the requisite credentials from pools of qualified candidates. Dr. Saran Kabba explained that individuals have to undertake extra training on their own, which many universities do not pay for. She further explained that "it becomes an extra burden for many African American women as they have to be stellar candidates for them to be even considered for the jobs advertised." Dr. Mariama Kamara explained that one of the biggest challenges she had to deal with was keeping her university out of the financial woes during COVID-19. She explained:

> The organizations are in crisis and it's about to shatter into pieces. It's like putting minority women off a cliff, so in each of my jobs. There probably have been my three last jobs. My significant administrative ones. There have been different challenges that I had to navigate, the first one was that I had to lead a major curriculum redesign, so there had never been a curriculum, we designed before and it was important for the university for the College of Business. And for the donor, we have an innovative

state-of-the-art curriculum, so I deleted my major curriculum design and change how students came to the Business school. And so, that was a really big deal. The second kind of big thing challenge I had to lead was when I got to Momajo University, Momajo University has three independent business schools. And they merged them into one College of Business and I was dean of the school of applied economics and management. And how has a consortium of three business schools worked together on a campus especially. I don't know if you know it about Momajo University. Momajo University is both public and private, so the school that I led was on the public side and the private side I had to build up the undergraduate, in the undergraduate side was a business, on the graduate side was applied economics, so the complexity of managing a merger and a very complex ecosystem. So that was the second challenge, and then the third challenge was I talked about leading my next university, a small tuition-dependent college as it rebrands and rebuilds itself in the pandemic era.

Dr. Kamara shared the following about leadership at colleges and universities:

All leaders confront challenges but they are the various Es that are so important to get you through those challenges. You asked about my education pedigree so, in your dissertation, you will look at the formal training and the informal training so the first E is education. I talked about what expertise, you need to build along the way, as you go up the ladder and I've always been committed to learning and building a set of expertise. The third one is Experience, I very seldom say no, because experience helps you learn, so I served on the presidential search committee for ….. University. I led searches when the provost called, I did some training programs, and I raised my hand a lot, so I can

have experience. The next E, that I talked about is Execution Capability, if you want to work your way out to the pathway of the presidency, you have to be visionary, but you have to be also able to get things done, implement a strategy, project management and all those types of things. The next is E is Emotional Intelligence. Women leaders, and especially African American women leaders have to know how to be emotionally intelligent. How to get along with different people, how to navigate power and politics. And then, finally, knowing what you want your executive presence to be, when you come into a room, and when you're not in the room. How do you want people to experience you and what do they want to say about your executive presence, your character, your persona, those type of things, and how you lead with integrity?

In discussing her experiences with stereotypes on campuses, Dr. Sebatu Kposowa explained that:

Oh! of course. All the time and you know from most time that experience comes from a place of ignorance, unexamined biases that people have. You know I always weigh if I want to intervene or not I will give you a quick example of how it happened. Very early on just after I was appointed and I was talking to the chair of our board, basically, he is my boss, and after I was appointed. Several of the board members had said, we should form a committee, so we can mentor and provide counsel to Sebatu as a new president, especially regarding trends and issues within higher education. Now our board like most boards is made up of businesspeople. I have been in higher education for 32 years, I am fully aware of trends in higher education, my whole entire career, so I was not going to get very much from people who are not in higher education. You know being there quote unquote mentor me. You know I am sure that came from a place, she is a new president what can we do to help, am but I am not so sure and I will never know. But I am not sure

if they could have made that offer if I was a white male president, a new white male president. Again, I will never know, but I suspect it could have been different.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to note that two main categories of findings emerged, navigating the convoluted path of personal motivation and non-traditional role models and professional support. Then role models within their various institutions especially as there is hardly any formal training at the universities for getting to the presidency and the necessary survival strategies that participants used to navigate their pathways to the presidency. The next chapter, chapter 5, will provide the summary, findings, implications, and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings and the implications of this study for higher education. This study aimed to explore how African American women who are now presidents of colleges and universities navigated challenges to get to where they are and their experiences as presidents in predominantly White institutions. I chose a narrative research methodology so that participants could share their unique stories. Thus, "narrative researchers hold in common is the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events" (Pinnegar & Danes, 2007, p. 4). According to Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), "these lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities" (p. 35).

