

LEADERSHIP ADVANCEMENT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF NON-FACULTY  
BLACK MALE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Lerone H. Joseph

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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### **Abstract**

This transcendental phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators and leadership advancement at predominantly White institutions (PWI) in Virginia. A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to address the central research question of what the leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia. Critical race theory as it relates to education was used as the theoretical framework to guide the study. Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to select non-faculty Black male administrators from predominantly White institutions (PWI). Data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups revealed five major themes: cultural taxation, intersectionality, and understanding of Black culture, self-preservation, and cronyism. The data was analyzed using established phenomenological investigation methods of bracketing, horizontalization, clustering into themes, textural descriptions, and textural-structural synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). The study found that Black non-faculty male administrators at PWI leadership advancement was impacted by perceptions associated with gender and race, the history of education in the southern United States, inequity within systems created by White majority, and the lack of mentorship available. These factors create a disparity in leadership advancement for Blacks in higher education compared to their White counterparts.

*Keywords:* Black male, non-faculty, leadership, predominantly White institution, social justice rationale, intersectionality, race, ethnicity

**Copyright Page**

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**Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, DeLisa, who has offered unwavering support and encouragement during the past five years of my doctoral journey. She has cheered me on when I was discouraged, she has laughed at me when I was making a mountain out of a tiny molehill, she prayed with me, wiped my tears during moments of catastrophe, and has most importantly been 100% confident in my ability to get to the finish line.

## Acknowledgments

*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. Amen. (James 1:12 KJV)*

To God the Father and Jesus Christ, the ultimate maker, protector, guide, and healer be all the praise for providing me with the health and strength to complete this process.

To my Committee Chair, Dr. Floralba Arbelo Marrero. Thank you for saying yes to my request to serve. Thank you for the unconditional support and continued motivation you have provided. You always knew the right words to say and had perfect timing.

To Dr. Lucinda Spaulding. Thank you for your completeness, attention to detail, and always asking for the best from me. You have challenged me, and I have valued every piece of feedback you offered. I appreciate that you desire excellence.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Copyright Page.....	4
Dedication.....	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
List of Tables .....	12
List of Abbreviations .....	13
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	14
Overview.....	14
Background.....	15
Historical Context.....	17
Social Context.....	19
Theoretical Context.....	21
Problem Statement.....	23
Purpose Statement.....	24
Significance of the Study.....	25
Research Questions.....	27
Central Research Question.....	27
Sub-Question One.....	28
Sub-Question Two .....	28
Sub-Question Three .....	29
Definitions.....	30
Summary.....	31

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	32
Overview .....	32
Theoretical Framework .....	33
Related Literature .....	39
Leadership in Higher Education .....	40
Cultural Taxation .....	56
The Leadership Pipeline .....	57
Summary .....	61
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .....	65
Overview .....	65
Research Design .....	65
Research Questions .....	68
Central Research Question .....	68
Sub-Question One .....	68
Sub-Question Two .....	68
Sub-Question Three .....	68
Setting and Participants .....	68
Setting .....	68
Participants .....	70
Researcher Positionality .....	74
Researcher's Role .....	76
Procedures .....	77
Permissions .....	77



Recruitment Plan.....	77
Data Collection Plan .....	80
Questionnaires.....	81
Individual Interviews .....	85
Focus Groups .....	89
Data Synthesis.....	92
Epoché.....	94
Horizontalization.....	94
Phenomenological Reduction .....	95
Meaning Synthesizing.....	96
Trustworthiness.....	97
Credibility .....	97
Transferability.....	98
Ethical Considerations .....	99
Dependability and Confirmability .....	99
Transferability.....	100
Summary.....	101
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	102
Overview.....	102
Participants.....	103
Results.....	106
Themes.....	107
Research Question Responses.....	125

	10
Central Research Question.....	125
Sub-Question One.....	127
Sub-Question Two .....	128
Sub-Question Three .....	129
Summary.....	130
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	133
Overview.....	133
Discussion.....	133
Interpretation of Findings .....	133
Research Questions.....	134
Empirical.....	141
Theoretical .....	145
Implications for Policy or Practice .....	146
Theoretical Implications .....	146
Practical Implications.....	149
Limitations and Delimitations.....	151
Recommendations for Future Research .....	152
Recommendations for Institutional Leaders .....	154
Conclusion .....	155
References.....	158
Appendix.....	182
Appendix A: IRB APPROVAL.....	182
Appendix B: CONSENT FORM .....	183

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .....	1
APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	3
APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	5
APPENDIX F: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT .....	6
APPENDIX G: Audit Trail.....	14
APPENDIX H: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT .....	17
APPENDIX I: SIGNIFICANT WORDS.....	25
APPENDIX J: SIGNIFICANT WORDS.....	26
APPENDIX K: JOURNAL NOTES.....	27
APPENDIX G: Audit Trail.....	28
APPENDIX H: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT .....	31
APPENDIX I: SIGNIFICANT WORDS.....	39
APPENDIX J: SIGNIFICANT WORDS.....	39
APPENDIX K: JOURNAL NOTES.....	40

**List of Tables**

Table 1. Student Demographics of Institutions.....	69
Table 2. Participant Demographics.....	71
Table 3. Themes and Subthemes for all Data Sources.....	103

**List of Abbreviations**

Predominately White Institutions (PWI)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

United States (US)

Social Justice Rationale (SJR)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Higher education institutions have embraced change, diversity, and the concept of multiculturalism (Alexander & Arday, 2015). Institutions have recreated mission statements to ensure they are inclusive, address student recruitment plans, and conduct multiple climate studies to support diverse learning environments. These efforts have resulted in a student population increasingly representative of the U.S. demographics. However, inequalities in higher education leadership levels persist (Arday, 2018). Despite the increase in access to higher education for Black males, Black males have made little progress in leadership roles (Wood & Palmer, 2014). The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources report (2016) revealed, “The ethnic and racial makeup of administrators is not changing fast enough to keep up with broader demographic shifts in college and universities” (p. 21). The macro concern is that Black males seem to have minimal leadership roles at predominately White institutions (PWI). Predominately White institutions are viewed as institutions in which Whites account for 50% or greater student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

The label of PWI goes beyond racial percentages of students who are enrolled at an institution. Bourke (2016) explained that “race and racism are the cornerstones upon which these institutions were built and operate” (p.13). Race is related to equity and the addition of another identity such as gender makes establishing equitable environments complex. These equity issues impact individuals who may hold identities outside of the dominant group. There is a considerable amount of research focused on Black females because of the double minority classification. However, there is limited research that focuses on Black men because they are

often categorized by gender. Black males have made little progress in leadership roles when compared to their White counterparts.

This chapter presents a detailed outline for this study, which is designed to understand the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia concerning leadership advancement. The chapter first discusses the background of the selected area of study from a historical, social, and theoretical perspective and explanation of how the situation impacts the researcher. The remainder of the chapter describes the problem and purpose statement, presents the research questions, defines key terms, and concludes with a chapter summary.

### **Background**

Higher education has made notable changes in several practices that promote diversity and equity. There is, however, a gap in the representation of Black male administrators who serve in leadership roles at predominately White institutions (Perna, Gerald, Baum & Milem, 2007). Conversations about race, equity, and diversity are often arduous to have and can have profound emotional impacts. Misperceptions or social constructs may impact these conversations, yet they are necessary and essential in the shifting higher education landscape. Li and Koedel (2017) explained that "Blacks, Hispanics, and female faculty are underrepresented relative to their U.S. population shares; this shapes the current diversity imbalance in higher education" (p. 351). This imbalance impacts individuals in these roles, but it also prevents students from diverse racial identities from attaining the educational benefits of a diverse learning environment. Diverse learning environments promote student growth and reflection, support students feeling unique, create opportunities for role modeling, and bring new perspective. The imbalance exists primarily in senior-level positions since Black males have

greater representation in lower administrator or managerial leadership roles with fewer opportunities for career advancement than in faculty or upper-level leadership roles (Perna, Gerald, Baum & Milem, 2007). Representation not only impacts the student experience but can also be associated with policy outcomes. Representation among leadership would reflect the interests of the represented group, ensuring that policies are more inclusive (Gonyea, 2019). Creating inclusive policies embraces diversity as a tool for social change and supports a diverse learning environment for students, faculty, and staff.

In the case when representation is occurring, there are still challenges that Black or minority individuals encounter. When these professionals become leaders, there is a significant amount of pressure placed on them to perform. Scott (2016) explained that "the current literature often ignores the experiences of Black male leaders and how societal misperceptions impact it" (p. 39). Several factors impact the challenge of making improvements on representation. Two of these factors are institutional type and geographic location. The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources reported that in 2017 only 7% of higher education leadership administrative positions at predominately White institutions were held by individuals who identified as Black. The report classified positions such as top executives, deans, associate deans, division's heads, and controllers as administrative leadership positions. A summary of the historical, social, and theoretical background provides context for the research problem.

Creating diverse and equitable learning environments is at the forefront of the mission of higher education institutions. The demographic changes in higher education have resulted in institutions diversifying at the fastest rate in history (Quaye, Harper & Pendakur, 2019). Institutions have made commitments to ensure that their student population is reflective of the



demographics of the U.S. population. These efforts around diversity and equity seem to be limited when examining non-faculty Black males' representation in leadership roles. Despite numerous research that connects Black students' success to having Black administrators as role models in leadership, non-faculty Black male administrators are underrepresented in higher education (Bimper, 2017; Gardener, 2019; Ross, Powell & Henriksen, 2016). Only 3% of Black males hold positions as faculty members in higher education (Turner & Grauerholtz, 2017). In contrast, 83% of college presidents identify as White and 70% identify as male, while only 8% identify as Black, 2% as Asian, and 1% other (American Council on Education, 2016).

According to the American Council on Education report on Race and Ethnicity in higher education (2016), "people of color represented less than one-fifth of senior executives, 42.2 percent of service and maintenance staff and one-third of campus safety personnel were people of color" (p.16).

### **Historical Context**

The United States has seen the transformation in many areas; colleges and universities have been a significant part of this transformation, especially regarding access for minority populations (Valverde, 2003). During the 1990s, Hispanics were the fastest-growing youth population, with an increase of 56% compared to Asians and Pacific Islanders (29%), Blacks (7%), and Whites (3%) (Fry, 2003). Higher education institutions view diversity as a transformative tool that allows them to meet the goals of creating an inclusive learning environment (Karkouti, 2016). Although educational achievement, social status, and qualifications of Black males have increased with the changes in higher education and access for minority students, their presence in leadership roles in higher education is limited.

The historical context of Blacks and education in the United States must not be ignored. Blacks did not have the same access to education as Whites Pre-Civil War. The post-Civil War changes to education saw an increase in Blacks seeking educational opportunity changes in education (O'Brien, 1999). It is essential to understand the history of education in the southern region since the focus area for this study will be public predominately White institutions in the southern region of the United States. Major federal regulations impacted equity in education. Brown vs. Board of education is one of the most impactful cases that provoked a change in education inequity. This court decision had unintended effects on higher education. Affirmative action plans aim to ensure equal educational opportunity for minorities and have compromised the landmark decision's integrity. The court's rulings created opportunities for integration at the student level, but shortly after this case, Blacks assumed roles as school administrators. Despite these changes, racism and discriminatory practices are present within the education system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Practices of discrimination that exist in society have permeated academia. While there is not the same separation that existed during the Brown vs. Board of Education era, some racial tendencies still exist in the educational system today. According to Chesler, Lewis, and Crowfoot (2005), "understanding race and racism in higher education is inseparable from understanding race and racism in society" (p.7). Historically, Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have impacted higher education. Black leadership is prevalent at these institutions, but discrimination still exists (Gasman, Nguyen & Commodore, 2017). The historical context of hiring practices in the United States is vital to consider. Federal regulations require institutions to have more equitable hiring practices. Affirmative action's original purpose was to increase minority representation, but it has impacted other areas of higher education (Baker, 2019). Brown v. Board of Education paved the way for significant opportunities in

American society for minorities and Whites by ensuring equal justice, fairness, and education. Leadership positions at colleges or universities play a significant role in the success of the institution. The process of choosing leaders may vary from one institution to another; however, it is fundamental that institutional leadership represents the students the institution serves. Understanding the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators will provide context for their perspectives on leadership advancement at predominately White institutions.

### **Social Context**

Historically, Black males have trouble in higher education based on numerous social constructs and misperceptions (Hall & Rowan, 2000). These painful experiences may be more significant when they are in leadership roles. Black men have unique needs to consider as leaders to excel (Collins, Suarez, Beatty & Rosch, 2017). There are many negative stereotypes associated with Black males that impact their ability to be successful. Some of these negative stereotypes include laziness, uneducated, masculinity complex, and lack of sensitivity. Hall and Rowan (2000) described this concern as "a deeply rooted manifestation of racism that is reflected in the practices and policies of higher education today" (p. 4.). Although these stereotypes are social constructs and misperceptions, they may impact the ability of Black males to progress in roles as leaders at predominantly White institutions. Social constructs create generalizations that have become part of the misperceptions associated with Black men in higher education. Harper (2015) stated, "there is a continued illumination of institutional practices and policies that yield inequitable outcomes and marginalized Blacks" (p. 647). These practices have resulted in Black males who hold leadership roles to feel isolated and forced to conform to the ideas and characteristics of leadership defined by their White counterparts. Mabokela and Madsen (2005) explained that "the lack of discourse around the equity of Black leadership has allowed the

continuance of largely deracialized color-blind ideology" (p. 196). Approaching leadership from the lens of not seeing color perpetrates racism and is often used by Whites to control prejudice (Plaut, Thomas, Hurd, & Romano, 2018). This approach is often taken to support leadership that is not based on prejudice and embraces diversity. However, its impact is the opposite of the intentions. This approach tends to limit or deny others' experiences who are often not in the majority and perpetrates systematic racism. Colleges and university officials may use the color-blindness approach to handle changing patterns in diversity. This approach puts higher education institutions in a position where they fail to maximize benefits associated with diversity (Bourke, 2016). The pressure created by policies and practices could potentially be one of the barriers for Black males moving into leadership roles at public, predominantly White institutions.

Access to higher education has expanded. This expansion has led to a diverse population of students enrolling in colleges and universities. Despite this shift, there has been little change in ensuring that institutional leadership mirrors the student population. Students must be able to connect with staff, faculty, and administrators who share similar identities. McBride (2017) explained that "understanding what contributes to a college experience that motivates students to achieve academic and personal success is especially important for the Black male population" (p. 17). There is a responsibility for institutions to ensure that they aim to reach these students. Creating mentoring opportunities that allow students to connect with staff who share identities help Black male students develop non-cognitive skills and encourage them to be more motivated to learn and take personal responsibility for their success (Shoretter & Palmer, 2015).

The concern extends beyond just diversity and stretches into recruitment, advancement, and institutional reputation. The current research is limited in focus on this population and securing leadership roles. A small amount of research addresses what is known as the pipeline

issue, which claims that Black males are not ready for leadership roles. The leadership pipeline is connected to race as a social construct. Racial identity is a social construct; those within the majority have disproportionate control over access to resources which contribute to inequity that has significant implications on society and racial inequity (Binder & Abel, 2019). This remains a problem (Thompson, 2006). Racial identity can impact the ability of Black males to advance in leadership roles. Gaining knowledge of the lived experiences of Black males in higher education leadership positions can help institutions create appropriate action plans to narrow the existing gap. Black males face challenges in their perseverance and achievement in higher education. Institutions struggle to create opportunities for this population to engage in academic performance and educational experiences. Predominately White institutions often seek to meet quotas that satisfy laws that are put in place. However, it does not create longevity or support the social justice rationale.

### **Theoretical Context**

Critical race theory (CRT) is the theory guiding this study. The founder of the CRT is Derrick Bell. There have been several additions made to Derrick Bell's original work. CRT emphasizes the socially constructed nature of race and asserts judicial conclusions to be the result of the workings of social phenomena, but perceives race as an essential factor (Delgado, Richard, & Stefancic, 2001). CRT examines the experiential knowledge of minorities concerning race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT views racism as a phenomenon that functions on many levels (Stovall, 2005). The origins of CRT are found in the legal system to examine inequalities associated with justice and race but has made its way into other fields such as education (Graham, Brown-Jeffy, Aronson & Stephens, 2011). According to Stovall (2005), "the most crucial element to the development of CRT as a legitimate analysis of current educational

structures is the recognition of racism as a system of oppression" (p. 97). In short, CRT provides an avenue to explore the connections between relationships among race, racism, and social structures.

Colleges and universities represent significant social structures, providing an open opportunity to determine how race and racism impacts these institutions. CRT is not centered in education, but the tenets are applicable to a higher education setting. The evolution of this theory has led to social justice scholarship in educational leadership (Capper, 2019). Critical race theory is applicable to this study because it provides insight across multiple identities and challenges the standard White male norms that have been created in education. Critical race theory provides a lens to explore how inequities in higher education exist and how these inequities may impact Black males' leadership advancement.

## **Problem Statement**

The general problem was that institutions have invested in creating a diverse student population, but staff and administrators do not mirror that population. Colleges and universities have made significant changes in the type of students that they recruit, admit, and support. Specifically, public predominately White institutions have made changes in recruiting and admission policies to ensure that they are supporting diverse enrollment agendas that mirror their regional populations. Predominately White institutions developed high-impact practices to allow minority students to gain equitable access (Pierszalowski, Vue & Bouwma-Gearhart, 2018). From this large-scale concern, the issues around the roles of leadership and who is represented become another concern. Adserias, Charleston, and Jackson (2017) believe "organizational climate and culture is imperative to produce the change needed in order for a diversity agenda to thrive" (p.315). There is a disparity in leadership advancement for Blacks in higher education compared to their White counterparts (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). This is a multi-layer concern that becomes more complicated when gender is included. Black males are often overlooked because the focus is often given to Black women because of the double minority categorization. Although Black women are at a significant disadvantage, Black males are faced with a different view of success when compared to their colleagues' view of success. Some research has focused on the continued isolation, cultural incongruences, and racism (Harper, 2015). Black males have little to no choices when dealing with stereotypes and the corresponding effects that impact their experiences in leadership (Harper, 2015). There are limited studies that focus on leadership advancement of Black males in higher education; a significant amount of research instead focuses on identity, resiliency based on their identity, and the impact of mentoring (Buckley, 2018, Burton and Weiner, 2016, and Kelly,

Harrison, and Moore, 2015). The changes in the student population in higher education should be reflected at the administrator level for institutions to support all students holistically. Grace and Nelson's (2019) examined student perceptions of racism and how it impacts Black males as they support other individuals within an educational context. The problem is that institutions have not committed to diversifying institutional leadership as they must diversify the student population. This study examined Black male administrators' lived experiences to gain an understanding of their leadership advancement at PWIs.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with their leadership advancement in public, predominantly White institutions in Virginia. At this stage, the research leadership advancement will be defined as a professional moving from a mid-manager or supervisory position to a senior leadership position in a college or university setting. The theory guiding this study is Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) critical race theory (CRT). CRT provides an avenue to explore the connections between relationships among race, racism, and social structures. Colleges and universities represent significant social structures, providing an open opportunity to determine how race and racism impact these institutions.

Critical race theory in this study is used to explore how inequities in higher education exist and how these inequities may impact leadership advancement. For this study, the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with leadership advancement are understood as the ability to progress from a mid-level management position to a senior leadership position at a higher education institution. Examining the lived experiences of this population using a qualitative, phenomenological research design, and patterns of representation



are examined using a CRT framework which allows the researcher to capture the essence of how identity and gender may play a role in leadership advancement.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant because it was designed to understand how leadership advancement in higher education is impacted by identity and race. While the higher education student population is increasingly representative of the U.S. demographics, inequalities at the leadership levels persist. The study's practical significance is that the findings can be used to support higher education policies about leadership advancement as it relates to non-faculty Black males at predominately White institutions.

Harris and Bracka Lorenz (2017) and Grier-Reed, Arcinue, and Inman (2016) completed studies that focused on the role of African American males in higher education, specifically student engagement and retention of students. There is minimal research on the leadership advancement and challenges that administrators may face in roles as leaders. Kim and Hargrove (2013) noted that while Black men only comprised 6% of the entire U.S. undergraduate population in 2010, less than one-third earned their bachelor's degree within six years. The stereotypes continue to exist and can often be a deterrent at multiple levels. According to Harper (2015), "Black men are often among the most stereotyped populations in higher education and society, confirming stereotypes have been shown to undermine performance and persistence" (p. 647). This study will examine the lived experiences and the factors that influence these experiences for Black male leaders at predominately White institutions. Diversity in leadership will allow the work environment to be more inclusive of supporting overall development. The study seeks to address the gap in the impact of identity (race and gender) on leadership

advancement of non-faculty Black males at PWIs since the current literature focuses on the double minority of Black females in higher education.

The theory that ground this study is Critical race theory (CRT). Critical race theory explores the connections between relationships among race, racism, and social structures and how this creates inequities in society. This framework is applied to higher education and the role of policy and practice formulation. CRT has made significant discoveries in identifying areas in which inequities exist in higher education mainly with a focus on students' lived experiences. Participants' stories will be used to determine if the themes identified are like those uncovered by CRT. It is important to note that CRT, although it originated in the field of Law, has been used across numerous disciplines. Ladson-Billings (2000) suggested that CRT can support asking vital questions about the control and production of knowledge, particularly knowledge about underrepresented populations in higher education. CRT is a dynamic theory since it combines numerous ways in which power driven by race is understood. CRT combines a series of arguments regarding race and power in the post-civil war era (Crenshaw, 2011).

From a practical standpoint, gaining a deeper understanding of Black males' leadership advancement experiences in higher education at PWIs will allow institutions to address any concerns around issues such as equity in promotions, mentoring, professional development, and social justice. Addressing these concerns may create more opportunities for Black males to serve in higher education, potentially improve campus climate, and provide opportunities for students who identify as Black to see leaders with a similar identity. The opportunities can also be applicable to other minority identities to help increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education. Having this population represented may impact students and create environments where both students and staff feel comfortable. Black males in leadership roles can

also serve as role models for students and provide a sense of hope that leadership is achievable even despite identities that are held and show ways to dismantle current systems of inequity that exist in higher education.

### **Research Questions**

This study focused on the experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at PWIs to understand their perspective as it relates to leadership advancement. The study used a transcendental phenomenological research design to collect data from this population of administrators. The research questions were guided by the theoretical framework of critical race theory that focused on disparities in education and the role of policy and practices in the formulating of racial inequity (Dixson & Rousseau-Anderson, 2018).

#### **Central Research Question**

What are the leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia?

As higher education continues to grow and develop, institutions are currently navigating changes in enrollment, diversity and equity, and financial resources management. Leaders in higher education are vital leaders who are responsible for implementing strategic plans, solving problems, and developing innovative ways to support student success. Leaders also contribute to ensuring that students are properly represented in decisions that will impact their outcomes. This is even more challenging for leaders who identify as Black because whether gifted, high-achieving, or unengaged, and there is still a struggle with negotiating leadership spaces and development (Baker & Avery, 2012). Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) explained that "truly diverse leadership within the administrative rankings can be used to help stakeholder's conceptualization minority experiences in the workplace" (p. 667). The intersection of race and gender are essential

identities to consider when examining career development and advancement. There is a belief that education, combined with a strong work ethic, is the solution offered to how staff should advance and develop in their respective roles. However, social inequity evolving from intersectionality contests this principle (Hattery & Smith, 2007). This question focuses on understanding disparities and inequalities connected to race in education and how these impacts leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at PWIs.

### **Sub-Question One**

How do historical patterns of educational inequality in higher education impact Black leaders' perceived support at PWIs?

Inequalities in higher education continue to exist and are connected to social and cultural capital (Bhopal, 2017). The experiences of individuals with minority identities impacted by inequality connected to historical context occur at various levels. Bhopal (2017) explained that "Black and minority ethnic students experience disadvantages at different stages; from admissions to the classroom" (p. 2298). The satisfaction of Black identities on dominant culture campuses is meager (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). The lack of satisfaction presents a significant concern for individuals with these identities. This concern also challenges what Dugan (2006) considers is one of the main functions of higher education which is to provide access, education, and development for future leaders (p. 217). Low student retention may impact gaining and maintaining access to leadership roles. What are the experiences of K-12 teachers who mentor English Language Learners?

### **Sub-Question Two**

What are the self-identified leadership characteristics of non-faculty Black male administrators in higher education at PWIs in Virginia?

Leadership characteristics may vary from one institution to another or from one role to another. Dugan (2006) identified "relationship building, process orientation, ethics and care as key characteristics of leaders" (p. 218). Bashum (2012) views fundamental leadership principles as "ability to inspire, value-driven, and ability to share common goals" (p. 344). Leadership qualities are often perceived differently based on the race of the leader (McIlwain, 2007). For this study, it is crucial to determine the leadership characteristics of non-faculty Black male administrators in higher education. When these are identified, responses can be compared to those identified by literature.

### **Sub-Question Three**

How do non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia experience the intersection of race and gender in their leadership advancement?

Racial and gender stereotypes often become the motivation for describing leadership styles (Jean-Marie, Williams & Sherman, 2009). Intersectionality is essential when examining race at any level. Understanding intersectionality promotes a deeper understanding of social inequalities that are created and maintained (Gillborn, 2015). Crenshaw (1995) defines intersectionality as "a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias" (p. 358). Race and gender are one example of two identities that often intersect. The impact of this combination on leadership advancement is what this question seeks to determine. It is important to note that race is a social construct, and racism was invented and reinforced by society.

## Definitions

The definitions listed below are terms that are important to understand the study adequately. The terms were selected based on the literature and theoretical framework.

1. *Higher Education Leadership* - roles in higher education support institutional development, supervise other administrative staff, and part of policy development (adapted from Cleverley-Thompson & Cleverley-Thompson, 2016).
2. *Non-faculty* - a position that is not part of an academic faculty, no teaching, lecturing, or research responsibilities.
3. *Predominately White Institution* - institutions of higher learning in which White students account for 50% or higher student enrollment (Bimper, 2017).
4. *Social Justice Rationale* – institutions become more reflective of shifting demographic trends and address both past and present identity-based social inequities (Harper, 2015)
5. *Intersectionality* – Intersectionality, the mutually constitutive relations among social identities; individual’s social identities profoundly influence one’s beliefs about and experience of gender (Shields, 2008).
6. Allyship – working towards ending systems of oppression by challenging binary model
7. *Equity* – refers to the fact that different people have varying needs of support and assistance. The goal of equity is to help achieve fairness in treatment and outcomes (Kezar & Sam, 2010).
8. *Equality* - treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities (Kezar & Sam, 2010).
9. Systematic Racism- what happens when cultural institutions and systems reflect that individual racism (Slater, 2021).

## Summary

This chapter presented a foundation of the current environment that Black males face in higher education. Some inequalities exist about identity and leadership roles. The achievement ideology often placed on Black males compounds this issue when it comes to leadership. This chapter has set the stage for why it is important for institutions to consider Black males for leadership roles. The landscape of higher education has changed. Access to minority groups has created a diverse student population. Public predominately White institutions have made changes in recruiting and admission policies to ensure that they are supporting diverse enrollment agendas. The general problem is that institutions have invested in creating a diverse student population, but staff and administrators do not mirror that population. From this large-scale concern, the issues around the roles of leadership and who is represented becomes another concern. This trend must translate to leadership to ensure that students feel supported, and opportunities are created for educated minority students. Racial identity continues to impact employment in higher education. The lack of current research does not provide enough to force the changes that are needed. This study seeks to provide information about lived experiences and how that impacts leadership advancement of Black males in higher education.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

This chapter provides an examination of relevant literature related to non-faculty Black males and leadership advancement in higher education. This chapter provides an overview on the current literature that is related to the study. The first section of the chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical framework which guides this study, critical race theory (CRT). The chapter will continue by discussing the related literature to overall leadership of higher education institutions, the role diversity plays in these structures, and the factors that impact leadership advancement.

Institutions continue to focus on narrowing the gap that exists regarding inequalities (García & Weiss, 2017). This is important because it highlights the changing landscape of higher education. Diversity is a vital part of higher education, but there is a need for a change in organizational climate for institutions to meet the diversity agenda (Adserias, Charleston & Jackson, 2017). This chapter will synthesize the applicable literature to gain an understanding of the pertinent ideas and present knowledge associated with how identities such as race and gender impact leadership advancement in higher education specifically focusing on Black males. Black male administrators in higher education represent a population of administrators who often do not mirror the diversity of the student population that higher education has tried to create. Despite the increase in access to higher education for Black males, Black males have made small progress in leadership roles (Wood & Palmer, 2014). Arday (2018) explained that “the types of leadership that students within higher education are exposed to have a significant bearing on their constructions of leadership” (p. 193). The final section of this review will focus on comparing the leadership pipeline for Black males versus their White counterparts by examining



advantages and limitations of this practice. The literature is limited with regards to examining representation of non-faculty or students and their experiences. The lack of research in this area creates a gap with regards to non-faculty development, representation, and leadership advancement, necessitating the need for this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory guiding this study was Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) critical race theory (CRT). CRT did not originate in education, but because of its dynamic nature, it is applicable in numerous subject matters. The principles of CRT are situated across subject and object the nature of knowledge continuum that emphasizes the importance of experiences and minorities voices (Capper, 2019). Critical race theory as it relates to higher education explores the existence of inequities in higher education and the role of policy and practices in the formulating of racial inequity. This study used the principles of this theory to connect the impact of identity, specifically race and gender and inequities to leadership advancement. The literature review synthesizes the applicable literature to gain an understanding of the pertinent ideas associated with leadership advancement in higher education and how those ideas are connected to the principles of CRT. There are several vital components of CRT. These components connect identities and characteristics and demonstrate how they are used to build understanding around the topic of race. To understand how society functions, it is important to understand the connections between race, racism, and power. Delgado and Stefnacic (2017) explained that "CRT seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the connection between race, power, and racism by using broader perspectives" (p. 15). This connection between each of the areas allows individuals to understand how experiences are impacted by the identities. Each area can also be connected to the perception of advancement about leadership in higher education.

The examination of the intersectionality of race and gender using the framework of CRT provides an analytical tool for seeking to understand inequity in higher education. This lens highlights the interconnectedness between race, gender, and social structure. This concept of intersectionality allows for further exploration around the impact of how group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias. Identities are complex and can shape specific lived experiences (Gillborn, 2015). The label of predominant according to CRT reveals continuing social practices that adhere to the maintaining White supremacy, resulting in the prolonged suppression of people of color (Crenshaw 1995). Two areas that intersectionality using a CRT lens highlights are coalitions between different groups with the aim of resisting and changing the status quo and understanding the nature of social inequities and the processes that create and sustain them (Gillborn, 2015). Race is an important identity in how individuals view and are treated in society. Racism is often viewed as a random act; however, using a CRT lens, racism is and always will be endemic and pervasive in society (Tate, 1997). The tenets of CRT allow leaders in education to examine and understand the structural, political, and economical presence of racism in society (Capper, 2019). Racism still exists despite people of color holding positions of power. Ladson-Billing (1998) argued that “the gains of having individuals of color in positions of power does not mean that a post racial society exist but instead these gains prop up White privilege, increase racism on other levels, and support massive inequalities in society” (p. 8).

It is important to note that CRT, although it originated in the field of law, has been used across numerous disciplines. CRT continued to change and grow as more events and new ideas evolved. As it relates to an educational setting and leadership, it provides a platform for individuals with marginalized identities to share their stories. With regards to education, the most

important link between the disciplines recognized by Tate (1995) was the existence of racism as an endemic to daily life and inclusion (Stovall, 2005). The six tenets of CRT are the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, the importance of counternarratives and counter stories, the critique of liberalism, importance of interest convergence, and intersectionality (Delgado & Stefnacic, 2017). To create the framework for this study, three of the six tenets were selected that were most relevant to examining non-faculty Black male leadership advancement. The three tenets selected were permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, and the importance of counternarratives and counter stories. These three tenets of CRT provide a framework for explaining how race, power, and racism overlap to impact the make-up of leaders at higher education institutions. CRT is valid to examine educational policies and practices because it recognizes the impact and connections of structural and social racism. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) presented CRT as a conceptual framework for understanding education inequity and identified racism as a permanent fixture in our society.

Racism continues to exist in society. Bell (1992) classifies racial realism as one of the important parts of CRT; this idea forces individuals to acknowledge the permanence of subordinate status. Bell's premise was that if acknowledgment occurs, it may allow individuals to move forward. Higher education is a microcosm of society, which means racial tension exists in this setting (Museus, Ledesma & Parker, 2015). When examining leadership in higher education, it is important to consider the role of race and how it impacts everyone within the institution. It is therefore important to consider how CRT evaluates the impact of race on leadership and staff ability to progress in leadership roles. The permanence of racism may help White educational leaders acknowledge that they themselves are racist and all leaders are complicit in racism (Khalifa et al., 2014). This idea of the existence of racism has led institutions

to create diversity education programs or trainings to assist individuals with their own racist assumptions and beliefs.

Whiteness as a property was selected to highlight the historical connections of education to White identity. This tenet focuses on the exclusion of individuals because of racial identity, which impacts ability to lead or gain access to services or education (Harris, 1993). CRT and the tenet of Whiteness as a property is important in education because Whiteness has been seen as the model for education and exists in admissions and acceptance (Amiot, Mayer-Glenn & Parker, 2020). Ladson – Billing and Tate (1995) connected this tenet to funding for education; wealthier communities tend to support educational development. These wealthier communities often tend to be predominately White, and there is the protection of these communities (Capper, 2019). There is a structural component of this tenet, mainly in how courses or trainings are designed. Ladson-Billing (1998) explained that “CRT views school curriculums as specific to White supremacist and the stories of non-Whites tend to be left out” (p. 17). Understanding the CRT tenet of Whiteness as a property can assist educational leaders with addressing concerns that are brought to them by individuals who hold on to this belief with regards to education and leadership. Using a CRT lens suggests that educational leaders must work towards creating an anti-racist identity. This approach is not developed quickly, but must happen through a series of stages and is ongoing (Capper, 2019).

Providing a space for individuals who hold minoritized identities to share their experiences is also important so that institutions can build on successes and identify areas of improvement. This is one reason why counternarratives and counter stories are important. Stories provide critical insight into institutional climate and the actuality of those who are impacted. Counternarratives allow daily micro-aggressions and institutional racism that people of color

experience to be brought to the forefront (Capper, 2019). On the other hand, it is important for educational leaders to recognize when stories of the majority also need to be shared to showcase inequity and provide corrective action. Understanding the importance of telling both sides of the story can aid leaders in how to develop equity reform in schools (Delgado, 1993). The decision-making process is also connected to the storytelling tenet. It is important for the storytellers to be part of the decision-making process to facilitate change. Educational leaders must seek the perspectives of non-White individuals to move forward with the work needed from an equity standpoint (Knaus, 2014). Although it is not listed as a specific tenet, community engagement is a significant component of using CRT to address equity and equality issues in education. The three tenets of permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, and the importance of counternarratives and counter stories impact institutional policy development around recruitment and retention, which contributes to leadership advancement within an organization. These tenets allow educational leaders to examine the often-hidden oppression that occurs when race intersects with other identities.

Inclusion and diversity in higher education in the United States cannot be discussed without addressing the history of education and its exclusionary origins. Understanding differences allows leaders to learn more about others, organizational functions, and how individuals are motivated and rewarded (Capper, 2019). CRT connects some of the historic legal decisions, such as the desegregation of schools to current educational climates around equity and access. Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) noted that “incorporating racial and ethnic minorities fueled cultural changes in education and forced cultural realignment in higher education” (p. 677). The concept of diversity cannot be addressed in a vacuum because it is connected to numerous other areas. Cultural realignments include having institutions focus on creating equitable practices that

support and retain leadership that reflects the needs of a diverse student population. CRT provides a framework to explore how race, power, and racism impact higher education and leadership. Black male non-faculty are not immune to some of the challenges that are associated with race, power, and racism and how they impact higher education and leadership. CRT provides a strong argument that identities are important, and they impact leadership advancement in higher education. The importance of identity is directly contrasting to the concept of structural functionalism. Structural functionalism's main goal is operational efficiency, not equity (Capper, 2019). The education system, despite transformation over time, was designed to serve White upper-class individuals (Frattura & Capper, 2015). Structural functionalism conflicts with diversity because it seeks to maintain historical systems and structures of oppression (Capper, 2015). The view that the incorporation of identity into educational structure creates a deficit is an important aspect to consider for change to be made.

CRT helps provide a framework for recognizing that systematic racism exists, it connects the historical aspects of White supremacy, examines laws and inequities associated with them, and provides education around how race and racism function in society. On the other hand, CRT does not aim to create an us versus them mentality. It does not aim to divide based on race or class, and it does not support the idea that one race is inherently racist.

This study is guided by CRT's claim that educational inequalities and historical patterns of oppression in higher education exist and can impact practices around leadership advancement. CRT will guide this study because it provides clarity around the nature of race and its role in education. It highlights the impact of how institutional racism favors the advancement of White administrators. Favoritism of Whites is not a new concept; it is connected to the post slavery era in which the self-interest of Whites was the priority in education (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This

framework provides the opportunity to analyze race and its impact on higher education by examining how policies and practices may support oppression and unequal power relations. CRT will be used to investigate how race and racism are embedded in the practices and policies that impact leadership advancement of Black male administrators in higher education. CRT will support the study by using the components as a lens to examine structures that directly or indirectly impact the leadership advancement of Black male administrators in higher education.

### **Related Literature**

The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2016), revealed that Blacks are unrepresented at all levels of higher education. The lack of representation is surprising since higher education institutions have made enormous determinations to increase efforts to develop multicultural learning and improve campus climate around diversity (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The student experience is impacted by the leadership of institutions. It is not surprising that minority students face challenges contending with PWI campus culture without representation (Gonzales, 2003). The selection of leaders may vary from one institution to another; however, it is vital that institutional leadership be representative of the students who they serve or wish to serve. Representation is important but can also be misleading if the student body is not diverse. Leaders in higher education are often categorized as either academic or managerial based. Distributed leadership is a concept that has been explored and claims that this approach decreases dualism in the education system (Youngs, 2017). Leadership must see diversity beyond representation and work toward inclusion in ways that relate to the organizational integration of functions (Bourke, 2016). The diversity of the individuals within the organization matters to the success of staff and students. Leadership roles can be challenging, but there is always a strong interest for individuals to ascertain leadership positions for several

reasons. Race and inequity are two important factors that impact leadership in higher education and often undermine progressive approaches that attempt to be more inclusive and representative (Mirza, 2017). To fully understand leadership advancement in higher education as it relates to Black males, it is important to gain an understanding of the current ideas and knowledge around leadership in higher education, the impact of diversity on leadership, and potential challenges that the intersection of these identities create. Diversity, equity, and equality are complex and have a large impact on the experiences of individuals and the perception of the institution in society.

### **Leadership in Higher Education**

Higher education is constantly changing. The management of these changes falls solely on institutional leadership. The principles of leadership have also seen transformation with time, place, and population changes (Wang & Sedivy-Benton, 2016). The combination of the changing landscape of higher education and transformation of leadership practices impact several other areas such as staff hiring, staff advancement, and institutional mission. Yenney (2018) explained that “institutional mission impacts and constrains the ways in which organizational leadership can act on issues” (p. 241). Yenney’s argument that higher education institutions are mission driven means that leaders must be intentional with mission development to ensure that they can support the institution holistically. Mission driven can sometimes be based on a business model versus academic interest. Mission statements are public declarations of purpose, but in many cases do not reflect educational vision, instead appeals to the business aspect of education. Leadership transformation is impacted by culture. Shifting traditional academic values and adjusting organizational change impact leadership (Crevani, Ekman, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2015). Crevani et al. (2015) found that a hybrid approach to transform leadership in higher



education was effective for non-White tenure track faculty. However, this approach was not necessarily effective when applied to non-faculty administrators. There is a distinct difference in the research that focus on the advancement of tenure track members versus non-faculty administrators.

According to Arday (2018), Black male staff tend to be one group that requires institutional missions to provide more equitable paths to leadership to support the changing higher education landscape. According to the American Council on Education (2013), between 2008 and 2013, the number of African Americans in senior administrative positions declined from 3.7 % to 2.3%, while 30% of all college students are from minority racial groups (American Council on Education). Based on a more recent study in 2016, the American Council on Education found that the total number of minority leaders, especially presidents, had not grown substantially, especially with regards to minority women. These figures support the recommendations made by Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) that there needs to be an investment at the early stages of leadership and more formal leadership training opportunities available for minority staff members. Leadership in higher education is multilayered and cannot just simply be categorized as one type or based on simple theories (Mirza, 2017). There are politics and religion associated with leadership in higher education. Youngs' (2017) study of changing times in institutional leadership supports this claim. Higher education leadership can be described as a political project that may often represent the societal ideologies of those with power and privilege (Youngs, 2017).