Discussion

There were two research questions for this study. The researcher designed the two research questions to elicit detailed explanations about the participants' experiences. Therefore, the interviews and the analysis of the transcripts started after the interviews as the participants answered the research questions. This section discusses how the participants answered each research question concerning the categories and themes.

Research Question One

How have African American women navigated the administrative labyrinth to the presidency of colleges and universities?

Mentors

The pathways to the presidency are unique. As such, all the participants explained their educational preparations' impact on their success. All the participants in the study mentioned the motivations that they received from their mothers to be resolute and remain strong in the face of

adversity. Thus, all the presidents explained the importance of having a terminal degree, Ph.D. or Ed.D., as these meet the educational requirements for an applicant to become a president. President Aminata Peters mentioned that she had to return to get a doctorate based on advice that she got from her mentors. The participants learned survival strategies very early, deemed necessary for Black womanhood. According to Collins (2000), "these self-definitions of Black womanhood were designed to resist the negative controlling images of Black womanhood advanced by Whites as well as the discriminatory social practices that these controlling images supported" (p. 10). As a result, the women remained resolute in the face of challenges. The participants also honed the leadership and administrative skills needed for the position of president. In a study by Hagan and Oliver (2022), the participants similarly "addressed and overcame the barriers to enhance their efficacy" (p. 3) and progress in their career advancements.

The women also explained the impact of mentors in navigating their pathways to and within higher education. The mentors were men and women within their various institutions. Several authors have postulated the importance of mentoring for women, women of color, and African American women in higher education (Baron, 2020; Delgado & Allen, 2019; Hagan & Oliver, 2022; Washington, 2006). The participants in this study expressed that mentoring, to a greater extent, made a difference as mentors motivated them and gave them the necessary impetus for leadership roles.

Barriers of Race and Stereotypes

The participants in this study overcame the barriers of race, stereotype, and microaggressions as they aspired for the presidency. The study found that the pathways to the presidency were indeed convoluted. Dr. Sebatu Kposowa pointed out that it was just a leap of faith she took to become president. Many African American women in academic or

administrative tracks worry about their very survival as they may experience pathways differently from their white counterparts. Most people pick up jobs because they want to grow. Therefore, anything that may stifle their growth based on race and subtle inequalities inhibits them from reaching their goals. Thus, “the underrepresentation of administrators of color in higher is one of the most ethical dilemmas facing colleagues and universities” (Wolfe & Freeman, 2013, p. 1). Wolfe and Freeman (2013) also noted that despite the credentials and “their leadership acumen, many racial and ethnic minorities will encounter ceilings of the institution does not create an environment that welcomes their contributions” (p. 4). All the participants in this study explained that they experienced stereotypes and needed to work harder than their White colleagues to demonstrate that they could perform the work of presidents.

The study showed that the participants navigated the pathways to the presidency differently as they had the academic qualifications and a “variety of activities under leadership development such as graduate education programs, professional associations, and formalized leadership training” (Horn, 2018, p. 2). Indeed, participants were both self-motivated and motivated by others. They followed the nontraditional way to become president, as none of the participants was sure about the right path to the presidency. Their representation as presidents have increased, and they are becoming visible at least.

Research Question 2

How have race and gender affected African American women’s pathways to their institution’s presidency?

Stereotypes

Higher education in the United States has always been replete with discrimination issues based on gender and race hence the wide use of African American women experiencing

intersectionality. All the participants expressed the stereotypes they experienced as they navigated the challenges in the various institutions. Stereotypes are barriers to the progress of African American women, and all four participants shared their experiences about stereotypes, such as being capable or just there, in their positions as part of tokenism. Even though all women may experience gender stereotyping, African American women experience race-based stereotypes. Thus the "underrepresentation of African American women academics in senior ranks and leadership positions in higher education is an enduring social justice issue" (Ragoonaden, 2020, p. 28).