Review of Sewerin and Holmberg's (2017) study regarding leadership changes in higher education revealed that the most common paradigm is the functionalist approach. This type of leadership focuses on effectiveness, performance feedback, and power, essentially a business

model (Sewerin & Holmberg, 2017). This paradigm gives little focus to identity, complexity, and multiplicity of perspectives as it relates to organizational culture (Gaus, Tang & Akil, 2019). Leadership or individuals with power tend to be those with majority identity. In the United States, the majority identity is White. Individuals who may hold something different may face challenges in progressing in leadership roles based on this common paradigm (Sewerin & Holmberg, 2017). Understanding the narratives of individuals who hold these minority identities may help to inform and change current leadership discourse in higher education (Arday, 2018).

Like Sewerin and Holmberg's (2017) findings on leadership changes, Wang and Sedivy-Benton (2016) made an addition to the leadership paradigm by highlighting the role of trust in institutional leadership. Individuals in leadership positions come with a certain level of trust that is established by either their predecessors or institutional mission (Wang & Sedivy-Benton, 2016). Trust is multidirectional and requires the buy-in of employees as much as employers (George, 2016). The intersection of the current functionalist paradigm of power and trust provide a framework for how higher education leadership is presented in the relevant literature. These areas contribute to the experiences of employees, and their own leadership advancement.

Masculinity cannot be ignored when evaluating male leadership in higher education. Broom, Clark, and Smith (2017) found that in male-centered initiative, masculinity emerged as one of the salient frameworks to understand engagement. The research primarily focused on Black male student engagement, but the researchers believe that this translates to administrators in higher education. Institutions focus on creating initiatives that cater to males, specifically focused on Black and Latino males. Social and cultural capital were significant predictors of engagement and participation (Strayhorn, 2010). Masculinity impacts leadership via the lens of

the expectation that manhood as a social construct of matters in the experience of Black males in higher education (Brooms, Clark, Smith, 2017).

**Leadership at predominately White institutions.** Incorporating diversity into the current leadership structure at PWIs may not be easy since the level of integration of diversity needed challenges homogeneity of leadership (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Adserias, Charleston and Jackson (2017) explained that “shifting organizational climate and culture is imperative to produce the change needed for diversity to thrive and it begins with leadership styles” (p. 316). The literature around leadership at PWIs supports the need for diversity and highlights steps institutions have taken. Diversity has become a universal term and is often combined with inclusion to address policies and practices (Arday, 2018). However, these efforts may not be having as large of an impact as expected. Based on the findings of Bhopal and Jackson’s (2013) investigation of satisfaction of Black male administrators, it was revealed that these administrators had several concerns with diversity and inclusion. Some of the concerns identified included lack of trust, discrimination, and feeling like outsiders (Bhopal & Jackson, 2013). These concerns have a direct impact on campus climate.

The landscape of higher education has changed. This change has impacted the student population as well as leadership. The literature does not provide theoretical insight into the racial and gender dynamics that face Black males or people of color. White male supremacy is not uncommon within and outside of higher education. It is especially common at predominately White institutions that follow closely the historical perspective of leadership within education. Although there have been advancements made in areas of equality to address oppression, there is still unequal sense of power for people of color in higher education (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). This disparity exists despite the workforce being equipped to support diverse administrative

leadership. The reality is that educational programs should help to counteract this issue but have not done a good job making changes. Predominately White institutions have established programs they describe as “grow your own leadership.” These programs when examined are intended to help marginalized populations gain access to leadership positions in higher education but fail and instead just meet the status quo (Sherman, 2005). In Ribeau’s (2001) study which featured interviews of 32 Black presidents of PWIs, it revealed that the characteristics to leadership advancement include work in a diverse environment, strong work ethic, building external relationships, and political astuteness.

**Leadership advancement.** There is a substantial amount of literature that discusses leadership and best practices for advancement. However, there is limited research that specifically addresses the leadership advancement of male Black non-faculty administrators in higher education. For this study, it is important to understand leadership advancement practices in higher education and the role of identities in this process. Lewis (2016) defined leadership advancement as “movement with an increase in responsibilities, rewards and salary or vertical movement with an increase in responsibility and rewards” (p.110). Maranto, Teodoro, Carroll, and Cheng (2019) described general advancement of leadership as “unneutral conduits of talent” (p. 470). Maranto et al. (2019) found that staff are most likely to pursue advancement or advancement in roles when the system favors them. Lewis (2016) also found that other factors such as length of time in one’s role, the absence or presence of mentors, perception of work success, and gender can determine leadership advancement. When race intersects with leadership, it creates complexity since the ideas of power become relevant to the analysis (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Wrushen and Sherman’s (2008) study demonstrated how

intersectionality is important when considering leadership in education. Identities can significantly impact an individual's leadership experience and advancement.

The professional year of experience seems to be one of the major determining factors addressed throughout the literature regarding leadership advancement. The specific years of experience needed to progress in leadership or an individual's role varies. Ten years of professional proficiency in higher education was the minimum requirement for administrators to advance, according to one study (Herbrand, 2001) that examined student affairs professionals' path to senior leadership. Ten years is a large amount of experience. On the other hand, Orr's (2011) study of educational leadership programs cut the professional years of experience in half, given that leaders had graduated from a recognized leadership program. More recent studies focus less on the years of experience and instead prioritize the individual's qualification. Doctoral degrees tend to be common requirements to be designated as an expert, but do not guarantee or prepare individuals for leadership roles or advancement (Casey & Fletcher, 2016).

Higher education institutions over the last three decades have progressed towards a more corporate style of management and leadership (Taylor, 2017). This shift places a great deal of emphasis on leadership and advancement, but also places the power into the hands of majority identities in these organizations (Kanter, 1993). Kanter's work on the role of men and women in organization is still relevant to leadership practices today. According to Townsend's (2020) study, women in higher education are not being retained because of concerns regarding their identity politics they are exposed to while at work in PWIs. Kanter (1993) found that White men often hold top status in corporations, which provides them situations where they are more likely to progress quickly in their leadership roles than their minority counterparts. Jo (2008) interviewed ex-administrators from Ivy league institutions and found inadequate career

advancement was one of the top three reasons listed for why staff left the field of higher education completely. Leadership advancement is a challenging issue to address in higher education. The current literature has outlined some of the concerns with regards to equity of leadership advancement in higher education. There is not a large amount of literature that addresses Black male administrators and leadership mobility. This dearth in the literature is why it is important to understand the narratives of these individuals related to their leadership advancement experiences in the context of higher education.

### **Diversity and Leadership**

Diversity and leadership are not uncommon terms. Most recently, the two concepts have been connected. The workforce has changed, demographics of society has also changed, and leaders recognize diversity impacts performance. The challenge with the connection between diversity and leadership is the expectations that organizations recognize that diversity must come with equity and fairness (Shaban, 2016). The impact of diversity on leadership has been linked to success when leaders do diversity origination, interpolation, and use of structures they have management responsibilities for (Chin & Trimble, 2014). Higher education institutions are often viewed as a reflection of society. Adserias, Charleston and Jackson (2017) recognized that there are numerous challenges associated with leadership and diversity. Challenges include breaking cultural barriers, shifting in beliefs, and overcoming resistance (Adserias et al., 2017). Institutions have taken steps to address diversity by enhancing mission and vision statements; however, these conflict with the individual experiences that administrators have around race and equality. When examining diversity within institutions, one concept that is at the forefront is the power distance. This is the idea of organizational leadership accepting the unequal distribution of power. The power distance is fluid based on the population that is been discussed. Although the

perception around power is typically negative, researchers such as Tian and Sanchez (2017) found that it can lead to the development of trust.

Higher education professionals and faculty do not reflect the overall population of undergraduates or the shifting demographics in the United States. Fewer than a quarter of faculty members are non-White, and only 6 percent are Black, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES. The data shows that 14 percent of undergraduates are Black, more than double the percentage of Black faculty members and still greater than the percentage of Black professional employees. Through their investigation of leadership and diversity, these researchers proposed the diversity agenda. The diversity agenda according to Adserias et al. (2017) is defined as “transformational change in order to reflect shifting demographics trends embodying social and cultural values” (p. 315). After reviewing the literature, three core rationales came from the diversity agenda. The three rationales of the diversity agenda are the social justice rationale, the educational rationale, and the business rationale (Adserias et al., 2017). Each of these are important to leadership advancement because they impact administrators’ ability and are directly related to identity. The social justice rationale focuses on the shifting of institutions to represent shifts in demographics, while ensuring that social inequalities of past and present are addressed (Adserias et al., 2017). Institutions must recognize that there is a need for a shift within the organizational climate and culture. McArthur (2016) explained that “proper assessment around institutional climate is imperative to produce the change needed for a diversity agenda to thrive” (p. 469). On the other hand, the educational rationale is built on intuitions retaining diverse student and staff populations. This extends to strategies that are used to attract diverse student and staff populations (Adserias et al., 2017). Finally, the business rationale is twofold; institutions must be more diverse to compete with the

changing market and have an obligation to prepare students for a global market. Each rationale presents several challenges for leadership and impacts the career advancement of higher education professionals.

Adserias et al.'s (2017) rationales were built on the principles discussed by Williams' (2013) study on the role of Chief Diversity officers. Institutions must recognize diversity as a matter of strategic importance to address the challenges (Williams, 2013). The literature regarding which style of leadership may address the diversity agenda's rationales is unclear. Aguirre and Martinez (2006) recommended transformational leaders based on their monographic study of leaders from eight institutions, while other researchers such as Kezar and Eckel (2014) suggested a more transactional and laissez-faire approach based on their study of university presidents. The unknown regarding what styles work and do not does help in finding solutions to the challenges of diversity. The attention to diversity is reflected in the mission statements of institutions, but there is often a disconnect between what is posted versus the everyday campus environment (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015).

Colleges and universities have shown significant improvement in their commitment to diversity in terms of the student population. Still, there has not been the same noticeable change in the case of administrative leadership (Jackson, 2001). As the student population changes, institutions must give the same level of energy to securing a diverse group of administrators. Incorporating diversity is often viewed as a challenge, but as an alternative, it can be used to create successful experiences for students and employees at every level. Santamaria (2013) examined the multicultural perceptions of leadership towards social justice and equity and found that there are positive attributes that can be gained from the use of diverse identities in leadership. These positive attributes lead to the development of nine leadership characteristics



often associated with leading with a diverse or social justice lens. The nine characteristics that emerged were developing group consensus, leading with critical conversations, recognizing the threat of stereotyping, engagement in academic discourse, honoring staff, leading by example, developing trust, and servant leadership (Santamaria, 2013). The findings of this study support the argument that educational leaders with underrepresented identities tend to lead with a different perspective in mind and develop specific characteristics because of the influence of identity. Santamaria (2013) described it as “leading through a different filter of experiences than their peers, rendering their leadership practice different” (p. 349). The concept of culturally appropriate leadership is also explored by Santamaria (2013), building on the work done by Walker (2000, 2003) on African American leadership practices. These researchers found that the current environment or climate of society influenced how leadership responded (Santamaria, 2013). Therefore, educational leaders cannot simply operate within the confines of the institution, but must be always mindful of how society views identity.

**Male leadership in higher education.** Higher education leadership is not only male-dominated, but also a male perpetuated construction (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). Vongalis-Moscow’s description of higher education leadership was based on investigation of female leadership aspirants in higher education. According to Vongalis-Macrow’s (2016) study, 60% of academics were men, and they held approximately 77% of leadership positions. These statistics confirm the male dominance in higher education. Establishing this foundation or baseline for leadership is important in understanding how gender identity is perceived in higher education with regards to leadership and how it impacts leadership advancement practices. Gender identity is directly related to intersectionality that is outlined by the tenets of CRT. Vongalis-Macrow’s (2016) findings can be supported by Judson, Ross and Glassmeyer (2019) who focused on

teaching in engineering, but quickly recognized the role of gender in promotion and leadership decisions. Their findings revealed that there are implicit biases that support some faculty role differences, particularly in male dominated fields (Judson, Ross & Glassmeyer, 2019). Both these articles provide evidence that bias exists towards males in leadership. It is important to recognize based on that higher education leadership is dominated by White male leaders. Although there is an advantage given for males versus female identities, Black males are still unequally represented when compared to their White male counterparts. Drawing from the work of Vongalis-Macrow (2016) and Judson, Ross, and Glassmeyer (2019), the findings make a powerful case that leadership in higher education is controlled by males and there is a tremendous amount of bias associated with the selection and promotion of leaders.

There are several stereotypes such as lack of empathy, hyper-masculine, decisive, commanding, and fiscally responsible associated with male leadership in general (Madden, 2011). Gender stereotypes are nothing new and apply to higher education settings and have an impact on both male and females (Madden, 2011). Effectiveness is a large measure of leadership; stereotypes create preconceived notions about effectiveness, and in some cases, can create false expectations. There is a large amount of literature that supports the notion that success in leadership is not associated with a specific gender (Dunn, Gerlach & Hyle, 2014; Fischbach, Lichtenthaler & Horstmann, 2015; Haake, 2009; Madden, 2011).

**Black male leadership in higher education.** Individuals who hold leadership positions at colleges or universities serve an integral role in the success of the institution. These roles can be challenging to manage, but there is always a strong interest for individuals to ascertain leadership positions. The selection of leaders may vary from one institution to another; however, it is vital that institutional leadership be representative of the students whom they serve to

support engagement and a positive campus climate (Arday, 2018). Like Arday's (2018) claim that institutional leadership be representative of the students whom they serve, Hurtado (2007) believed that diversity is central to institutions meeting civic responsibilities of higher education. Black and African American employees make up less than 10 percent of higher education professionals, according to college data from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. White employees account for more than three-quarters of all higher education professionals. The benefits of a representative leadership are connected to student learning, retention, and advancement (Hurtado, 2007). Many Black males are born into disadvantaged situations that negatively impact education and consequently career advancement (Jenkins, 2006). There is still a deficit for Black males when compared to other racial groups regarding health, social, and economic categories (Mitchell, 2017). The literature clearly establishes the importance of representation for students and how this is connected to overall educational success. Further, representation is not only related to the changes that have occurred in terms of access to education, but also to the civic responsibilities of higher education in advancing social progress and decreasing concerns associated with racism and inequality. Turner and Grauerholz (2017) found that "the lack of Black men in professional ranks and the disparate treatment made them question the commitment of institutions to diversity" (p. 212).

The history of the United States as it relates to race cannot be ignored when examining the role of Black men. Black men were ranked in society at a place where there was a lack of power and privilege and have learned to operate in society from a marginalized space (Palmer et al, 2014). Blake and Darling (1994) suggested that the stereotypes that society often uses to describe African American males include being lazy, violent, and mentally inferior to Whites. These stereotypes in society often bleed into the higher education environment. Arday (2018)

explained that examining the leadership through the context of race and gender provides powerful insight in navigating racism. These stereotypes are continuously experienced by Black males, during K-12 and undergraduate experience. Black Males at PWIs describe their experience as contentious since they must deal with labels placed upon them by teachers and students (Harper, 2015). Coping with the stress of stereotypes is part of the racial fatigue battle that Black males face as they attempt to navigate leadership advancement in higher education (Mitchell, 2017). These are some of the areas that must be considered when examining the leadership advancement of Black males in higher education. Black males hold leadership roles in higher education (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016); however, despite the increase in access to higher education for Black males, Black males have made small progress in leadership roles (Wood & Palmer, 2014). The limitations that exist regarding Black males holding leadership roles creates a domino impact on a wide range of issues including support for students and diversifying curricula (Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

Palmer, Maramba and Dancy (2013) and Farmer and Hope (2015) both examined the recruitment and retention of Black males at the higher education level. However, there is little research that discusses the emotional labor attached to a Black leader in higher education (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). Anthym and Tuitt (2019) used principles of CRT and focused primarily on Black males who serve in diversity roles in higher education, but it is applicable to individuals with similar identities. They found that five areas were necessary to improve the relationship between race and leadership: preparation, communication, initiative, authority, and human concern. Anthym and Tuitt (2019) affirmed the work of Wolfe and Dilworth (2015), adding that institutions must provide more resources to support or counteract systematic oppression for minority leaders (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). Providing resources is a good step

towards addressing the concerns, but there are underlying systematic issues that must be corrected if there is to be continuity in ensuring that the leadership is representative of the student population.

The importance of learning to function in White spaces is another area that is often overlooked when examining Black male leaders in higher education. This ability may represent social progress, but can also trigger negative reactions in non-Black individuals (Anderson, 2015). This may also lead to the creation of micro-aggressions, an area that has been studied closely with regards to the treatment of marginalized populations. Micro-aggressions can be defined as often unconscious, and seemingly innocuous everyday speech, behaviors, and settings that innocently or intentionally demean or violate a person or group (Lee and Leonard 2001). The impact of these acts goes beyond the individual, but also impact policies and decision making. Simply functioning is not enough for Black males to be successful; administrators must go beyond and seek to understand deeper how Black male professionals need to be supported (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017)

**Intersectionality of Race and Gender.** The concept of intersectionality has been discussed in numerous arenas, but within education it contributes or provides a framework to leadership, policy, and the educational environment. Intersectionality is defined as the study of how different power structures interact in the lives of racial and ethnic minorities (Crenshaw, 1989). Identities such as race, class, and gender are not seen as mutually exclusive. To understand the struggle of people of color, one must first examine the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality supports micro-level analysis around inequalities within leadership practices (Agosto & Roland, 2018). The intersection of these identities impact individuals' social position in the world (Berger & Guidroz, 2010). Intersectionality was

originally introduced in a legal setting but can easily translate to an educational setting. Understanding the contributions of intersectionality is vital to support higher educational agenda; however, there are some areas in higher education that do and undo intersectionality and, subsequently, how intersectional analyses may advance a radical social justice agenda in higher education (Harris & Patton, 2017). The social justice agenda has become a large part of higher education institutions which seek to ensure that missions and visions are inclusive. Despite the shifts in diversity and the focus on education, there is still a stark difference between how Whites and people of color view race (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). Lewis (2016) also highlights the impact of tokenism by using the pipeline. Lewis' (2016) idea of a pipeline can be challenged when the findings of Shepherd (2017) are reviewed. Shepherd (2017) found that “there is a gender imbalance that is created by leadership pipelines in higher education despite efforts to prepare women for roles” (p. 82). Despite knowing the impact of intersectionality on equity, educational leaders have yet to embrace working across difference beyond recruitment of students and staff (Crenshaw, 1991).

Agosto and Roland (2018) explained “intersectionality can be applied to educational leadership because of the understanding of social groups, social structures, and social oppression” (p. 259). Intersectionality within higher education focuses on social identities of populations who are marginal or invisible and focuses on the impact of power (Agosto & Roland, 2018). Intersectionality research demonstrates the interplay between social organization and power—it does not put forth a particular theory of power. Intersectionality impacts experiences of minorities or those with marginalized identities. Specifically, it impacts the intersectionality of race and gender of individuals. The intersectionality of race and gender is critical in investigating how interconnecting systems of oppression and privilege affect the

experiences of Black males (Hotchkins, 2016). Intersectionality is an important part of diversity. The diversity of faculty and staff contribute to improving perspectives of students, and this translates to addressing equity issues in the world (Zambrana, Ray, Espino, Castro, Cohen & Eliason, 2015).

**Tokenism and leadership.** The idea of tokenism was coined by Kanter's (1977) work that focused on the different experiences between male and females in the workplace. Kanter (1977) described tokenism using the theory of proportional representation, which proposed that the token employee would work harder than the non-token employee. Employers would select individuals from marginalized populations as a token in the workplace (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). Niemann (1999) built on the work of Kanter (1977) and focused more on the scope of work that the token employee was asked to produce. Niemann's (1999) research found that faculty members who were labeled as the token performed above expectations and were asked to perform additional tasks that their White counterparts were not asked to complete. It is important to highlight that Niemann's (1999) findings also revealed that fear of repercussions by the token individuals was the reason they completed tasks and did not question the decisions by leadership. This concept has been the center of student activism on many campuses in recent times. Students are no longer satisfied with simply just meeting the hidden quota but are seeking true representation for faculty and staff (Niemann, 2016).