All the participants revealed that race and prejudice were subtle in many ways. As such, they had to deal with race, gender, and sex, which their counterparts from the dominant culture did not have to deal with simultaneously. Dealing with the intersectionality of these disadvantages poses severe challenges for the career advancement of African American women. Thus, implicit and explicit biases against African American women undermine the tenets of meritocracy and limit access to power, as postulated by Hoyt and Goethals (2017).

Many of the barriers African American women experience do not just go away when they are at the top, as they still experience microaggression internally and externally. People sometimes ask how did get to the presidency as a sign of disapproval or express doubt in their capabilities. African American women "endure a form of double minority status at predominantly White institutions" (Reed, et al., 2022, p. 131). They experience negative class evaluations by students who are predominantly White and must deal with disdainful encounters with students if they use the traditional pathway to the presidency if they teach courses.

Mentoring

All the participants explained the impact of mentoring on them. Interestingly, all the participants were mentored by both genders, and none mentioned experiencing sexual harassment from their mentors, even when it involved cross-gender relationships. The participants noted that they were encouraged by their mentors to aspire for promotions and take the leap of faith even though they did not meet all of the required and preferred skills for the job of the president. The participants stated that colleges and universities needed to define mentoring for individuals aspiring to become presidents clearly. Still, they gained vital skills that they eventually used along their various pathways to becoming president. According to Hill (2020), role models and mentors support the learning of minorities and growth in leadership roles.

Lack of Leadership Development Programs

All the participants explained that they had to work assiduously to gain the requisite educational credentials and training to serve as presidents. There is indeed a pipeline myth that African American women must deal with, as there are no clear pathways to the presidency. However, there are many leadership development programs for women, such as HERS, and women aspiring to become presidents of colleges and universities attend such programs to get a competitive edge and acquire the requisite skills. A few universities have presidential leadership institutes, but they cost money. For example, The Ohio State University has The President and Provost's Leadership Institute that focuses on long-term faculty leadership development (Ohio State University, The Women's Place, 2023). The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, created the Women's Place (TWP) "to make Ohio State a cutting-edge institution which supports and develops women's opportunities for achievement" (OSU, TWP, 2023, p. 2).

Colleges and universities are now very complex; therefore, leadership development programs must be specific and clear so that young people aspiring to become president one day can learn about cost containment and many local, state, and federal policies. All of the participants in this study participated in academic and leadership training to have the requisite credentials for the position of president. Dr. Sebatu Kposowa explained the cost and that her university assisted her in attending a significant leadership institute. Therefore there should be more leadership development programs nationwide and make them affordable to individuals who may want to build leadership career development.

Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research has always had some limitations, and this study is no exception. Prather (2010) states, "qualitative research methods do not require the random selection of informants" (p. 11). This study had only four research participants, and this small number may make it difficult to generalize beyond these four cases. Thus, the participants in this study may not be a representation of African American women as presidents of colleges and universities in the United States. It is also essential that qualitative researchers typically do not make external statistical generalizations because their goal is usually not to make inferences about the underlying population. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) state, "no proposed research project is without limitations, there is no such thing as a perfect designed study" (p. 42). This narrative research inquiry involved a small number, and this will make it hard to generalize to all African American women who are presidents of colleges and universities across the country. Marshall and Rossman (2016), postulate that narrative research/inquiry focuses "on the individual rather than the social context" (p. 157). Marshal and Rossman further state, "narrative may suffer from

recalling selectively, focusing on subjects of experience, filling in memory gaps through inference and reinterpreting of the past" (p. 157).

It also took much work to get participants for this study. Thus, it was time-consuming, and I had to make many follow-up calls to potential participants. A few participants responded, and I set interview dates way in advance. The researcher was the primary instrument in this research. Generally speaking, researchers should consider their personal biases (Patton, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2014). Patton (2015) further states, "neutrality is not an easily attainable stance, so all credible research strategies include techniques for helping the investigator become aware of and deal with selective perception, personal biases, and theoretical predispositions" (p. 58). As a black male researcher, I extensively analyzed the transcripts and presented them as they were to remain unbiased. The study participants had access to the transcripts for their reviews and to make inputs.