The federal affirmative action guidelines are not unfamiliar to education and have impacted hiring practices in hiring education over the last six decades. Despite the efforts to ensure that non-White faculty and staff are treated fairly from a hiring standpoint, faculty of color remain significantly underrepresented on college campuses (Niemann, 2016). Institutions seeking to create diverse experiences and the leadership pipeline theoretically should support the

diversity agenda. Lewis (2016) supports the pipeline and considers it a critical structural factor of organizational behavior leading to comparative representation. Lewis (2016) also highlights the impact of tokenism by using the pipeline. The study specifically examined how PWI have unbalanced composition with regards to race and gender, which then creates subcultural absence (Lewis, 2016). This impact is dangerous and impacts the leadership advancement of the minority group. Lewis (2016) explained that “the behavior of the unbalanced group creates both a tokenized environment and token positions” (p. 109). Instituting change is challenging when the change agents are numerically minority. This is the challenge that Black males face when trying to progress in their leadership roles given the organizational structure. On the other hand, institutions struggle to overcome the effects of tokenism by using their own human agency to advance in administrative roles and change the organizational culture (Lewis, 2016).

### **Cultural Taxation**

Cultural taxation is described as professionals of color being best suited for specific roles because of their race and ethnicity (Padilla, 1994). This is prevalent in colleges and universities, especially in the form of serving as the subject matter expert on all aspects of diversity (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). This demand exists because of the disproportionate representation of Black staff members in college and university settings. Guillaume & Apodaca’s (2020) study found that cultural taxation is most prevalent for staff who are in the early stages of their career (p. 2). Some institutional leaders have made the argument that there are not enough qualified Black men or people of color to fill the specific roles. However, there has been a steady increase in the number of Black males who have completed doctoral degrees. Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) reported that female faculty of color experience “an increased pressure to represent diversity as tokens, advocates, and role-models.” The desire to be successful comes at the cost of staff



sacrificing other areas. Jayakumar et al. (2009) found that specifically, faculty members who can handle the cultural taxation tend to be more successful and enjoy their roles. Cultural taxation is compounded by the idea of the collectivist perspective. This concept is focused on how Black communities collaborate with each other as part of cultural wealth (Guillaume & Apodaca, 2020). A significant amount of research focused on pressure to pursue tenure; unfortunately, there is the need to publish or lose their position (Cleveland, Sailes, Gilliam & Watts, 2018). Institutions must address the concerns around diversity and cultural taxation by ensuring that they are aware of the current challenges facing marginalized populations. Recruitment is simply not sufficient to address the major issues and concerns created by the lack of diversity at every level (Robinson, & Aldana, 2020).

### **The Leadership Pipeline**

The leadership pipeline is not uncommon and exists across multiple disciplines. Charan, Drotter, and Noel (2010) defined the leadership pipeline as “visible steps taken by an organization identifying candidates for succession, combined with development.” (p.34). When executed correctly, there are several advantages to using this approach (Griffith, Baur & Buckley, 2019). Organizations such as higher education institutions often create internal leadership pipelines that span entry level to executive positions (Griffith, Baur & Buckley, 2019). As the previous literature highlights, institutional leadership is dominated by White males. This dominance can impact who is selected to participate in this pipeline and ultimately creates homogenous leadership (Charan, Drotter & Noel, 2010). Evans, Hess, Abdelhamid and Stepleman (2016) evaluated the leadership pipeline created by Augusta University and identified institutional culture and cultural competence as the two factors that lead to the success of this program. In this case, communication strategies were changed, additional opportunities for

career development were offered including mentoring, and additional assessment around race and culture was completed. Baker, Lunsford and Pifer (2019) also found that there can be leaks in the pipeline if staff have different aspirations than what the pipeline is designed to serve. A leadership pipeline is present in higher education institutions. There are benefits and disadvantages. The disadvantages based on the literature seem to enhance inequity in leadership with regards to race and gender.

Mentorship is also another vital part of ensuring that the leadership pipeline is successful. Mentoring provides a support system for staff. Building a professional networking can be challenging. This challenge becomes even greater for Blacks in higher education because of the relatively few Black faces on many campuses. This is not a new subject area but has recently been revitalized for organizations to provide higher quality of support and build relationships between staff (Grier-Reed, Arcinue, & Inman, 2016). Despite the popularity of mentoring, much of the research around this subject area cannot agree on a singular definition (Dawson, 2014). The lack of consistency in definition may be one of the reasons why institutions have varying approaches to mentoring programs. One of the findings reflected in research around mentoring is that mentorship is connected to reflective learning which impacts leadership and personal development (Hudson, 2013; Priest, Kliewer, Hornung & Youngblood, 2018). The research supports the idea that mentoring impacts development. The absence of mentoring can therefore hinder development, impact leadership advancement, and serve as a barrier to retention (Zambrana et al., 2015).

Mentoring also provides opportunities for students to see examples, learn from experiences, and have a support system. Numerous researchers have described the positive impact of mentoring relationships in an educational context (Dixon-Reeves, 2003; Stanley &

Lincoln, 2005). Institutional type also impacts mentoring programs as well (McCoy, Luedke & Winkle-Wagner, 2017). Crisp and Young (2018) explained that “mentoring can be directly connected to personal development and leadership empowerment” (p. 36). Mentoring has been instituted to impact the retention of Black women in academia because of the double minority label, but the same efforts have not been given to Black men (Mitchell, 2017). The strength or success of mentoring can be connected to the characteristics of the mentors, and the identities that they hold. One of the most common reasons for successful outcomes in mentoring is the influence of race of the mentor and mentee (Freeman & Kochan, 2019). The connections between family backgrounds and shared lived experiences provide additional value in the relationship development. Overall, mentoring is an important part of improving retention, and for Black males, some of the benefits include leadership development, improving satisfaction, and identity development (Christie & Baghurst, 2017). Howard (2014) found that mentoring provides a high level of encouragement for Black males who are often scrutinized and not seen in a similar context as their White counterparts. Effective mentoring allows African Americans to advance socially, politically, and economically (Strayhorn & Saddler, 2009). It is important that the leadership pipeline accounts for mentoring for all identities to support equitable leadership advancement practices. Scholars have advocated that mentoring not only benefits the mentee but promotes engagement for staff and can have a trickle-down impact on students (Mitchell, 2017).

The concept of bridge leadership is an area that is often overlooked when examining leadership advancement of Black males. This concept is like mentoring or a pipeline but focuses more on the current leader recognizing responsibilities to be a bridge for others (Capper, 2019). Bridge leadership approaches demonstrate a concern for future, equity, and the community

(Horsford, 2012). Collins' (1999) study found that the emphasis on individual work or individual identity only perpetuates White ideals and does not help to solve the equity problem.

Social belonging interventions are on the increase, which can also be used for support staff. Social belonging interventions are practices that help with transition to promote engagement. This type of intervention has shown to have a positive impact on the retention of marginalized staff. There is a positive association with Black males who participate in these types of programs and the success they have in higher education. These programs do not necessarily impact social aspects of Black males; however, the research supports positive changes in work satisfaction and career advancement (David, Patterson, Perkins, Butler-Barnes & Walker, 2017). Self-efficacy is also highlighted in the literature as having an impact on student success; however, this varies based on institutional characteristics (Wood, Newman & Harris, 2015).

**Cronyism and Leadership.** The concept of cronyism is often used interchangeably with other concepts such as favoritism or nepotism. Despite these practices creating disproportionate treatment of employees, employee dissatisfaction, and a lack of trust in leadership, they still exist in many organizations (Arasli & Tumer, 2008). The empowerment of interest groups impacts how individuals gain access specifically in the areas of career advancement. Modern advancement is often dictated by who is known and the ideas associated with next in line for positions of power (Hodgson, 2019). Individuals who fall within minority groups tend to be impacted negatively (cronyism) as it relates to leadership advancement. Roscigno (2019) explained that “inequality creation is not merely just about status vulnerabilities but also fundamentally about power and social relations” (p. 4).

## Summary

The review of the relevant literature revealed several themes about the leadership advancement of non-faculty Black males in higher education and how it is impacted by several factors. The framework established by three of the six tenets of CRT was used to create the framework for the study. These tenets connected identities of race and gender to leadership advancement in higher education. CRT provides an analytical perspective to examine how the experiences of participants and the organizational structure of higher education institutions create disparities and impact leadership advancement.

The major themes that were addressed in the literature were the overall state of leadership in higher education and how this is impacted by identity, the intersectionality of diversity and leadership, and the notion of the leadership pipeline. The educational statistics in the literature revealed that there are disparities that exist with regards to Black men in leadership roles in comparison to their White counterparts. Patitu and Hinton (2003) and Mirza (2017) all support the ideas that the inequitable representation of administrators impacts the campus climate and student experience. Despite the evidence supported by statistics, there is still little literature around why and how identity (Black male) influences leadership advancement in higher education. This gap supports the needs for the study as it seeks to determine how educational inequalities in higher education impact practices that support African American males gaining access to leadership, why characteristics of leaders vary based on identity, and how the intersectionality of race and gender impact leadership advancement in higher education.

The literature around leadership describes how complex of an issue it is. There is a large focus on the intentionality behind mission statements and how they impact leadership advancement. These mission statements are often written from the perspective of the majority,

which sometimes present serious concerns of how to support individuals who do not fit into this category. The institutional type also matters when considering the construction of mission and vision. Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) found that the level of integration of diversity at PWIs challenges homogeneity of leadership which may cause an imbalance to the norms. Although this is a factor, the current literature still reveals that Black male leaders are perceived differently than their White counterparts.

There is a significant amount of literature that addresses the necessary steps for leadership advancement. Lewis (2016) defined leadership advancement as “movement with an increase in responsibilities, rewards and salary or vertical movement with an increase in responsibility and rewards” (p.110). There is an imbalance in how advancement occurs based on identity and gender. Several factors such as years of experience, educational qualifications, and formal leadership training all impact leadership advancement according to the literature.

Diversity in leadership around race and gender is important. There are barriers that exist that impact leadership advancement because of identity. Some of the challenges include breaking cultural barriers, shifting in beliefs, and overcoming resistance (Adserias et al., 2017). These challenges cannot be ignored if institutions are to establish administrators who are representative of the changing landscape of higher education. With regards to gender and leadership, the literature clearly establishes that higher education leadership is dominated by males. According to Vongalis-Macrow (2016), 60% of academics were men, and they held approximately 77% of leadership positions. Despite the dominance of males, there is still a disparity when race is introduced into the equation. Black males have made small progress in leadership roles (Wood & Palmer, 2014), but remain underrepresented. The limitations that exist regarding Black males holding leadership roles create a domino impact on a wide range of issues including support for

students and diversifying curricula (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). The literature discussed the idea of cultural taxation for marginalized identities. This is an important consideration for Black males since some do hold leadership roles, but the expectation that they perform for the entire race and go above and beyond creates significant fatigue.

The leadership pipeline was the final aspect of the literature reviewed. Although there are many benefits to creating leadership pipelines such as consistency, professional development, and creating support systems to creating an appropriate pipeline, there are also several limitations such as inequity in gender preparation, dominance by the majority group, and lack of transparency. Leadership pipelines are effective for leadership advancement when there are equitable structures in place to create a diverse pipeline. Higher education institutional leadership is dominated by White males (Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). This dominance can impact who is selected to participate in this pipeline and ultimately create homogenous leadership as well as impact the values surrounding advancement (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2010). The current research also highlights the importance of institutions incorporating a bridge leadership philosophy. This, although very similar to a pipeline, focuses more on cultural connections and placing the responsibility on common identities to act as a resource for each other. As research continues to identify ways to assist Black males toward advancing into leadership positions, it is imperative that focus also be given to retention to truly sustain a pipeline (Mitchell, 2017). There is a need for additional formal and informal structures to support Black males throughout their career journey.

The current research is limited with regards to non-faculty Black males and leadership advancement. It is imperative that researchers continue to explore what is needed for Black males to be successful and lead in a higher education setting. There is an opportunity for more

research to be done at smaller PWIs. Research has insufficient findings on the intersection of leadership advancement and male identity. The current literature addresses race, but often fails to connect the gender identity to the discussions. The hope is that this study can address these concerns and narrow the existing gap by investigating the experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with their leadership advancement in the context of public predominantly White institutions (PWI) in Virginia.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with their leadership advancement in the context of public predominantly White institutions (PWI) in Virginia. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the participants, setting, procedures, research design, and analysis. An explanation of the researcher's role, and all data collection and reporting methods are addressed. The chapter's final section address trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and a summary of the chapter.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design was used for this study. Specifically, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used to explore the perspectives of non-faculty Black male administrators and their leadership advancement in public PWIs in Virginia. A qualitative research method was selected because of this method's flexibility in capturing information from various sources and the exploratory nature of this study. Flexibility was essential because it allowed the researcher to explore participants' lived experiences even when unexpected themes emerged from the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research also crosses disciplines and subject areas, and connects complex experiences providing an in-depth view about a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This type of research design does not test a hypothesis nor provide a single answer. This approach relies on the lived experiences of individuals to describe experiences and the meaning derived from those experiences. Accounts of participants' lived experiences were collected using multiple mediums and then used by the researcher to connect the experiences to the overarching phenomenon. Using a qualitative design

considers the holistic perspective of the phenomenon as a complex system that is more than just the sum of individual units, but collective experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Van Manan (1977) stated that "qualitative research connects perceptions of individuals via stories to the social world" (p.207). Using this method allowed this researcher to connect patterns and themes from participants to conclusion.

This study was designed to understand a specific population's perspectives on leadership advancement in higher education. To fully understand the meaning and essence of the lived experiences of this phenomenon associated with this group of individuals, flexibility and gathering of information from multiple sources, mainly documenting the lived experiences of individuals that have experience with the phenomenon being investigated was conducted. The phenomenological research design was deemed the best choice for this study. Phenomenology is a form of inquiry that seeks to understand human experience in the context of a specific problem or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). There is limited published research about Black male non-faculty administrators' leadership advancement. It was vital to understand how leadership representation changes to reflect diversity and support ethnically diverse student populations. Using a phenomenological approach allowed this researcher to work with data and identify the major themes associated with this phenomenon among this population. Guenther and Falk (2019) explained that "generalization from qualitative research can be achieved through proper research design, and it is a legitimate and useful process" (p. 1012). Pulling together the data, analyzing it using coding techniques, reading, and reducing it to descriptions and common themes is crucial in qualitative research. This research approach allowed findings to be transferred to other contexts; information can be used by others that are in similar circumstances and working through similar problems (Carminati, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transferability can be

obtained in qualitative research by providing details about the population, location, and analysis to provide a clear picture that informs the reader (Connelly, 2016). The research study's findings could be relevant to other conditions, situations, and populations.

The study's findings shed light on leadership advancement regarding a specific population in a particular setting. Examining this population and the topic selected required attention to detail and a deep dive into perceptions, participants' understanding of leadership, and, most importantly, understanding the participants' lived experiences through descriptions of those experiences. For those reasons, a transcendental phenomenological design was selected for this research. This approach relies heavily on the individual experiences, which allowed information to be gained from the story, not from the researcher or other sources (Moustakas, 1994). This type of phenomenological approach is appropriate because the researcher aimed to determine how individuals' experiences connected to leadership development and advancement within a higher education context. A transcendental phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to capture this group of individuals' beliefs, values, and motives in higher education. Using this approach allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives organically. It is important to gain a deeper understanding of this specific population's experiences with leadership advancement to offer perspectives and understand what support is needed for this specific population to advance in leadership roles. One of the most important reasons why this design was appropriate is the transcendental feature of the design. This feature emphasized that prejudgments or biases are set aside to view the phenomenon being examined with an open mind (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher identified the population in both race and position. In addition to this transcendental aspect, there is also a combination of viewing experiences and behaviors as an integrated and inseparable relationship (Moustakas, 1994).

## **Research Questions**

The research questions listed below were developed based on the theoretical framework and body of current literature. These questions guided this transcendental phenomenological study.

### **Central Research Question**

What are the leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia?

### **Sub-Question One**

How do historical patterns of educational inequality in higher education impact Black leaders' perceived support at predominately White institutions?

### **Sub-Question Two**

What are the self-identified leadership characteristics of non-faculty Black male administrators in higher education at predominately White institutions in Virginia?

### **Sub-Question Three**

How do non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia experience the intersection of race and gender in their leadership advancement?

## **Setting and Participants**

### **Setting**

The setting for this study was public, predominately White institutions located in Virginia. The institutions selected for the study were described as public predominately White four-year institutions, institutions that were classified as predominately White with a significant percentage of the student population who identified as non-White. The percentage of students who identified as non-White was an essential distinction for the setting because institutions

should have leadership that represents the population. There are 11 public predominately White four-year institutions located in Virginia. Four of the eleven were identified to select participants for the study. Institutions with larger difference between White and non-White students allowed for experiences to be shared and provided a context for deeper insight about staff that were representative of the student population. Institutions varied based on size, location, and institution type (Liberal Arts or Research). The student demographic for each institution was important to understand representation based on race and gender. Student demographics were very similar among the institutions selected. Students fell within middle class socio-economic status, and undergraduate population of an age range of 18-23, and approximately 3:1 with regards to male to female ratio.

**Table 1**

*Student Demographics at Institutions*

Institution	Number of Students	Student Population % by Race				
		White	Black	Asian	Latino/Hispanic	Other
River University	30103	48.9	17.3	12.7	7.64	13.46
Mountain Ridge	30598	62.9	4.25	5.57	8.89	12.55
University on the Bay	24932	47.7	27.4	4.36	6.16	14.38
University on Plains	24639	60	6	13	6	16

*Names listed as pseudonyms*

The leadership structure at PWIs was very similar. They were led by Presidents and governed by a Board of Trustees or Visitors. Directly beneath the President in terms of leadership were Senior Vice Presidents. The hierarchy structure may vary slightly based on how they are divided in an institution. For example, some universities have ten Senior Vice Presidents, one for each of the university's main functional areas. The next step in leadership was divided into two areas, academic and student affairs. Each area was led by either a dean or a

Provost. The title varied based on the institution, but the roles were similar. Beneath that level, there were Assistant Deans or an Assistant Provost, followed by department heads for individual units.

The southern region was selected because of the history of inequality within the geographic and educational contexts. Examining this region provided perspective on the types of equitable practices in higher education leadership. Any institution's leadership sets the tone within the institution, and significant organizational change must address institutional diversity and leadership that represents students (Walter, Ruiz, Tourse, Kress, Morningstar, MacArthur & Daniels, 2017). Educational institutions are large parts of society and can often reinforce and perpetuate social norms and stereotypes. The evolution of higher education saw access to different social and identity group's increase not only on the student level, but also for faculty and staff. However, the perceptions associated with these groups also entered the educational environment. Biases are influenced by background, cultural environment, and experiences and can create equity concerns in higher education (Tate & Page, 2018). Lynn and Adams (2002) explained that educational establishments are the primary environments where racism exists and have a significant impact on those who are part of the institution. The southern region's history of racism within education and social constructs associated with groups is connected to leadership structures and advancement.

### **Participants**

Purposeful criterion and snowball sampling was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is a method of recruiting participants that fit specific criteria and possess experience with the phenomenon under investigation that will provide insight to the study (Creswell, 2018). Snowball sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling where participants are

recruited through existing participants which are friends of participants who are recommended to participate by existing participants (Suen, Huang & Lee, 2014).

**Table 2**

*Participants Demographics*

<b>PARTICIPANT NAME</b>	<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>HIGHEST EDUCATION COMPLETED</b>	<b>TITLE</b>
Participant B	University on the Bay	12	PhD	Director of Multicultural Affairs
Participant C	University on the Bay	5	Masters	Resident Director
Participant G	River City University	10	MBA	Associate Director of Finance for Student Affairs
Participant H	River City University	7	Masters	Assistant to the Director of Cultural Affairs
Participant I	River City University	16	MBA	Associate Director of Division's HR
Participant J	Mountain Ridge	17	Masters	Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Participant L	River City University	6	Masters	Coordinator
Participant M	Mountain Ridge	9	Masters	Assistant Director
Participant N	University on Plains	5	Masters	Coordinator for First year programs
Participant P	University on the Bay	11	Masters	Assistant Director
Participant Q	Mountain Ridge	8	Masters	Coordinator for sophomore programs

Participant R	University on Plains	7	Masters	Area Coordinator
Participant W	University on Plains	9	MPA	Advisor

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*Names listed as pseudonyms*

For this study, the participants were accessible to the researcher through higher education networks. Although the main recruiting technique was purposeful criterion, a snowball approach was used to identify participants who possessed specific characteristics for the study. This was essential because it allowed the researcher to determine who and what information should be gathered or not gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2014). For phenomenological studies, since the focus is on accurately portraying a particular group's phenomenon, there was no need for a large sample size. The goal was to gather descriptions of their lived experience, which were rich in detail and imagery, as well as a reflection on meaning (Grossoehme, 2014).

The sample for this study was small and met specific criteria that was developed to select participants. This type of sampling allows the researcher to identify and select individuals or groups with experiences that provide information on the phenomenon of interest (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The characteristics used to select participants for this study were based on their positions on campus, their potential to step into administrative leadership roles soon, their professional experiences, and their inclination to participate in the study. Participants recruited for this study were Black males who currently held full-time leadership positions at predominately White public institutions. Participants had five years of experience and held a supervisory role in their current institution. The years of experience and supervisory requirements was necessary to provide details about experiences achieving that role. Supervisory experience demonstrates that they had experiences to lead and make them relevant for the study because they had not yet held top administrative positions; they were still on their career path to



leadership (Table 2). The study limited participants to only administrators, not faculty. Creswell and Poth (2018) confirm that having specific characteristics in place to select participants works well for this approach when all participants have experienced the phenomenon; this was useful for quality assurance. Thematic analysis was completed on the information gathered via interviews and focus groups; therefore, having a representative sample decreased sampling error and increases data quality (Omona, 2013). This sampling method allowed the researcher to concentrate on individuals who had experienced the phenomenon and improved their chances of accurate information.

There is no specific requirement for selecting a sample size for phenomenological approaches since studies have been done, ranging from 1- 25 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This type of study aimed not to gather a representative sample or large group, but instead found individuals who could accurately speak to the phenomenon that was studied. For this study, participants were selected from each of the four institutions. Participant saturation was anticipated at approximately twelve to fifteen participants; however, sampling continued until no new themes emerged from additional participants. The sample size for the transcendental phenomenological approach may range from as little as three to fifteen (Moustakas, 1994). Twelve was the saturation point because it provided enough opportunity to collect information that provided insight into the phenomenon that was transferable among institutions. It was also a large enough pool to capture specific information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each participant received a monetary gift card upon completion of the study as a token of appreciation for participation. According to Singer and Couper (2008), “Monetary incentives are used to help motivate survey participation” (p. 49).

### **Researcher Positionality**

This study is important to me because I am a Black male who is passionate about higher education. I have worked in higher education for nine years and aspire to be in a leadership capacity at some point in my career. I identify as a Black male who has also worked in higher education for nine years and has held numerous supervisory positions. Black males in leadership roles may have a trickle-down effect on Black male student performance and ultimately may improve retention and graduation rates. Mentorship may also support an increase of Black males in leadership roles via a leadership pipeline. I have observed how underrepresented Black males are in leadership roles at public predominately White institutions throughout my professional career. The lack of representation does not exist on the student level. The educational system in the United States has changed significantly over the years to a more diverse cross-section of the population in terms of race, class, and gender. However, as an administrator, these changes do not seem to be occurring in the leadership of these institutions.

This study has been developed to understand Black male higher education administrators' lived experiences in leadership, how they achieved their positions, what pathways they used to gain access to leadership, and what they may be doing to support others on the same path. I bring a social constructivism paradigm to this research and use an epistemological philosophical assumption. Social constructivism paradigm focuses on the experiences of others. Social constructivism is an interpretive framework whereby individuals seek to understand their world and develop meanings that correspond to their experience (Creswell, 2013). The approach provides an opportunity to understand a problem by examining the interaction or experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators to determine how this is connected to leadership advancement.

For this study an epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions were examined. An epistemological assumption believes that knowledge is built on participant social realities (Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2009). Gender and racial identities impact an individual's social reality; these identities are two important aspects of participants in this study. Connecting the social reality to lived experiences makes this assumption relevant for this study; participant's experiences will be captured by hearing about their experiences and treating them as experts since they have lived through this process. Ontological assumptions are related to the nature of reality; it is addressed using multiple perspectives of participants in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on the information gathered, themes were developed based on questionnaires, interviews, and focus group responses. Axiological assumptions focus on the role of values and the impact on the narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My values as a higher education professional have been developed over several years, my progressive leadership roles, gender, and racial identity. My values support professional development, learning, and career advancement for professionals of color.

This Social constructivism paradigm aligns with a phenomenological research design. This design is appropriate for this study because it is described as a foundationalist. It focuses on securing the right answer with valid understandings of texts independent of factors in the interpreter, while investigating data based on stories or lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Combining this paradigm, assumptions, and methodological approach allows me to use a qualitative research method to access information from participants. The hope is that this study will provide insight into Black non-faculty administrators' leadership journeys to provide institutions with the necessary steps needed to support this population.

This section provides an opportunity for you to articulate your motivation for conducting

the study, that is, your research paradigm or interpretive framework (i.e., post-positivism, social constructivism, pragmatism, or transformative frameworks), and your three philosophical assumptions (i.e., ontological, epistemological, axiological) that will guide the study. Keep in mind that qualitative research is written in the first-person voice rather than the third-person voice. Many times, post-positivism and social constructivism are frequently used with phenomenological and grounded theory studies, whereas pragmatism is the research paradigm that is used when conducting a case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transformative frameworks include the many critical theories, action research, and feminist theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Researcher's Role**

It was important to note that a critical part of qualitative research is that the researcher be personally involved at every level of the process; decisions are made on personal grounds (Fink, 2000). For this study, I served as the primary instrument for data collection. The transcendental phenomenological approach required the researcher to employ the bracketing process (Moustakas, 1994). As part of the bracketing process, I provided my responses to all interview questions shared with participants (Appendix D). Taking this step will address any concerns around data collection because I used this time to set aside specific feelings and biases regarding the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Although I have not worked at these institutions, the university and college environment are incredibly familiar. Recognizing this from the start can aid in addressing researcher bias. The researcher's mental and other discomforts could impact obtaining valid data if biases are not recognized (Chenail, 2011). The high level of familiarity served as an advantage as it provided a comfort level to the participants knowing that I was familiar with higher education environments.

## **Procedures**

This section describes the relevant procedures necessary to complete the study.

Explanations in this section includes necessary site permissions, information about securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, soliciting participants, the data collection and analysis plans by data source, and an explanation of how the study achieves triangulation.

### **Permissions**

The researcher received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval regarding participants and data collection (Appendix A). After approval was received, participants' selection was the next step, followed by data collection, recording, and analysis. The researcher used current networks in higher education to share information about the study, including the criteria required for the participants. Interested participants contacted the researcher and snowball sampling was used to recruit additional participants.

The researcher received IRB approval from Liberty University for the study (see Appendix B). All steps outlined in the Liberty University Dissertation Handbook were followed. Upon securing approval from IRB Liberty University, the committee chair and committee members were notified. It is crucial to ensure that all approval procedures are followed closely and ethically to protect the participants. Selecting and ensuring the safety of all participants is critical to research (Stang, 2015).

### **Recruitment Plan**

A pilot of the questions was completed before the main study to address any challenges that may be associated with identifying participants for the study. Additionally, this helped to revise questions that may be unclear before further use in interviews and focus groups. Creswell (2013) asserts that using a pilot study can also elevate areas such as transferability and

validity. The pilot study did not serve as a data collection method, but was used to test and verify procedure. All proposed questions were examined and reviewed before initiating the pilot study. The final step of the pilot study process was to create specific participant checking to receive feedback about the process and make specific modifications to the questions. Feedback from the pilot study included making questions more specific to allow participants greater context as well as providing definitions for terms such as pipeline, mentoring, and social justice rationale (See Appendix C for journal notes).

For this study, the target was a participant saturation of approximately twelve to fifteen Black male non-faculty administrators. Qualitative research suggested that the number of participants is large enough and varied to adequately capture the phenomenon and meet the study (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016). Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to select participants until the saturation goal was met. Participants received an email providing information about participating in the study and the nature of the study. The goal was to identify participants that met the criteria of Black males, having a minimum of five years of experience, and served in a supervisory capacity in their current role; the participants received more information about the study and the next steps, including the contact information of the researcher. Each participant received a monetary gift card upon completion of the study. Connecting with the researcher's professional networks was used to initiate the snowball sampling process. These initial participants were used to make recommendations for other participants who met the criteria for the study.

Data was gathered from Black non-faculty administrators from four different PWIs in Virginia. The participants ranged in roles they currently were in but had at least five years of higher education experience. The institutions also varied by size ranging from twelve thousand to

thirty-two thousand students. Participant recruitment was done by identifying administrators who met the criteria. Targeted emails were sent to those individuals outlining the purpose, research questions, and study timeline. Email addresses were gathered from researchers' professional networks, and an open call for participation was sent via email. The email included information about the researcher and the next steps if the participant was interested. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Using these techniques allowed the researcher to understand how participants viewed their experiences and aligned with a qualitative approach (Mohajan, 2018). All participants completed a study consent form that provided details about the study. All data collected was stored electronically and password protected on the researcher's device.

Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups by using an online communication platform of Microsoft Teams. All the data collected was audio recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed. The recording and transcription were stored on a password-protected device. The participants selected for the study completed a questionnaire to document that they met the characteristics to participate; this questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. The first step was to arrange a meeting with each participant via Microsoft Teams to complete an initial meeting, review consent forms, ensure the participant met inclusion criteria, and share general information about the study. This meeting allowed this researcher to build rapport with each participant (Creswell, 2018).

The next data collection method was a semi-structured one-on-one interview with each participant. Meeting interviews were scheduled via an online platform; all questions for the interviews had been reviewed during the pilot study. Each participant took part in a one-on-one interview for approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were scheduled based on researcher and

participant availability (see Appendix D). The researcher conducted individual interviews using a virtual online platform of Microsoft Teams and Facetime. Using this interview approach helped with confidentiality and potentially helped the participant to be more comfortable. Using this approach allowed the researcher and interviewee to diverge from pursuing an idea or responding in detail (Fink, 2000). If a participant was unable to meet virtually, phone interviews were offered as an alternative. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim. The researcher informed participants of recording guidelines and the impact on transcription based on a plan for transcription logistics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To ensure accurate documentation of interviews and focus groups, audio recording was used to capture all participant responses. A structured interview protocol was used for all interviews. Creating a predesign for the study allowed the researcher to take notes easily regarding each question and response from the participant and supported the organization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were also given opportunities outside of the structured interview to self-report. Allowing participants to self-report makes the participant feel more valued (Moustakas, 1994). Recordings were stored in two locations, and password access was required to access files. The third form of data collection used was a structured focus group. Each participant was invited to a meeting that was conducted using the online platform of Microsoft Teams. Each participant was informed of the themes that emerged from the questionnaire and interview process. Participants were guided through structured questions which helped to confirm and develop themes further.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Data collection is critical in qualitative research. The methods used can impact the depth of information about the phenomenon under investigation (Fink, 2000). Data was collected using



three different techniques: questionnaires, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus groups. Interviews were the primary data collection method used in a transcendental phenomenological design and allowed the researcher to explore views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations (Creswell, 2018). All three data collection methods allowed the researcher to explore participants' lived experiences as they responded to questions. Participants were informed of each data collection method before each one was conducted. The nature of the study, the participants' role, and consent were reviewed before starting each collection method.

### **Questionnaires**

A demographic questionnaire was the first data collection tool used. Questionnaires were developed to gather information on participants. A sample questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. Open-ended questions in the questionnaires focused on specific themes identified from the literature. Questionnaires were sent to the participants electronically. Each participant was given a unique identifier to ensure that only this individual with this information was able to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted using Qualtrics electronic software. Using this data collection method allowed for collecting data in written format, giving the respondent more time to tell his or her story. Questionnaires tend to yield high-quality data (Marshall, 2005). The question format for the questionnaire was essential to consider. Using open-ended questions for the questionnaire reassures the researcher that all relevant issues are addressed (O'Cathain & Thomas, 2004). Considering the gaps in the literature, this was an appropriate place to gather more information around the issue. Participants shared more information about institutions during this phase. The following questions were used in the initial questionnaire:

1. How do you identify based on race?

2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
4. How long have you worked in higher education?
5. Briefly describe your current role at your institution.
6. Please list all your leadership roles and job responsibilities you have held in higher education.
7. Please identify all the types of institutions you have worked at previously based on specific classifications.
8. How many years have you served in a supervisory role?
9. Briefly describe what steps you have taken to support your career advancement.
10. How do you think your racial and gender identity has impacted your career advancement?
11. Based on your experiences, can you describe your thoughts on how stereotypes of Black males impact the perception of Black male perception?

Questions one, two, and three served as demographic questions to gain an understanding of how participants identified themselves. This was important to confirm that all criteria for participation was met.

Questions four, five, and six focused on general leadership in higher education. It was important to gather a baseline of participants' understanding of leadership as it related to higher education. These questions allowed participants to connect institutional mission, vision, and leaders. Yenney (2018) explained that "institutional mission impacts and constrains the ways in which organizational leadership can act on issues" (p. 241). Yenney's argument that higher education institutions are mission-driven means that leaders must be

intentional with mission development to ensure that they can support the institution holistically.

The remaining questions were designed to determine an understanding of participants' perspective on masculinity. This was important because the literature suggests that masculinity impacts leadership, but it is also an important part of a Black male administrator's approach to leadership. Broom, Clark, and Smith (2017) found that male-centered initiative masculinity emerged as one of the salient frameworks to understand engagement. This question sought to gain a baseline for participants' understanding of PWI leadership and determined if they recognized the difference. The literature around leadership at PWIs supports the need for diversity and highlights steps institutions have taken.

Diversity has become a universal term and is often combined with inclusion to address policies and practices (Arday, 2018). Diversity is an extremely popular concept within and outside of higher education. Institutions have made efforts to showcase diversity at every level. The diversity agenda according to Adserias et al. (2017) is defined as "transformational change in order to reflect shifting demographics trends embodying social and cultural values" (p. 315). After reviewing the literature, three core rationales came from the diversity agenda. The three rationales of the diversity agenda were the social justice rationale, the educational rationale, and the business rationale (Adserias et. al., 2017).

### ***Individual Interview Questions***

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position.

CRQ

2. Describe your challenges when working with English Language Learners (ELL) in your classes. SQ1

3. Describe successful practices you use when working with ELL students in your classes.  
SQ1
4. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to work with ELL students as a teacher? SQ1
5. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with ELL students that we haven't discussed? SQ1
6. Describe your challenges when working with lower socioeconomic status (SES) students in your classes. SQ2
7. Describe successful practices you use when working with lower SES students in your classes. SQ2
8. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to work with lower SES students as a teacher? SQ2
9. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with lower SES students that we haven't discussed? SQ2
10. Describe your challenges when working with handicapped students in your classes. SQ3
11. Describe successful practices you use when working with handicapped students in your classes. SQ3
12. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to work with handicapped students as a teacher? SQ3
13. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with handicapped students that we haven't discussed? SQ3

The questions should have a modest explanation for their inclusion in your interview protocol, which may include a question's relationship to the problem, purpose, theoretical

framework, conceptual framework, or any applicable research questions, the latter of which is most common. An exhaustive rationale for each question supported by empirical literature is not required. After developing your questions, discuss in your procedures that you will get experts in the field to review your questions. Of course, these are typically your committee members and need not be anyone else. Piloting the interview with a small sample outside of your study to ensure clarity of questions and wording is not necessary but certainly permissible. In qualitative research, we want to avoid the time and energy spent with unnecessary pilot studies, and we do not want to waste viable data. With reviewed and approved interview questions, you can approximate the value of a pilot study by taking extra care to critically review the conduct of your first interview and seeking on-the-spot feedback from your first participant. When minor changes are made to interview questions that do not change the substance of an interview, the credibility of the interview protocol is sufficient to include the first participant in the study. Any pilot of your interview protocols must wait until after you receive IRB approval to collect data.

### **Individual Interviews**

In depth, semi-structured, individual interviews with open-ended questions were used as the first data collection method. Interviews not only allowed for data to be collected but provided the researcher with the ability to organize and analyze data into a coherent portrayal of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A semi-structured interview was selected so that the responses provided direction of the respondents' lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews allowed the use of clarification questions and themes to be identified (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Gerbich (2007) supported the data collection method of interviewing because it allowed the researcher to explore further aspects which became event via responses to the open-ended

questions. Open-ended questions are used to access the perspective of the participant; this can limit the researcher putting personal ideas onto participants (Patton, 1990).

The interview questions were open-ended and sought to build a picture and identify themes and relationships about the phenomenon being explored. According to Moustakas (1994), open-ended questions allowed clarification questions to be asked and identified themes. The setting of the interview was also essential. Rapport building occurred before formal questions were asked on the topic. Setting aside time at the start to build rapport created trust between the interviewer and participants, creating a more relaxed atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher followed a predetermined interview protocol that allowed for questions associated with the research to be asked and questions that built rapport (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview began with questions that allowed participants to contextualize the phenomenon, followed by questions descriptive and structural, and concluded with questions that clarified the phenomenon. The following interview questions were used to collect data and were updated based on the pilot study:

1. Please introduce yourself to me, and tell me about your current role at “INSERT INSTITUTION NAME”
2. Tell me about your decision to pursue a career in higher education.
3. Outline the steps that you have taken personally, academically, and professionally to prepare you for your current role.
4. Tell me what opportunities your institution offers to you which may help your ability to advance in your career.
5. Describe the current hiring practices at your institution.
6. Describe how would someone in your role progress into a leadership role.

7. What steps would you have to take if you were interested in taking on a larger leadership role at your current institutions?
8. Describe how you would gain and maintain access to a leadership role at a PWI?
9. Describe how representative you think the current leadership of your institution is with the student population.
10. Describe your experience over being promoted or passed over for a leadership role.
11. What do you think impacts leadership advancement for Black males at PWIs?
12. Describe the barriers that hinder non-faculty Black males from holding leadership roles at your institution.
13. What role does race and gender play in leadership advancement in higher education at PWIs?
14. How should your institution address the social justice rationale?
15. Please describe how any form of mentoring that has impacted your career advancement.
16. The leadership pipeline seeks to create opportunity and mentorship for future leaders; how does your institution use this strategy for supporting leadership development and career advancement?
17. Please tell me anything else that you would like to about this topic that I have not asked.

Question one provided an opportunity for the participants to give a self-description as well as tell the research in their own terms what they thought their role at the institution may be. This was important because often in higher education individuals are classified as one role, but often take on additional responsibilities. Providing an employee, the opportunity to share their perspective of their role decreases the chances of the employee feeling isolated or struggling with the assignment listed versus non-listed duties (Stone-Johnson, 2015).

Questions two, three, and four focused on identifying how the participants viewed the work they had done to achieve their current role. Additionally, it allowed the participants to share their perspective on the contributions the institution has made to their career advancement.

Question five focused on institution's hiring and promotion practices from the participants' understanding. This provided this researcher with comparative data that could be used with the document analysis review of the written policies. Hiring practices may vary in the process, but there are consistent regulations that exist. Employees tend to not have a full understanding of not only hiring, but also the promotion or avenues for promotion in education (Shoemaker & McKeen, 1975).

Questions six through ten were developed to evaluate two things: the employees' desire to lead and the employees' perception of opportunity and leadership at their institution. This was important and could reveal what the participants viewed as a barrier. It also provided an opportunity for the participants to share their story.

Questions eleven through fourteen focused on the climate around diversity and social justice. These questions were intentionally kept for the final question so that the others would not be driven by emotional responses that could have been influenced by campus climate. Diversity is often misinterpreted as numbers and acceptance, but it goes beyond that perspective (Chen & Hamilton, 2015).

The final three questions focused on mentoring and the leadership pipeline. These are areas that the literature revealed were directly connected to career advancement. Mentoring relationships can have significant impact on raising awareness about barriers as well as support promotion possibilities for individuals experiencing these relationships (Steele, 2016). Recently, the leadership pipeline philosophy has been adapted from the corporate or business world into



higher education. Strategic agency is required if individuals are to prosper in the academic game (Shepherd, 2017).