The study participants are presidents of colleges and universities in predominantly White institutions (PWIs), so I did not design the study to compare them with other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) presidents. Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been categorized as one of "seven types of postsecondary institutions that have special recognition in federal law as minority serving institutions (MSIs)" (Gagliadi et al., 2017, p. 18). The findings portray that African American women continue to face challenges related to fast-paced structural changes, microaggression, and slow-paced policy changes within higher education. There is a lack of sincerity from the male hegemony to discuss or bring out changes that could help minority women to move up the administrative ladder without winding pathways. Some studies have shown the steadfastness and perseverance of African American women in higher education. The few women who could go through the hurdles did so based on merits,

strong credentials, and the requisite experiences needed to perform the job of a college or university president.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

The study unraveled implications for African American women aspiring to become presidents of colleges and universities nationwide. The findings brought the need for more leadership training or educational programs specifically for individuals aspiring to become president. Leading higher institutions is a life-long career; therefore, educational institutions should develop more leadership and administration courses that could lead to presidential career paths. Baker (2022) states "leadership development initiatives should be aimed at early career faculty in order to ensure the skills and competencies needed to be successful in later career stages are developed" (p. 127). The women in this study followed the non-traditional pathways to the presidency. Waring (2004) states, "the assumption is that the typical route to the presidency is through the academic path, and this is still largely true" (p. 5).

There are still very few African American women serving as presidents nationwide. Thus, many others have creditable academic qualifications and the requisite experiences to lead colleges and universities. According to Jones (2013), "women must make important decisions before choosing to pursue a presidency in higher education" (p. 103). With their familial cultural socialization, African American women must navigate challenges within the family and utilize social support to progress. Becoming a president is a long journey, a marathon that needs significant endurance to reach the top. From the stories shared about their experiences, the women did their best to succeed in male-dominated higher institutions. One can see them as harbingers of hope for other African American women as they seek the pathways to the presidency. Giving the situation in Canada as an example, Baron (2020) described higher

education as “a contested space” (p. 94). Baron stated that “academic work in most universities usually includes a blending of research, teaching, and service, but the people doing this work are often seen as either research-focused or teaching-focused” (p. 94). Many African American women enter universities and colleges to perform these two roles (teaching and research) and, while there, cultivate or become interested in the presidency as they successfully navigate through the different positions and roles. All the participants in this study had the outright desire to grow and therefore utilized personal and professional mentors along their pathways. Katuna (2019), therefore, posits that “through mentoring, those who are already in positions of influence as professors or administrators identify individuals who possess qualities that indicate a solid potential for professional growth” (p. 76). Thus, higher education institutions should have clearly defined and definite mentoring strategies that are clearly defined and definite to support African American women’s career development.

Thus, many African American women experience the shifting of the goal post analogy when they move up the academic and administrative ladders as contracts and agreements are given various interpretations, thereby delaying ascension to leadership roles. Duncan (2014), share her experience that even though she was a tenured professor at her university, her “hire through a special diversity initiative, was not supported in any way by an infrastructure or administration cognizant of the larger, systemic issues of power and privilege” (p. 56). Although state governments and the federal government have enacted policies to protect the rights of minorities and created non-hostile work environments, it is burdensome for minorities to seek litigations against institutions as it is costly and time-consuming. In many cases, minorities will leave institutions or remain there and suffer in silence. Jones (2013) stated that “much needs to

be done by higher institutions to address the shortage of African America women by creating leadership programs that are specifically designed with them in mind" (p. 102).

All the participants in this study discussed the subtle and conspicuous stereotypes they experienced either along their pathways to the presidency or even when they became presidents of their respective institutions. It is very challenging to forestall stereotypes as no specific laws prohibit such situations. Katuna (2019), in her study, recommended that "stereotypes pertaining to race, sexuality, ethnicity, age, religion, and other identities that sociologists study that can lead to leadership expectations" (p. 165) and institutions should prevent the situation. Universities and colleges must design support strategies for people to deal with stereotypes that demean their capabilities, such as "funding professional network of scholars; initiatives that promote inclusive campus cultures that value racial, gendered and class diversity" (Platt, 2022, p. 180). Combating negative stereotypes will help African American women perform to the best of their abilities. Universities and colleges must strategize by creating inclusive work environments to give equal opportunities to African American women so that they can lead predominantly White institutions with the desired confidence (Allen, 2022; Baker, 2022; Bynum & Stordy, 2017; Hagan & Oliver, 2022; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). According to Banks-Hall and Miller (2022), "the leadership selection process in colleges and universities is critical to implement authentic diversity" (p. 51). Diversity issues should not only be on paper but there should be avenues for people to grow.

Moody (2004) stated that universities should coach and monitor search committees, mainly as many search committees "rely on in-house handbooks to guide search committees in their work" (p. 93). Moody stated "the handbooks usually don't identify stereotypical thinking and other complex problems of decision-making and fail to provide concrete steps to the search committees for rising above these problems" (p. 93). Moody bluntly stated, "provost or another

high-ranking administrator should arrange for academic search committees before they begin their soliciting, screening, and review of credentials" (p. 94).

The number of African American women leading higher education institutions has increased, but white males still dominate the position of chancellors, boards of regents, and boards of trustees. Therefore, white men still have tremendous power and control over the African American women serving as presidents. Higher education should appoint minority women to serve in such capacities as chancellors or boards of trustees. Indeed, the experiences shared by the study participants could guide other African American women wishing to become presidents of colleges and universities especially, in predominantly White institutions.

Since missions and the federal government established higher education institutions in the United States, many white men who eventually served as leaders of colleges and universities enjoyed the white privilege to get the job. According to Jeyaskingham (2012), "white privilege refers to the range of unearned social privileges that are said to be possessed by white people but largely invisible to them" (p. 672). Jeyaskingham (2012) further stated that white privilege had been ingrained in higher education. In addition, the study revealed that gender-based barriers and race-based barriers and stereotypes exist and are pervasive. Therefore policies must include strategies for integration based on diversity, and recognizing the heterogeneity of academics and administrators is "not only democratically smart, but morally right" (Wolfe & Freeman, 2013, p. 4). Shavlik et al. (1989) "stated that all institutional policies should be reviewed periodically to assess whether there is a differential negative impact" (p. 449) on minority women, which is very applicable to African American women. Colleges and universities must reshape their organizational structures, reexamine their policies and procedures and develop plans to help African American women get into leadership roles and maintain their presidencies. Colleges and

universities must appreciate and value diversity. Colleges and universities should nurture the growth of African American women by giving them opportunities to serve in different capacities. Moody (2004) stated that universities should have proactive mentoring as "mentors need to provide psychological bolstering and also career-advancement interventions" (p. 133). Mentors can introduce their mentees to influential leaders who can open new doors of opportunity for them" (p. 133). Mentors can collaborate with mentees. They should "help juniors hone their research, publication, and networking skills" (p. 133). Those in leadership positions should seek ways to stimulate and support African American women. Chancellors and boards of trustees of colleges and universities must remember the concept of diversity when appointing search committees and selecting faculty and campus leaders.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study explored the experiences of African American women in navigating challenges along the pathways to their presidencies and their experiences as presidents. Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommendations for further studies:

- Research to do a situational analysis of African American women in navigating challenges to the presidency in one of the seven types of specially designated minority serving institutions (MSIs), specifically Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- Explore leadership development programs for women aspiring to become presidents of colleges and universities and the impact of such programs on career development.
- Further research on mentorship among women leaders and the assessment of cross-gender mentoring relationships. And the impact on women.

- Explore institutional norms and policies that impede African American women from leadership roles across the different higher institutions of learning.
- Researcher to further research the career pathways of African American men as presidents of predominantly White institutions.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the number of African American women serving as presidents of predominantly White institutions has increased in the last two decades. However, there remains much underrepresentation, especially as many African American women have the requisite education credentials and experience to do the president's job. With the use of narrative inquiry, this study, therefore, sought to explore the experiences of African American women as they navigated challenges to becoming presidents of colleges and universities and their experiences as presidents. The findings showed that all the women were persistent and determined to move along their pathways to becoming presidents. In addition, the participants used informal and formal role models and mentors to learn the nuances involved in leadership roles in higher education. The findings show that African American women were steadfast, persistent, and determined to succeed despite the many challenges and barriers along their pathways to the presidency and the challenges they experienced as president. The results revealed that both private and professional mentoring helped the participants and was significant for their early aspirations for the position of president. The study also revealed that leadership development programs were not too common for people aspiring to become presidents and that there needed to be clear pathways. The women expressed other challenges and barriers, such as stereotypes and male dominance in higher education, that still pose problems for women of color seeking leadership career advancement in predominantly

White institutions. The overall bosses of all the women serving as presidents are still men who are chancellors or chairmen of the Board of Trustees.