### **Focus Groups**

Focus group interviews provided an opportunity to obtain collective opinions on a subject matter from specific individuals through group interaction (Litosseliti, 2003). According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), "focus groups are useful in generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs" (p. 293). Arday (2018) explained that "focus group interviews are an instrument which aims to arrive at an understanding of the society, in particular, how we make sense of our individual experiences" (p. 195). The questions that were developed for the focus groups were created based on the themes that arose from the interviews. Focus groups provided an environment where participants freely discussed the phenomenon (Goonewardene & Persad, 2018).

Using focus groups allowed this researcher to illustrate perspectives, views, and potential theories explored (Kitzinger, 1994). This data collection method was beneficial because it allowed this researcher to ask the same or similar questions and observe how participants interacted with each other, and to examine participants' interpretations of themes and arguments (García-Sampedro Fernández-Canteli, & Muth, 2019). Three focus group meetings were held; all were online using Microsoft Teams. Each focus group consisted of three to four participants. A transcript of one focus group is listed in Appendix F. The focus was on ensuring that the setting was formal and remained focused on the phenomenon (Morgan, 1997). Formal settings allowed this researcher to gather more information and minimize the participants from simple, repeating responses.

The themes identified from analysis of the individual interviews were used to create

additional questions. Participants were notified of the focus group's length, day, place, and time. The final step in this phase was for this researcher to serve as the facilitator. It was crucial that the facilitator's role was understood, to be familiar with the questions, and prepared to document all data. The facilitator walks a tightrope between directive and voiceless; it is a critical balance (Wibeck, Dahlgren, & Öberg, 2007). All responses were documented at this stage.

### ***Focus Group Questions***

The following interview questions were used to collect data for the focus group in addition to questions that came from themes identified from the interviews:

1. The major themes identified from questionnaires and interviews were cultural taxation, intersectionality, self-preservation, understanding of Black culture, and cronyism. Please identify three of these which most connect with your experience.
2. Describe the impact of creating a leadership pipeline on career advancement and the success of institutions.
3. What are some examples of cultural taxation that act as a barrier to leadership advancement of Black males in higher education at PWIs?
4. Discuss how the intersectionality of other identities other than race and gender impact career advancement of Black males in higher education at PWIs.
5. What policies or practices can be instituted to address the concerns around tokenism of Black males in leadership roles?
6. Are the themes that were identified representative of your career advancement experience?
7. Which of the themes identified are most important or impactful to your career advancement experience?

8. After this discussion, please select one theme from our list which most relates to your experiences regarding career advancement.

Question one presented the themes identified to the focus group. Each participant was asked to select three themes which most connected to their experiences. This introduced the entire group and gave participants perspective to each other's experiences. It is important that in all focus groups the facilitator supports open disclosure among participants to produce accurate data to analyze (Wilson, 1997). Presenting the themes gave participants the chance to revisit responses in interviews and encouraged open discussion.

Question two was centered on the impact of leadership pipelines. Barshay's (2020) studies indicated that pipelines are important but often do not exist in the same quantity or quality for Black males as they do for their White counterparts. Diversity does not exist in the pipeline as it should to create advancement (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). This question provided the space for participants to discuss their experiences and perceptions of pipelines in education in greater detail.

Question three focused on the impact of cultural taxation on leadership. Cultural taxation is often overlooked but has a significant impact on marginalized populations and *can impede career progress and affect job satisfaction* (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011). It was important to note that there was no difference in gender when discussing the impacts of cultural taxation (Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). The intersectionality of race and gender is an important aspect discussed throughout the literature, so discussing that this specific area removes gender identity made it relevant for participants to explore and determine if their experiences aligned with the literature.

Question four sought to determine if participants believed that other identities outside of race and gender impacted their career advancement in higher education at PWIs. The intersection of these identities impact individuals' social position in the world (Berger & Guidroz, 2010). Based on this position, other identities may contribute to career advancement or may be overshadowed by the focus on race and gender.

Question five sought to identify potential recommendations that participants could identify to address the areas that impacted Black males' career advancement in higher education at PWIs. Felix and Trinidad explained that "the role of race is often diluted by policy makers which leads to failure to address disparities (p. 465). Addressing diversity, equity and racial inequalities are concerns that have existed in higher education for several years. Addressing these concerns require systematic collaboration that provides multiple insights into providing solutions for all employees (Prystowsky, 2018).

Questions six and seven focused on validating the themes that were identified during the questionnaire and interview processes. These questions assisted the research in understanding nuances of attitudes, beliefs, or opinions that participants had about the themes presented (Flick, 1998). These questions allowed participants to also add additional information that may have been left out from the previous data collection methods. Finally, these questions supported the trustworthiness of the data collected.

### **Data Synthesis**

Using a phenomenological approach when analyzing data, the focus is placed on discussions and reflections of the experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). A transcendental phenomenology analysis is explained in terms of the contents of experience rather than the object of the experience. For this study, the data were analyzed using established

phenomenological investigation methods of bracketing, epoché, horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and meaning synthesizing (Moustakas, 1994). This researcher examined how the contents of experiences impacted Black male administrator's leadership advancement at predominantly White institutions (PWI) in Virginia. Several themes were uncovered from numerous data collection methods and analysis. Analysis was continuous throughout each of the data collection methods. Creswell (2007) explained that this is important in this design because of the high level of interactions that occur between the researcher and participants.

The data collected from interviews and focus groups was transcribed verbatim. The transcripts and questionnaires were printed in preparation for the coding process. Transcripts were coded to identify major themes from the data collected. This approach requires specific data analysis methods to authentically describe the participants' lived experiences by identifying significant statements, coding, and organizing according to like categories, and then reducing into themes. Meaning was identified from the dominant themes that became evident from encounters between researchers and participants (Grbich, 2007). Moustakas (1994) described the data analysis process as explication and interpretation to reveal structure, meaning, coherence, and other circumstances. Specifically, the data was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modification to the Van Kaam method of data analysis. These steps begin with the epoché followed by horizontalization, which involves taking every statement relevant to a question or topic and giving it equal value (Moustakas, 1994). Following epoché and horizontalization, the reduction and elimination, clustering and identifying themes, identification of the invariant constituents and themes occur, with the final steps consisting of using relevant validated

invariant constituents, constructed for each co-researcher, and finally, a construction of the essence of the phenomenon for each research participant (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Epoché**

In this step, this researcher assumed a phenomenological mindset. Epoché required the removal of beliefs and preconceived notions about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The goal was to isolate the phenomenon as experienced by the participants, referred to as bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth (2018) built their bracketing concept based on this idea of isolating the phenomenon. The researcher examined the data without questioning its validity. The data was seen as it appeared in its context without doubt or belief (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Completing this step allowed the researcher to focus on the participants' perspective of the phenomenon. As part of the bracketing process to identify and remove predilections, this researcher allowed new ideas, experiences, perceptions, and people into consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). This researcher created a journal about the subject of the research and described personal experiences. It is important to note that while the researcher set his own beliefs about the phenomenon aside, total pre-understanding cannot be eliminated from the study, but recognition of this was important. In a transcendental phenomenological approach, it is acknowledged that pre-understanding cannot be fully eliminated or bracketed (Koch, 1995).

### **Horizontalization**

Interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing, the data was reviewed for accuracy and to identify significant statements from participants. Moustakas (1994) explains that initially, all statements have the same value. Horizontalization required the reading and rereading of the transcripts to code the data. As it was read and re-read, notes were made, and all significant statements were highlighted in each transcript. The identification of significant

statements allowed for open coding of the data. Patton (2002) describes open coding as “the process through which concepts are identified, and properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). The codes were applied to new data each time an appropriate segment was encountered. This step of identifying and coding significant statements is extremely important in the phenomenological process. In this process, the researcher gave equal value to every participant's statement during the data collection process (Moustakas, 1994). Meaningful words were identified and compiled in a master list (APPENDIX I). Next, these statements were assigned categories and organized according to identified categories. This process continued until all significant statements were identified, coded, and organized according to category. Creswell (2009) also explained that overlapping or repeated statements be removed from the list of significant statements. Similar significant statements were grouped together, while statements that were redundant were removed. The final list of categories was further reduced into overarching themes and subthemes in accordance with steps outlined below (see Appendix J). This provided details of the transcript and allowed the researcher to categorize responses according to the themes that were present.

### **Phenomenological Reduction**

The research questions were used to identify the strongest statements or areas of interest identified by the participants. The goal was to allow the researcher to be led to the original source of the lived experiences and the meaning participants ascribed to these experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The significant statements by the participants were used to identify themes (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The theme refers to a frequently used word or phrase (van Manen, 1990). A discovery of similar themes among different participants added to the rich, descriptive analysis of the phenomenon to fully describe the phenomenon. Identifying these

strong statements also allowed the researcher to manage the data into sections or main themes that could be easily analyzed. These subunits or themes made data management more accessible and provided the foundation for interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Imaginative Variation**

The essence of experience was a vital part of the verification process and was derived from the Imaginative Variation. Husserl described Imaginative Variation as the ability to differentiate between actual and possible cognitions relating to the phenomenon to make up the unity of synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). This aspect of the analysis allowed the researcher to build connections between themes because recognizing and cultivating vital themes was an important part of the qualitative research process. The themes were developed based on the coding process of significant statements to create a master list and the removal of redundant statements from the list.

Using imaginative variation, the goal was to describe the experience of consciousness. The aim was to clarify the structures of the phenomenon based on their specific experiences to ensure that all areas were captured (Turley, Monro & King, 2016). Giorgi (2009) explained that the researcher committed to the initial descriptions and battled through them as a firm rule at this stage. Phenomenology is directly connected to imaginative variation and can be used in the verification process. The phenomenon may be specific to individuals using this approach allowing each experience to be considered, and this researcher decided to differentiate between actual and possible cognitions relating to the phenomenon.

### **Meaning Synthesizing**

This final step in the analysis process allowed the research to go beyond reviewing of statements. The significant statements coded during the horizontalization process were



synthesized into descriptions, textural and structural. Textural descriptions address what participants experienced; structural descriptions address how participants experience the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994), any textural and structural description that emerges represents the meaning and essence of the phenomenon. These descriptions were synthesized to compose a description that was representative of the essence of the lived experiences of the participants. This stage involved reflection, which allowed the researcher to arrive at the phenomenon's essence by understanding what was concealed (Moustakas, 1994). Completing the reflection aspects allowed the researcher to compare the concealed understanding with respective data and draw conclusions. This combination of information allowed the researcher to describe the essence of the phenomenon based on participants' lived experiences.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was an important aspect of the study and accounts for the credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability of the findings. Guba (1981) discussed initial concerns around trustworthiness focused on establishing confidence, determining applicability, consistency, and neutrality of findings (Anney, 2014). Clearly establishing the four areas gives strength and confidence to the findings of the study. Substantiating and validating was done throughout the qualitative data collection and analysis process.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is extremely important as it allows for the study's findings to be taken seriously in the field. The first step to credibility was to utilize participant checks (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The recording was shared with participants, ensuring that the information transcribed was accurate with the recording. This method is described by Creswell and Poth

(2018) as "one of the most important ways to establish credibility" (p. 261). Evaluating the quality of research is vital to making recommendations and strengthening perspective. Using the member checks debunked concerns with lack of transparency in the analytical procedures often associated with qualitative research (Noble & Smith, 2015). This served as one way to confirm any conclusions that were drawn based on the findings. Methodological triangulation was also used to support credibility. Creswell (2013) recommended multiple sources of data collection, also known as triangulation. Data were collected from three different institutions; multiple data collection methods examined the phenomenon and allowed for comprehensive data to be gathered to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Joslin and Müller, (2016) explained that "methodological triangulation provides for more comprehensive understanding, as it resembles a more realistic view towards social science phenomena" (p.1044).

### **Transferability**

Transferability takes the study's findings and attempts to apply them to another context (Anney, 2014). In some cases, this is referred to as generalization of the study's findings or applicability to another context. Transferability is best supported by thick descriptions of the phenomenon that has been examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sampling techniques used were vital for this principle and impacted transferability. The criterion established for the participants and the setting in this study allowed for transferability to be achievable. Including specific criteria improves the consistency and transferability of qualitative research (Slevin & Sines, 1999). Anney (2014) explains that "the researcher facilitates the transferability judgment for the reader through the description and purposeful sampling" (p. 278). This researcher purposefully sampled to have variation in participant age, department/discipline, type of leadership role, and education.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Any ethical considerations or implications of the research should be discussed. As a minimum, the following ethical considerations are discussed: Obtaining site and/or participant access, consent, or assent letters, if applicable; obtaining informed consent from participants; informing participants of the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time; the confidentiality of the site and participants (e.g., use of site and participant pseudonyms; and discussing how both physical and electronic data will be secured and how long it will be stored. These might include data storage (e.g., locked filing cabinets and password protection for electronic files.) If you do not plan to add to the data collected for the dissertation, the data should be destroyed after three years (per LU IRB), but if the scholar feels that the study may be extended in the future, data should not be destroyed. Risks and benefits to the participants should be discussed along with an evaluation of the possible risks and mitigation factors. Any other potential issues unique to the study that might arise and how they will be addressed should also be included in this section.

## **Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability is related to the reliability of the study. It is the evaluation of the stability of the findings over time (Anney, 2014). It is imperative to recognize that the study participants were from a specific location of the country and institution type. The site provided the context in which this study was conducted. Changing this context may impact the outcome or results gathered. To ensure the confirmability of the findings, several checkpoints were incorporated throughout the research study. These checkpoints provided support so that others could confirm the research. Copies of interview transcripts, journal notes, and a list of significant statements were included and submitted for external audit.

Reflexivity was used to determine trustworthiness. Reflexivity is directly connected to human beliefs, cause, and effect. Using this method addresses the bias that may come from the researcher at varying levels of the research process. Dodgson (2019) explained, “reflexivity is not new to research but is classified as the gold standard for determining trustworthiness” (p. 220). There is an intersection between the researcher and participants in reflexivity. It is essential because it forces the researcher to hold themselves accountable by the standards that were set. Additionally, this also allowed the researcher to share his perspective, and it means readers may have a clearer picture. This researcher documented his own experiences with interviews and focus groups throughout the study (see Appendix K). This journal was connected to the epoché process outlined by Moustakas (1994) and improves trustworthiness.

### **Transferability**

Transferability takes the study's findings and attempts to apply them to another context (Anney, 2014). In some cases, this is referred to as generalization of the study's findings or applicability to another context. Transferability is best supported by thick descriptions of the phenomenon that has been examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sampling techniques used were vital for this principle and impacted transferability. The criterion established for the participants and the setting in this study allowed for transferability to be achievable. Including specific criteria improves the consistency and transferability of qualitative research (Slevin & Sines, 1999). Anney (2014) explains that "the researcher facilitates the transferability judgment for the reader through the description and purposeful sampling" (p. 278). This researcher purposefully sampled to have variation in participant age, department/discipline, type of leadership role, and education.

## Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research design, setting, participants, the researcher's role, procedures, and data collection and analysis. The transcendental phenomenological approach was selected because it relies heavily on the individual experiences, which allows for the information to be gained from the story, not from the researcher or other sources. Using this design allowed the researcher to be intentional with participants, set specific criteria, and build data collection as information was received at different points. The study used a primary research question and three sub-questions. This study focused on 4 PWIs in Virginia with a desired saturation of 12 participants. The institutions and participants were selected using snowball sampling. The three data collection methods outlined were questionnaire/demographic survey, interviews, and focus group. Interviews are the primary data collection method used in a transcendental phenomenological design, and questionnaires provide strength to the study because it allows for additional information to be gathered, including demographics. This study's data was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modifications to Van Kaam's methods of data analysis. All analysis areas were discussed, including epoché, phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and meaning synthesizing. The final section explored areas of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Subsections used highlighted approaches to support the reliability and validity of the findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with regards to leadership advancement at predominantly White institutions (PWI) in Virginia. Providing insight into Black non-faculty administrators' leadership journeys offers institutions the necessary steps to support this population and create pathways to their leadership advancement. Recognizing potential factors that impact decisions regarding leadership can assist institutions in creating diverse and equitable learning environments and leaders that are representative of all students. A transcendental phenomenological research design was used to capture the lived experiences of the thirteen participants in the study. Transcendental phenomenology was appropriate for a study of this kind because it allowed for the identification of significant themes, and provided logical, systematic, and coherent design elements that led to an essential description of the experience (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). According to Lavery (2003), this methodology allows for the development of a perspective inclusive of external, physical, isolatable stimuli (p. 34). Participants' experiences, perceptions, and ideas related to leadership advancement at predominantly White institutions of non-faculty Black males were investigated and presented.

The central research question of this study was: What are the leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia? The three sub-questions that guided this study were:

1. How do historical patterns of educational inequality in higher education impact Black leaders' perceived support at predominately White institutions?

2. What are the self-identified leadership characteristics of non-faculty Black male administrators in higher education at PWIs in Virginia?
3. How do non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia experience the intersection of race and gender in their leadership advancement?

### **Participants**

There were 13 participants in this study. Each participant was a non-faculty Black male who was employed full-time at a PWI in Virginia. Each participant met the criteria which were established for the study. In addition to identifying as a Black male and full-time status, all participants had at least five years of experience working in higher education and held a supervisory role at their current institution. The years of experience ranged from five to seventeen. To protect the confidentiality of each participant, pseudonyms were used for individuals and the four PWI institutions represented in the study. All participants agreed that any data collection method could be audio recorded; they provided informed consent documentation and affirmed they fully understood the research procedures involved.

#### **Participant I**

Participant I was an Associate Director for human resources of a specific division within River City University. Participant (I) had been working in higher education since his days as a work study student, not including his undergraduate work experience. Participant I had 16 years of professional experience. Participant (I) had only worked for one institution and one department at his respective institution. Participant (I) had not completed his master's degree.

#### **Participant M**

Participant M held the title of Assistant Director within Residential Life. Participant M was not originally from Virginia, worked in three states before relocating to Virginia, and had nine years of experience in higher education. Participant M described himself as a self-starter who pushes the envelope when it comes to creating equitable practices for teams he had led. Participant M held two master's degrees.

### **Participant L**

Participant L held the title of Coordinator in a small university division. Participant L was unique because he was currently working for the institution where he completed his undergraduate program. Participant L had six years of experience and had supervised both professional and paraprofessional staff members. Participant L provided an intriguing perspective because he had seen the institution make changes to address concerns around gender and equity issues.

### **Participant B**

Participant B was the Director of a large department at University at the Bay. Participant B held a doctoral degree in higher education leadership and had 12 years of professional experience. Participant B had also worked in three different departments. Participant B was also not originally from Virginia, but relocated for his current position.

### **Participant G**

Participant G held the title of Associate Director of a financial unit within a department. Higher education was not the dream job as described by Participant G, but he just fell into it. Participant G had two master's degrees, one of which was in Business Management. Participant G had ten years of experience in higher education and eight years of experience outside of the field.



**Participant N**

Participant N did not begin his career in higher education and still considered himself new to the field, although he had five years of experience and held a supervisory role. Participant N believed that his other identities including being a former student athlete had influenced his career advancement.

**Participant J**

Participant J held the title of Associate Vice President for Student Affairs. Participant J was completing his 17<sup>th</sup> year as a higher education professional. Participant J had only worked in the field of education. Participant J was new to Virginia. At the time of this study, he was completing his second year; however, he had only worked at predominately White institutions in the Southeast region. Participant J held a doctoral degree in higher education leadership.

**Participant H**

Participant H had experience inside and outside of higher education. As a trained social worker, participant H enjoyed working with diverse populations of students. Participant H had seven years of experience and held two master's degrees. Participant H had also worked at one other institution in Virginia.

**Participant C**

Participant C was a Resident Director with five years of experience in higher education. Participant C had also worked in one other department within the university. Participant C held a master's degree in counseling and credited his training in the field to his ability to navigate crisis.

**Participant R**

Participant R held the title of Area Coordinator and just recently completed his seventh year in the role. Participant R had only worked in higher education.

**Participant P**

Participant P was an Assistant Director for student life. Participant P was raised in the Southeast but left to pursue formal education in the Midwest. However, Participant P returned to Virginia after completing his master's degree. Participant P had 11 years of experience in higher education and was pursuing a doctoral degree in the same field.

**Participant Q**

Participant Q held eight years of experience in the higher education field but had five years in the K-12 setting. Participant Q worked primarily with students in their sophomore year while at the university. He held a master's degree from the institution that he was currently working for.

**Participant W**

Participant W was a career advisor. He had worked in two other departments and had nine years of experience in the field. Participant W was a native of Virginia. He had a master's degree in education.

**Results**

Data was collected using a demographic survey, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups. This researcher also kept a detailed journal of notes from interviews and focus groups. Using interviews provided an opportunity to gather detailed and rich data regarding a particular phenomenon (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). An overview of the study was provided before all the collection methods and each participant completed a consent form. A demographic survey was completed using Qualtrics. One-on-one interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. The questions focused on participants' leadership experience, educational and professional

preparation, race, gender, institutional support, and mentorship. Analysis was continuous throughout each of the data collection methods.

The results of the study were given using structural evaluation recommended by Moustakas (1994). The data was analyzed using established phenomenological methods of horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and meaning synthesizing. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. During this stage, this researcher read and re-read the transcripts and initially coded the transcripts focusing on noteworthy statements. These noteworthy statements were used in the next step to identify themes that could fully describe the phenomenon. These themes were used to create questions for the focus group. Next, the textural description of experiences versus the structural descriptions were identified. The textural descriptions of the data focused on describing the participant experiences regarding leadership advancement at a PWI as a Black male. Specific quotes from the participants were identified to support the phenomenon. Next, identifying the background and how the phenomenon occurred uses structural descriptions. These included participants' accounts of systematic structures that impacted leadership advancement and their past experiences. The final step involved synthesizing all the data to understand what may have been concealed (Moustakas, 1994). This was used to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

### **Themes**

Data analysis revealed five primary themes, including (1) cultural taxation; (2) self-preservation; (3) intersectionality; (4) understanding Black culture; and (5) cronyism. Table 3 represents the five themes. These themes were present throughout the experiences of the participants regarding leadership advancement.

### **Table 3**

*Primary themes and sub-themes*

<b>Primary Theme</b>	<b>Concepts Associated with Theme</b>
Cultural Taxation	Tokenism, Diversity expert, forced to understand all races, and History associated with identities
Self-Preservation	Show casing self-worth, mental health, and fear of failure
Intersectionality	Male Privilege, Masculinity, Colorism
Understanding Black Culture	Creating space for comfort, Reliability, Social Constructs
Cronyism	Mentoring, Pipelines to leadership, Institutional politics

***Theme One: Cultural Taxation***

The consensus from participants was that their identity added pressure to perform in any role that they may have held at predominately White institutions. This pressure was not just about the individual, but they were seen as representatives for their entire race and often viewed as an expert on topics surrounding race and diversity. Participants agreed that as Black men in higher education at a PWI, they often had to know more, do more, and be better. The impact of history as it related to both gender and race was also discussed. This seemed to be brought to the forefront because of the current racial climate of the United States. Southern states also have a rich history of creating disproportionate policies around race and gender. Participant I stated,

It is exhausting when you are viewed as the diversity expert because you are Black. There are unfair processes, a tremendous amount of shoulder tapping, and poor communication of information. If you are shoulder tapped, you then become the token which has severe negative consequences.

Participant J expressed a similar experience regarding leadership and the difficulty to achieve leadership roles overall, “leadership roles in general are hard to achieve; they require experience, training, and trust in addition to traditional standards set by the individual institution.” The addition of race and gender when trying to gain access made this step more difficult. The responsibility of defining what skills were needed for leadership varied from one institution to another; however, the participants expressed that the standards seemed to fit their White counterparts’ experiences more than their own. The participants’ experiences confirmed that the perception of leaders of Black males was also influenced by the past and social constructs. Participant J stated,

I understand there are certain things associated with the identities that I hold, and history does not help my image or those with decision making powers. Black men often get placed into a space of fear which then impacts their ability to progress. Fear of having to carry the burden for the entire race and having to change stereotypes.

The idea that gaining access would assist in narrowing the leadership gap that exists between Black males and their White counterparts was highlighted throughout the interviews and focus groups. Gaining access would create a domino effect and ultimately impact other areas to provide greater opportunities for Black males to hold leadership roles at PWIs. Gaining access would require current leadership to shift practices and change policies that were designed based on traditions and historical context. Participant C stated,

It is challenging to change the total mindset, especially when you are limited in positions of power. It is important that Black leaders gain access to continue narrowing the gap and create opportunities to support each other.

Institutions have made strides in narrowing the gap that exist in terms of race and gender. However, implementing some strategies to narrow this gap has also had additional impact on other areas of the institution. Attempts to narrow the gap have highlighted practices such as tokenism. The need to have representation for face value versus truly embracing differences that could impact the learning environment is often overlooked. Participant L expressed that, “the system is not fair, and the historical context cannot be ignored.” Additionally, the current system forces Black males to act as experts, and when this expectation is not met, they often feel isolated from others and not fully supported outside of diversity issues.

Although tokenism is viewed as negative, some participants explained that it had benefited their career and created some change. Instead of working to debunk this idea, they used it to advance others in the field with the power given. This perspective was only shared by a few participants; these had more years of experience in the field of higher education. The notion of understanding and playing the political game associated with higher education was connected to this idea. Participant P described his perspective as recognizing the reality of the situation, “I will be the token Black leader. It is challenging but it is necessary to advance in my career and create opportunities for others.” Despite participants’ perspective and experiences around tokenism, there was a consensus that it forces Black males to develop a strong sense of resiliency. To cope with the pressure that it places on the employee to be an expert, perform at a high rate, and often function in uncomfortable spaces, individuals must develop the ability to press on. Participant B stated,

As a senior member of leadership at my institution, I have overcome several barriers that were related to my identity, specifically my race. It was important that I not give up because of how important it is for someone with my identity to be in a leadership

capacity. I am aware that this meant I may become the token representative for my race. In my current role I am forced into positions where I must speak on issues that I am not aware of, but because of my identity I become the expert.

There is a tremendous amount of pressure placed on individuals who are currently in leadership roles. The participants who currently held positions described this as a make-or-break situation for the race. They explained that it often felt like no decision was the right decision. Addressing systematic policies that created disparity and impacted race and gender was viewed as challenging the institution. Participant J explained that despite his years of experience and education he stills felt conflicted about leadership and finding a balance between supporting the institution and breaking down systems that were detrimental to the overall learning environment.

Participants acknowledged that the standards set for defining leadership varied based on institution. These standards were not the only areas that were highlighted. The participants emphasized the disparity in the professional expectations that were set for Black males versus their White counterparts. It is important to mention that participants were not talking about the written regulations around professionalism, but instead discussed some of the unwritten rules that they were forced to follow. Participant M stated,

Professionalism is a skill that you learn from your environment. Although there are baselines of what is professional, these changes based on your surroundings. I had to adjust the language I used because I did not want to sound too Black or too masculine. The way I dress for certain meetings is altered because I am a Black male. I recognize history associated with my identity and the impact on perception.

The differences in communication and dress code on a professional level were also discussed by participants. In both cases, they explained that Black males were expected to be

perfect in communication, written and verbal, and if they were not, they were reprimanded, or he was viewed as not ready to take on more responsibilities. These arbitrary standards were built on expectations for individuals who were White and often conflicted with Black culture. Participant C explained that “the standards are often intentional to create exclusion of some groups; this allows for White leaders to maintain their positions.” The intersectionality of race and gender cannot be separated and becomes more pronounced when participants discussed professionalism. Attempting to detach the identities sends a negative message to Black males and creates distrust. Participant R stated,

Throughout my career, I have experienced individuals who have tried to separate these identities, for example men and people of color versus Black men. It is never okay to detach these identities. I know that it has hurt my chances of leading teams and advancing because I refuse to detach any of my identities.

The expectations placed on Black males who were in leadership roles or seeking leadership roles was connected to their identities. Participants identified inequity in standards and practices that impacted leadership advancement for Black males. The participants explained that they were asked to be everything around diversity and inclusion, which was described as invisible labor and a burden that did harm to their ability to lead. Despite the years of experience of the participants, they all agreed that there was an immense amount of pressure leading as a Black male at a predominately White institution.

### ***Theme Two: Self-Preservation***

Throughout the data collection, participants were transparent about the amount of pressure placed on Black males to represent the culture. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, there was emphasis placed on what it meant for leaders when they could secure



leadership roles. The theme of self-preservation reoccurred in several interviews. Although each participant provided a unique perspective, the notion that Black male leaders often approach leadership roles from the standpoint that they are being judged, not as an individual, but as a representative of those identities. There were mixed responses in terms of what steps were taken when an individual stepped into a leadership role in terms of support for other individuals who shared a similar identity. Leaders who had more experience seemed to feel more pressure to perform and ensure that they were not removed from the role. Younger participants, on the other hand shared, more of a willingness to challenge processes and not necessarily preserve their role, but also explained that some of the pressure came from individuals who shared a similar identity. Participant I stated,

I am afraid to fail when I step into any leadership role. Failing as a leader creates labels about my identities that can impact those who may come after me. There is a tremendous amount of pressure placed on Black leaders to be successful. I think this impacts performance and ultimately the decision to step into other leadership roles.

Participant C did not fully agree with Participant's I perspective, but provided more details regarding where some of the pressure to perform and support originates. Participant C described the idea of cultural wealth, "pressure placed on not just Black men, but Black individuals in general in higher education forces them into positions of being the token employee." The concept of cultural wealth reinforces tokenism, which was identified previously by most participants as a barrier to leadership advancement of Black males. Other areas discussed included the mental health of Black males at predominately White institutions,

expectations employed on Black males to attend to diversity-related work, and the extra weight felt due to their commitment to equity issues linked to their race. The pressures of opposing role expectations, and isolation, take a heavy toll. Participant Q stated,

There are several traditional ideologies that exist at my institution regarding how a leader should function and how they are selected. As a Black male it can be mentally draining trying to fit the mold that is set by others. In my career, this has deterred me from applying for leadership roles. In my situations, I work at the institution which I attended as an undergraduate, so I am seeing traditions that are over twenty years old.

Some participants also took responsibility for placing the pressure on themselves and putting them into the position of supporting themselves or the cultural expectations. This also had domino impact on other areas such as their leadership styles. Participant A said, “As the sole representative in my department for Black men, I am often harder on myself and those I lead. Ultimately, this has discouraged me from taking additional steps in leadership.” The same perspective was shared by participants who had worked at numerous institutions and had various supervisors. In addition to mental health, the idea of self-worth was also discussed. It was consistently shared that despite the role or experiences, participants still questioned if they were qualified to be in their roles. Participants highlighted simple tasks such as arriving for meetings ahead of time, completing deadlines ahead of the assigned time, and asking for additional tasks to prove that they could do more. Participant W stated,

My experiences in higher education span a few departments which means I have had numerous leaders. I have had to go above and beyond to demonstrate my self-worth. To address the stereotype that Black individuals are never on time, I would always be the first person at every meeting, even if this meant showing up an hour early. This was

taxing for my mental and physical health. I took this step because I need to preserve what positive perception exists and not create a narrative based on stereotypes.

Participants explained that the lack of support for Black males forced them to step into this phase of self and role preservation. There was inequity in the support processes which did not help to decrease the leadership gap that exists for Black males. Participants described self-preservation as the only way to navigate threats associated with their identities. When individuals hold leadership roles, they use self-preservation to protect the position because there is fear associated with potentially losing their role. Participant Q stated,

Racial division and inequity exist in workplaces. Support is never equal based on my experiences. I am not sure how to eliminate that from existing in education or other industries. As a Black man I am often forced to overcome situations and circumstances that are based on my identities. My journey in each of my positions when I enter a leadership role, I had to be concerned for my own mental health because of the pressure that is placed on me to be successful.

### ***Theme Three: Intersectionality***

All participants agreed that the intersection of race and gender impacted their leadership advancement at predominately White institutions. Both areas have equal value and should not be detached. Participants' experiences emphasized that success for Black males in non-faculty roles at PWIs was shaped by overcoming barriers associated with the intersection of their identities and the history associated with these same identities. Participant N explained that "there is a major connection between race and gender; the connection between my gender and race has impacted my experiences, especially when I consider how I show up, lead and make decisions."

The responses at every data collection stage were not completely negative, but some viewed their intersectionality to share experiences and guide their leadership philosophy. Participant C stated,

When I consider intersectionality of my race and gender, I also take into consideration my lived experiences. These are experiences that have been impacted because of the inequities that exist because of my specific identities. I view myself as a transformative leader, I use the intersectionality of my identities to connect with those who I currently lead in my role.

Other areas that were connected to intersectionality included the privileges associated with being male. Despite the challenges that Black males face at PWIs, there are still numerous opportunities where male privilege exists. This creates a different layer for Black males to manage not only professionally, but also personally. One participant admitted to struggling with intersectionality because of the male privilege. Participant C recognizes the male identity immediately gave him an advantage in some situations, stating,

I always consider what some of the privileges associated with my male identity. I know that this immediately gives me an advantage in some situations. For example, I have known that in many cases I will be compensated differently than females. I do not think this is fair, but the wage gap between men and women exists.

The stereotypes associated with both identities have forced Black males to adjust portions of their identities. Some of these stereotypes include aggressive behavior, anger, lacking empathy, and ability to be emotional. Participant M and Participant I both shared experiences in which they were directed to present themselves differently because supervisors were not certain that their Black male presence was appropriate for the situation. Other participants noted positive and negative experiences with supervisors because of the intersectionality of race and gender.

There were considerable noticeable differences by participants with more years of experience versus those who were still early in their career regarding compromising identities. Younger participants emphasized that intersectionality and remaining genuine could often challenge conventional views of professionalism. Participant I stated,

Considering intersectionality of identities, I think of my experiences of how the intersectionality has challenged the conventional view of professionalism. This may be in the form of dress, language, or communication. These are areas that are often considered when hiring or promoting leaders. As a Black man, it now becomes complicated; I am forced to control my identities for the sake of professionalism.

The difference in opinion from participants based on years of experience may also be connected to current climate around race and gender issues. Recent incidents have forced leaders to take a closer look at intersectionality and how it impacts experiences, policies, and procedures. Additionally, intersectionality allows leaders and Black males the opportunity to recognize the coexistence of oppression and privilege. Intersectionality also showcases how different social structures and social classes are impacted across organizations.

Participant G explained a different perspective regarding intersectionality. This participant felt that additional aspects of Black male gender intersected and impacted his leadership advancement. The intersection of gender and race has become more prevalent and creates another layer for institutions to ensure that the learning environment is inclusive. Systems of oppression and power become more complex when race and gender are considered.

Participant G stated,

This creates a respect issue among my peers but also increases fear. As a gay Black man, I am often isolated in both identities. The intersectionality of my identities decreased my

network on campus. During a panel interview for a leadership role, I overheard one of the panelists questioned if the way I present myself would be welcomed by the students. This is not uncommon; several of my colleagues have experienced this bias and discrimination which have led to them removing themselves from hiring processes.

Several rules and laws (i.e., Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, Equal Pay Act, and the Civil Rights Act) have been created to assist institutions in navigating the barriers and to assist in decreasing inequity because of race and gender. Despite these laws, institutions have created ways to operate within without addressing inequity, creating concerns for the groups who were already disenfranchised. Participant R believed that laws to protect against discrimination had been broken. Participant R stated,

It was hard to know the truth because individuals have limited power to question the leaders who are in place.

The final sub-theme that was identified focused on colorism. This concept is prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group. Colorism pits individuals of the same race against each other and serves as a barrier for leadership advancement. Colorism is different than racism, but still has an impact on minority groups. Participant J expressed frustration when dealing with the impact of colorism.

I not only have to deal with the intersectionality of my identities as it relates to navigating the day to day, but there are also issues associated with colorism. Individuals of the same race feel often create division because of shades of their skin. This forces me to think even harder and consider that factor when leading others.

#### ***Theme Four: Understanding Black culture***

An individual's culture impacts their lifestyle, decision-making, values, and beliefs. Responses from participants highlighted the lack of effort that was often put into creating spaces for Black males to feel comfortable in leadership roles despite knowing the historical context associated with individuals who identify as Black in education. A safe space is imperative because it allows these individuals to be authentic, feel supported, and lead through such a lens. Unfortunately, authenticity to some may be perceived as a fulfillment of a stereotype of a social construct that the interviews revealed often leads to Black men not being offered more significant leadership opportunities. Participants emphasized how important having authenticity was for Black males, but also the dangers associated with remaining authentic. Participant H stated,

I wear a mask at work. I learned very early that I would have to assimilate to be accepted. I recognize that living in the South there are certain connections to how Blacks were treated with regards to education and how challenging it has been to navigate the educational system.

Learning environments are complex, and the individuals who are part of these communities need to feel comfortable at every level. A "safe space" was the term used by participants in this study for what was needed to ensure that their identities were respected. Unfortunately, this space rarely exists, and when it did, participants indicated that it was secured by a person of color who was not in a leadership role. Participants credited their supervisors for the lack of creating a space for non-White staff members. The space that was described was not necessarily a physical space, instead it was space to socialize and feel free to be authentic. Participant G explained that his supervisor made efforts to understand Black culture and tried to create a space, but this only occurred for short periods of time, and in larger settings, the space

disappeared. Participant A and G believed that how the identities appeared and were perceived had impacted their leadership advancement at PWIs. Participant A explained:

Advancement has been impacted not just by identity, but how identity shows up or is perceived with regards to leadership. There are opportunities but not equal opportunities, unless you are willing to conform to fit inside the proverbial box, your chances of advancement decrease significantly. The traditional characteristics of leaders tend to conflict with the social constructs associated with Black culture and specifically Black males.

Having a secure reliable network was also important according to participants' accounts. This network can be created by the institution or occurs naturally in the learning environment. During the data collection process, the participants clarified that this reliable space should not be viewed as mentoring because it is short term and specific to a top. Understanding Black culture also requires a level of trust. This is a large part of the culture and is often overlooked by leadership. The disconnect created because of misperceptions has impacted the experiences of Black males. Relatability to colleagues and supervisors supports a sense of belonging to the department or institution. Interviews and focus groups revealed that this sense of belonging connected to understanding Black culture was often missing, leading, Black-qualified males to not remain in roles for significant periods. Not remaining in roles robs them of valuable experience, ultimately impacting their ability to advance and assume leadership roles. Participant P who was born and raised in the southern United States, described what was necessary to survive as a Black man:

I understand what it takes to survive in an educational setting when you are the minority. Although my post-secondary education occurred outside of the southern region,



I returned to the South and recognize the impact that history has had on how Blacks are treated in education. Despite all the opportunities and integration, you often still feel less than and are forced to have to debunk stereotypes and misperceptions on a regular basis.

Two participants who worked outside of a higher education setting shared similar and additional context regarding safe space, reliability, and social constructs. These same feelings occurred in a K-12 setting. One noticeable difference was the emphasis placed on ensuring one is aware of the surroundings, and the impact of identity that specific surroundings or environments had on the institution. Participant Q explained that outside of higher education he was always seen as the enforcer. He did not realize that this was reinforcing a stereotype that Black males are the authoritarians. Participant Q stated:

My identity has impacted my leadership advancement. In my previous roles I was asked to be an enforcer. In my current role I have been referred to as aggressive which is a stereotype often attached to Black males. I have also been told that this level of aggression may not fit well in certain leadership roles.

The disconnect created because of misperceptions impacted the experiences of Black males. Relatability to colleagues and supervisors supports a sense of belonging to the department or institution. Interviews and focus groups revealed that this sense of belonging connected to understanding Black culture was often missing, leading, Black-qualified males to not remain in roles for significant periods. Not remaining in roles robbed them of valuable experience, ultimately impacting their ability to advance and assume leadership roles. According to Participant B, “in predominately White spaces, no matter how hard I try, history has already created part of the narrative about my identity. This impacts how I function, the positions I seek or apply for and future aspirations.”

Understanding Black culture supports and promotes a level of authenticity which allows Black males to thrive in roles and take on additional responsibilities. Participant B stated:

There is no space for Black males to celebrate their culture because that is often seen as a negative attribute. Black males are forced to shape my leadership philosophy based on standards set by individuals who do not share my identity. There is a lack of intentionality in how positions are described or even shared with the university community. It often seems like there is a need to be in the inner circle to take the next steps.