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Appendix A: Solicitation Letter

Department of Education Leadership and Higher Education

College of Education and Learning Design

St. Cloud State University

720 Fourth Avenue South

St. Cloud, MN 56301

Date

Dr. ……

……

……

……

Dear Dr……,

Solicitation Letter for an Interview

My name is Sylvester Amara Lamin, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education Leadership and Higher Education in the College of Education and Learning Design at St Cloud State University. In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree, Doctor of Education (Ed.D.). I am conducting my dissertation with Dr. Rachel Friedensen as my advisor and would like to invite you on the topic: Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Learning. This research intends to explore and examine African American women's experiences in navigating some of the challenges to getting to the position of president. Therefore, the interview questions will focus on sharing your experiences over the years to get the presidency.

Your participation requires approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes interview session, although it may transcend this based on the details you wish to provide.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher will keep your responses to the questions asked in the strictest confidence, and I will not use your name in reports concerning the interview.

If you are willing to participate in the interview, please get in touch with me at 614-218-3282, weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. or 320-281-5420 evenings and weekends, or you may contact Dr. Rachel Friedensen at 320-308-3116.

Sincerely,

Sylvester Amara Lamin

Doctoral Candidate

Sylvesteramaralamin@gmail.com

Tel: 6142183282

Appendix B: Consent Form

Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

Consent to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research study about the experiences of African American women presidents in U.S. institutions of higher education.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to take part in 1-2 interviews. Face to face interviews will be conducted via Zoom using open-ended questions. The interview will last approximately between 45 minutes to an hour. If there are additional questions or clarifications to make after the initial interview, I will make follow-up contact for clarification and the possibility for an additional interview. With your consent, the interviews will be audio-recorded, but only the Principal Investigator will have access to the recordings. The interviews will be done through the St. Cloud University Zoom page using my account and Personal Meeting Identification. The recordings will be subsequently transcribed. Whatever you say during the interview will be confidential. At every stage of the research all efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality.

Benefits of the research Benefits from this study include sharing your experiences about how you navigated some of the challenges in getting to your significant academic leadership role in your institution. The study will utilize the framework of intersectionality to explore the perceive impact of race, gender and other structures navigating the challenges. I will also use the labyrinth metaphor as postulated by Eagly and Carly in their 2007 book: Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders.

Risks and discomforts: There are no anticipated risk, undue, stressor discomfort to you as a participant. Data collected will remain confidential. Efforts will be made to keep the information gathered in this study confidential irrespective of the small participant pool. Importantly, participation in this study will be confidential to the researcher. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released if required by state law. All efforts will be done to keep the details confidential.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact: Sylvester Amara Lamin, Tel: 6142183282 or Email bj8318cg@go.minnstate.edu or amaralamin10@gmail.com. Dr, Rachel E. Friedensen is my faculty advisor; you can reach her by Tel: 320-308-3116 or Email: refriedensen@stcloudstate.edu. Results of the study can be requested from the researcher, or you

can obtain research results/publication, from the *St. Cloud State University Repositor*y.

Compensation: If you choose to participate, there will be no compensation or any direct benefit to you. No incentives will be provided for your participation in this study.

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate.

I hope you choose to participate in this very important project and thank you in advance for your consideration.

_____ _____

Signature Date.

Appendix C: Release Form for Use of Photography/Video/Audio/Recording

Release Form for Use of Photograph/Video/Audio Recording

Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

Sylvester Amara Lamin

Email: bj8318cg@gominnstate.edu

Supervising Person's Name: Dr. Rachel Friedensen

Supervisor's Email Address: refriedensen@stcloudstate.edu

Please Print:

_____

Participant Name

_____

Legal Representative if Applicable

This form asks for your consent to use media for and from this study. We would like you to indicate how we can use your media. On the next page is a list of media types that we will use. Please initial where you consent for that type of use of your media. Legal representative initials will provide consent when needed.

Regardless of your answers on the next page, you will not be penalized.

We will not use your media in any way you have not initialed.

Questions regarding this form should be directed to the researchers. Additional answers can be found by contacting the IRB Administrator or an IRB Committee Member. Current membership is available at: https://www.stcloudstate.edu/irb/members.aspx

A copy of this form will be provided for your records.

Video with audio	
Consent Granted	Type of Release
x	Used by research team to record and analyze data
x	Published or presented in an academic outlet (e.g., journal, conference)

Transcription of audio	
Consent Granted	Type of Release
x	Used by research team to record and analyze data
x	Published or presented in an academic outlet (e.g., journal, conference)

I have read the above carefully and give my consent only for those items in which I initialed.

_____ _____

Participant Signature (if 18 years of age or older) Date

_____

Participant Name (Printed)

WHEN CONSENT IS NEEDED FROM A LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE, COMPLETE THIS SECTION. UP TO TWO LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE MAY SIGN.

_____ _____

Legal Representative Signature Date

_____

Legal Representative Name (Printed)

_____ _____

Second Legal Representative Signature Date

_____

Second Legal Representative Name (Printed)

Appendix D: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education.

The questions for each interview

1. Tell me about your formal education.
2. How did you start your career in higher education?
3. What was your most significant experience on the job market?
4. Tell me about your experiences on your journey to becoming the president of this institution?
5. What has been your most significant experience as an administrator, and after attaining the position of President?
6. What kind of advice will you give to someone coming up?
7. Who were your role models?
8. What additional comments would you like to make?

Appendix E: The IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Sylvester Lamin

Email: salamin@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION:

Exempt Review

Project Title Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

-Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email

ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair: _____ **IRB Institutional Official:** María-Claudia Tomany

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR LIFE.

Dr. Mili Mathew
Chair and Graduate Director
Assistant Professor
Communication Sciences and Disorders

Dr. Claudia Tomany
Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB#: 1126 - 2676	**Type:** Exempt Review **2nd Year Approval Date:**	**Today's Date:** 11/19/2021
1st Year Approval Date: 11/19/2021 **1st Year Expiration Date:**	**2nd Year Expiration Date:**	**3rd Year Approval Date:** **3rd Year Expiration Date:**

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210,

St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Continuing Review / Final Report

Principal Investigator: **Sylvester Lamin**

Co-Investigator

Project Title: **Navigating Challenges: Experiences of African American Women as Presidents in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education.**

St. Cloud State University requires all research activities involving human subject – whether or not they are supported by Federal funds – to comply with the Federal Policy of the Protection of

Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). According to this policy, ongoing research activities involving human subjects must be reviewed by the IRB, at a minimum of at least once per year. In some cases, such as when research poses a significant risk, the IRB may require more frequent reviews.

This form must be submitted before your study expiration date. (as indicated on your approval letter)

Proposed changes to the protocol of study documents may NOT be implemented until after the IRB has approved the

1. Please indicate the status of your project:

(Choose only one of the following)

____ Continuing Review:

____ Subject recruitment/enrollment continues; current consent/assent required, please attach.

____ Data collection continues with enrolled subjects; no additional subjects will be recruited.

____ Final Report

____ Project has been completed.

____ Data collection has been completed but data analysis continues. ____ The project has not and will not be conducted: Please explain:

2. How many participants have participated in your study? _____

3. Have any unexpected reactions, complications or problems occurred during this study?

____ No

____ If YES, please explain:

4. Have any subjects withdrawn from the study - either voluntarily or at the researcher's request?

____ No

____ If YES, please explain:

5. Have any subjects complained about the study?

____ No

____ If YES, please explain:

6. Has any new information been identified that may affect the willingness of current or future subjects to participate in this study?

____ No

____ If YES, please explain and indicate how it was or will be conveyed to subjects:

7. Have any changes been made to your study (including changes to informed consent documents, debriefing statements,

_____ _____

Principal Investigator's Signature Date

SCSU IRB **1126 - 2676**