#### ***Theme Five: Cronyism***

Despite the transformation of the education system in the United States, the historical impact cannot be ignored. The narratives of these participants not only highlighted their awareness of the impact of history, but also outlined how history has created certain perceptions of individuals with these identities. Organizational strategies of institutions seek to debunk some of these perceptions by creating policies that support diversity and inclusion. However, based on participants' accounts, these policies had made little impact in addressing the perceptions that history had created about Black men. Participant I, a middle manager with over ten years of experience in human resources, described how nepotism ran rampant for high level positions at PWIs:

Recruiting friends and associates is often used as a negotiation tactic for upper-level leadership roles. I experienced this early in my career as I was passed over for a position. The employee selected worked with the new director at a previous institution and was immediately hired.

Hiring practices such as the ones described by Participant, I impact not only leadership opportunities, but also disrupt the diversity of the learning environment. These recruiting practices are other ways in which power is maintained and traditions are upheld. This is referred to as tokenism in the literature. Participants discussed that the need to have work experience and education seemed to disappear and was replaced with the connections that an individual had built regarding leadership roles. Participant W recalled advice he was given and how that had played out in his career. Black men must have networking skills and be willing to step outside comfort zones to create connections and gain access. Participant W stated,

Education and experience are what I was always told would be most beneficial for leadership roles. However, I quickly learned as I progressed in my career that networking and relationships trumped education and experience. Networks provide opportunities that in some cases may never be publicized.

Participant M and G on the other hand received advice about networking and how that was necessary to advance their career. Although both participants still felt unprepared for the magnitude of building the connections needed, they credited mentors for making this known early. They saw the value of networking, but still believed they were not granted access to certain arenas which would have improved their network. Additionally, there was little training or guidance offered of how to master this practice. Fear or rejection was mentioned as one of the deterrents to participating in networking events. Participant M stated:

I was told very early in my career by a former mentor that I would need to get on board with someone who has made it, and they would bring you along. It was not clear what that meant until I witnessed several individuals with my level of experience and education ascend to positions of power because of their networks.

Universities and colleges like other organizations have institutional or organizational politics. Navigating this can take time and have serious consequences on an individual career. Institutional politics are often amplified because of the number of stake holders who are involved in the overall functioning of an institution. Leaders are forced to find balance between keeping stakeholders and donors engaged versus creating environments which are representative of trends specifically with diversity and inclusion. Understanding how politics work at each institution requires attention to detail and a willingness to listen and learn. Participant W offered the advice to learn as much as possible before joining the team because in his first few years the professionalism took a hit because he lacked the understanding and ultimately created more barriers for himself.

Throughout the data collection, the idea of proving yourself mentality was also discussed in terms of cronyism. Participants felt that they were always trying to prove their worth or meet expectations that were only set for individuals with their identities. The rules seemed to be different rules based on if one was White or not White. There was also the concern of what position one held or may have been seeking at the institution. There were several positions that had never had a person of color in the role. This makes it even more difficult to achieve because it goes against the tradition. Cronyism also challenges the theory of leadership pipelines and their benefits. It was consistent from all participants that they had never participated in a leadership pipeline. Some participants agreed with the literature that supports developing pipelines to address disparities that exist around race and gender at PWI institutions. Participant H stated:

There is no pipeline in my experience. I have worked at two different PWIs in the state and the steps to attaining leadership roles seemed more informal than formal, at least for me. I recognize that part of career development involves networking, but unfortunately if

you are never invited, you can't build a strong network. I am familiar with numerous leaders who were recruited because of their connections to other leaders.

The experiences outlined by the participants highlighted several consistent ideas relating to leadership advancement: inequity in the advancement processes, the need for authenticity, and the immense pressure placed on individuals who have specific identities. These Black males recognized that their identities have contributed to their career path and the perception of other administrators. Participants shared those opportunities for leadership advancement were present at their respective institutions. Despite availability, these opportunities often forced them to become the representative for Black culture. Stepping into leadership roles forced them to be placed into positions of supporting other staff, providing cultural perspective, and took a toll on their mental health. Participant M stated,

I have been put into numerous positions where I was the only one who identified as Black. In these roles I was asked to share my perspective on what Black employees would think or do. It often felt like I was the voice of the culture, not in the position because of my strengths and talents.

Each of the Black males interviewed in a one-on-one setting and during focus groups presented unique perspectives about their lived experiences. The consistent theme of feeling like a token in their roles was present and discussed in detail. Each participant connected this directly to his leadership advancement at PWIs. This perspective connected directly to the current literature which emphasizes that Black males often feel that they are placed into a space of meeting a quota or just serving as a representative for their race and gender.

## **Research Question Responses**

### **Central Research Question**

What are the leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia?

The overall experiences of Black males at predominately White institutions were described throughout all stages of the data collection process. The responses from one-on-one interviews and focus groups were transcribed and reviewed to gain a proper understanding of the experiences of these individuals. Each participant presented unique experiences, but one consistent response regarding leadership advancement experiences was present in both the interviews and focus groups. The central idea is that inequity exists for non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions when thinking of leadership advancement. There is not a lack of opportunities to advance, and the opportunities are often not made available equally. There is a large gap that exists regarding understanding the culture of Black males in higher education. The experiences shared by the study's participants highlighted that traditional leadership qualities that impacted advancement were defined by White male standards. The racial and ethnic stereotypes associated with Black males was another area that was described by participants to have an impact on the underrepresentation of Black males in leadership roles at PWIs. Participants' stories accentuated the belief that these negative assumptions impacted hiring processes, mentoring opportunities, and advancement resulting in inequity in leadership roles at many PWIs.

The research study participants who currently held high level leadership roles at institutions shared openly that their ability to advance into these leadership roles required conformity and assimilation. The traditional leadership character traits such as innovation, strategic decision making, and adaptability were often not easily recognized because of the identities that they held. Therefore, these participants explained that they would have to put

themselves into uncomfortable situations that would force White decision makers to recognize that they were capable of leadership advancement. This willingness to conform was something that the younger generation of participants expressed they were unwilling to do to advance. These participants felt that authenticity should never be compromised to secure advanced leadership roles. The notion that leadership advancement was a game was mentioned on numerous occasions. Playing the game was connected to the politics associated with leadership advancement in higher education. PWIs have held firm to traditional norms associated with leadership in general. These ideas impact hiring practices, promotions, training, and advancement. Changing the traditional practices requires shifting leadership models and institutional objectives that are more inclusive.

### **Sub-Question One**

How do historical patterns of educational inequality in higher education impact Black leaders' perceived support at PWIs?

Southern states have a strong historical connection to all levels of education in the United States, specifically, the connection to Black Americans and the fight for integration of schools.

Although schools in the southern states have desegregated, there are several long-lasting effects based on this history. The accounts shared by the study's participants emphasized that there were not a lot of leaders ahead of them, which made it hard to find role models who shared similar identities or provided support. The lack of representation may have stemmed from what was described as the enduring Whiteness of higher education. Higher education was initially designed to serve White people. It was initially led by purely White leadership. The interviews and focus groups revealed that participants had seen little changes in policies that advanced a

pipeline for non-White leaders and provided little support, despite steps to promote more integrated institutions.

Institutional racism is not a new phenomenon. The stories shared by participants put a spotlight on how institutional racism had impacted their leadership advancement and, in many cases, created the feeling of isolation. Traditional policies and practices specific to hiring and leadership provide different access to individuals based on race. Participants explained that these policies led to underrepresentation at numerous levels. Implicit bias versus focusing on the core of the problem at larger levels was shared as one of the major complaints when addressing institutional racism.

### **Sub-Question Two**

What are the self-identified leadership characteristics of non-faculty Black male administrators in higher education at PWIs in Virginia?

Securing leadership roles in higher education requires experience, education, connections, and a willingness to commit to the institution. These were the top qualities that were described during the data collection. However, research participants emphasized that despite having some or all these qualities, an individual's ability to network and build connections was the most identified characteristic that impacted their leadership advancement at PWIs. Building this network was not an easy task, as most participants felt they were operating at a deficit even when in upper-level leadership roles. Black non-faculty administrators often must go above and beyond to prove their worth. However, this network often reinforces the idea of cronyism. Cronyism is the idea that individuals in positions of power surround themselves with associates or friends despite qualifications. Since most individuals in positions of power



may not be Black, cronyism is a disadvantage to Black males in higher education and impacts leadership advancement.

The participants described that there were different standards of leadership based on identities. These standards were created by the individual who held positions of power and social constructs about leadership. The concept of professionalism was one of the standards that was discussed in detail in the focus groups since professionalism in leadership roles seemed to vary based on identities. In many of the lived experiences of the participants, they highlighted that their White counterparts or leaders could communicate, dress, and make certain decisions that would be viewed as unprofessional if they did the same. These standards created barriers to advancement in their leadership roles. In cases where participants held upper-level leadership roles, they explained that the measures of success also differed. According to participants, Black leaders must be resilient, have a growth mindset, and recognize their own self-worth. The participants explained that one characteristic they developed which was connected to their identities was the ability to read their environment and recognize the message it was sending. Narrowing the gap that exists in the standards which are created by individuals with power and privilege for non-faculty Black male administrators, when compared to their White counterparts will mean that institutions must take a deeper look at practices and policies that widen the gap and make the necessary change to support these talented individuals.

### **Sub-Question Three**

How do non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia experience the intersection of race and gender in their leadership advancement?

Gender and race were the two identities of focus for this study. The intersectionality of these identities creates several complexities in everyday life and presents several challenges for

leaders. Overcoming barriers based on the intersectionality of these identities was described by participants as a significant barrier to leadership advancement. Participants explained that overall, it was challenging to separate these two identities with regards to their leadership experiences. Despite the barriers that the intersectionality of these two identities created, all participants acknowledged the privileges associated with identifying as male. Other factors such as perception of male versus female leadership styles, working within a female-dominated field, colorism within Black culture, and challenging traditional masculinity perceptions were identified by the participants throughout the study as contributing to the challenges of intersectionality. According to participants, these factors increased the complexity of navigating leadership advancement.

The intersection of race and gender (i.e., Black and male) creates additional pressure on the administrator. Participants described that in many of their roles, especially those which give them power, they felt compelled to be a role model not just for the field of education, but for the entire race. Participant I stated that, “an individual’s leadership identity is shaped not simply by their experiences, skills, and education, but also by their race and gender.” The intersectionality of race and gender was also found to impact hiring practices. Participants shared that based on their experiences, men hired more men who shared similar mindsets. This philosophy has a negative impact on Black males since most upper-level leadership positions at PWIs are held by White males. Not only does this philosophy impact day-to-day hiring practices, but it also reinforces structures of oppression and systematic racism.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the lived experiences of thirteen Black male, non-faculty administrators who held full time positions at PWIs in Virginia was summarized and shared based on the study’s research

questions. The data was collected using a demographic survey, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups. Participants described their experiences and how ultimately their identities have impacted their leadership advancement. Five themes were identified from their responses as having major impact on their leadership advancement journeys.

The first theme of *cultural taxation* referred to the pressure that is placed on Black males at any level in an institution. Participants explained that this led to Black males feeling like tokens at their respective institutions. The idea of tokenism focuses on the fact that an individual was hired for their identities and not their experiences and skill set. Participants also described that cultural taxation also put the pressure on them to become diversity or race experts.

The second theme of *self-preservation* described when a Black male holds a leadership role, is often an implication that this individual is representative of the entire race or ethnicity. This creates pressure on this individual and he is now forced to make a choice of how to lead. The leader's success is not individualized, but instead, the entire race is credited. In a similar fashion, any mistakes made will be mistakes of the entire race or identity. The participants' experiences highlighted how Black male leaders were forced to meet standards which were set by their White counterparts. These standards are often unattainable because of bias, systematic racism, power, and inequity.

*Intersectionality* was the third theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. This theme described how the connection between gender and race impacted leadership advancement for Black males who were employed at PWIs. Intersectionality creates complex situations and barriers to leadership advancement. It is impossible for these administrators to separate these two identities. These identities are also connected to numerous negative

stereotypes. Addressing concerns around intersectionality forces institutions to have difficult conversations about inequity within the institutions.

The fourth theme that was identified was *understanding of Black culture*. Participants emphasized how important this was to create safe spaces, make employers more relatable, and to debunk stereotypes and social constructs. Without this understanding, a gap exists that impacts leadership opportunities and ultimately advancement.

The fifth theme that was discussed in the chapter was *cronyism*. This is the idea that individuals are often promoted or hired because of someone in a place of power and privilege. The current demographics of institutions place majority of the power and privilege into the hands of White men; therefore, cronyism creates a disadvantage for Black males despite their experiences and potential.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with their leadership advancement in public, predominantly White institutions in Virginia. The final chapter presents a review of the research findings and discussion of the findings in relationship to the literature. Theoretical and empirical implications of the study are discussed, followed by an identification of the study's limitations and suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with a final summary.

### **Discussion**

This section discusses the study's findings in light of the developed themes. The findings are supported with empirical and theoretical sources along with hard evidence from the study. This section addressed the interpretation of Findings, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The results of this study were attained using a transcendental phenomenological research method described by Moustakas (1994). Ladson-Billings and Tate's critical race theory (1995) was used as the guiding framework for this study. This design allowed participants to describe their leadership advancement experiences via a written questionnaire, interviews, and focus group. Thirteen participants identified as Black male non-faculty administrators employed at a PWI and had at least five years of experience. Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to select the participants. This type of sampling was appropriate for this study and assisted with validity because it supported participants who were directly associated with a specific

phenomenon (Stover-Wright, 2013). Data collection included a demographic survey, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups. The data collected was analyzed using layers of coding that identified themes, which were then reviewed and interpreted to address leadership advancement. Participants' quotes were used to support the descriptions of each theme that was identified. The results were presented in answers to the research questions and quotations from participants to support themes and concepts for each research question.

### **Research Questions**

Sub-question one: *How do historical patterns of educational inequality in higher education impact Black leaders' perceived support at PWIs?* Each participant acknowledged that historical experiences have shaped higher education and impacted the support they received and their leadership advancement. The setting of the study was four predominately White institutions located in the southern region of the United States. There was a significant connection between the location and the history of education related to race and ethnicity. The fight for integrated schools is well documented in this region. Although schools are fully integrated, the history associated with many institutions still impacts policies, procedures, and traditions. Participants explained in their interviews the challenge to make any significant change when the policies, procedures, and customs support the majority in terms of race. These policies, procedures, and traditions impact leadership, hiring practices, and ultimately the ability for non-White administrators to advance into prominent leadership roles at PWIs. There was a lack of support to have these individuals step into these roles. Since most of the institutions in this study had senior leadership who identified as White males, the participants felt that standards were created that they would never be able to meet to hold on to specific roles and they often felt under supported. The concept of systematic racism was discussed in detail by the participants.

Systematic racism is deeply connected to the history of education. Participants believed that these systems of oppression were built on power and privilege that history provides. Participants lived experiences revealed that systematic racism created inequities at institutions which negatively impacted Black males, the support they received, and their leadership advancement. The data collected revealed that historical patterns of educational inequality in higher education impacted the support Black leaders received and ultimately their leadership advancement capabilities.

Sub-question two: *What are the self-identified leadership characteristics of non-faculty Black male administrators in higher education at PWIs in Virginia?* Participants described several traditional leadership qualities that were generally applied to good leaders. Some of these qualities were communication, decision making, organization, and teamwork. Black male administrators' participants described using their experiences, that Black males must have all the general characteristics listed above and others such as resiliency, ability to build strong networks, and a willingness to put the institution first. Education and experience were also listed but seemed to be more of a checklist item than a true characteristic of leaders. One point that stood out from the participants' experiences was the double standard for what a successful leader should embody. Participants explained that they often found that they could not be themselves and had to try to be more like their White counterparts. The concept of professionalism was one of the standards that was discussed in detail in the focus groups since professionalism in leadership roles seemed to vary based on identities. The connection between masculinity and leadership was also discussed by the participants. Participants' experiences revealed that Black non-faculty administrators often had to embrace the stereotypes such as aggression, lacking empathy, and laziness associated with masculinity and leadership to be recognized. Although

most of the participants thought this was a negative, they admitted that it often resulted in building of stronger relationships on campus which helped their overall career and leadership advancement.

Sub-question three: *How do non-faculty Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia experience the intersection of race and gender in their leadership advancement?* The intersectionality of race and gender impacts the perception and experiences of Black male administrators at predominately White institutions in Virginia. Participants explained that they had been asked to minimize characteristics associated with their identities to fit into the institutional culture in some situations. This was described as compromising their authenticity to meet specific standards set by individuals who did not share the same identities. The responses revealed that they have had to balance each of these identities throughout their careers to be successful. Although all participants explained that the intersectionality impacted their leadership advancement, there was a slight difference in perspective between participants with more experience than those with less experience. Participants with more years of experience explained that they were more willing to compromise their authenticity if it meant securing a leadership role that could potentially help the entire race. On the other hand, participants with less knowledge noted that this was often something they refused and created chaos, which in some experiences negatively impacted their ability to advance.

Most participants viewed intersectionality and managing its impact as a challenge. However, a few participants explained that these identities had benefited them in more recent years because of the situations that had occurred nationally to raise awareness around gender and race. Participants explained that they had been invited into spaces that they were not welcomed



into before and given the opportunities to share more. It can sometimes feel like tokenism, but an increase in access was viewed as a positive outcome.

The overall lived experiences of the participants regarding leadership advancement at predominately White institutions was not positive. Although participants highlighted that leadership advancement opportunities appeared to exist, the chances of Black males stepping into these roles were challenging. The history of education and the connection to race, operating by standards which are defined by White males, stereotypes of Black males, and the lack of an effective leadership pipeline were identified as reasons for making the advancement challenging. Despite meeting educational requirements for leadership roles, the lack of connections to networks responsible for decisions surrounding leadership was also highlighted by the participants. Inequity, systematic racism, power, and privilege impact the ability for Black non-faculty male administrators to lead at predominately White institutions.

### ***Summary of Thematic Findings***

The five primary themes revealed in this study of leadership advancement of non-faculty Black male administrators included (a) cultural taxation, (b) self-preservation, (c) intersectionality, (d) understanding Black culture, and (e) cronyism. The first theme of cultural taxation had four associated subthemes: (a) tokenism, (b) serving as a diversity consultant, (c) feeling forced to understand all races, and (d) the history associated with these identities. Participants believed that their identities were directly connected to decisions made during hiring. Participants used phrases such as “filling the quota,” “being the token,” and “representing the culture” to describe comments they had heard when Black men were hired for specific roles. These comments were incredibly discouraging for Black male administrators who were seeking

leadership opportunities. They felt they were not evaluated based on skills and experiences, but instead on their identities.

In addition to the concerns associated with hiring, participants also described the significant amount of pressure placed on them to represent the entire culture. This pressure often created uncomfortable spaces for participants, which impacted their overall experiences. Some participants noted that this often led to switching roles and even leaving the institution for new positions. The final concept that was identified in this theme was the history associated with Black males in education. Southern states have a strong historical connection to all levels of education in the United States, specifically, the link to Black Americans and the fight for integration of schools. Although schools in the southern states have desegregated, there are several long-lasting effects based on this history. These effects include stereotyping Black males as lazy, aggressive, lacking empathy, and undereducated to lead. The history of education has also allowed White men to create unrealistic standards for non-White men to achieve.

The second theme self-preservation was supported by the main ideas of showcasing self-worth, mental health, and fear of failure. All the participants viewed leadership roles at PWIs as extremely stressful and challenging to achieve. The participants who currently held senior level leadership positions explained that despite their success, it always felt like they still had something to prove. Their decision making was impacted by thoughts of how they would be viewed by Black and non-Black staff members. This pressure not only impacts how they perform, but also their overall mental health. One consistent experience each participant testified to having was an extreme fear of failure in their roles. Participants explained that failing may cause domino effect for the entire Black culture. Participants felt that they had a responsibility to push forward and provide other opportunities for individuals who may follow.

The third theme of intersectionality was not unexpected. Without inconsistency, each participant shared that his leadership advancement at PWIs was directly connected to the intersectionality of his race and gender. Additionally, participants realized that in many cases the intersectionality was a barrier. This theme was supported by the main concepts of male privilege, masculinity, and colorism. Each of the participants explained that they recognized the power that came with male identity and the perceptions associated with male leaders in higher education. The participants noted that it was hard to balance power, perception, and expectations related to their identity. Masculinity, like male privilege, was seen as a negative about leadership advancement experiences. There were certain expectations that participants must not only lead, but also become less likely to receive promotions or additional responsibilities if they did not. Finally, the concept of colorism was identified as an intercultural concern. Participants with fewer years of experience explained that individuals who identified as Black but visually presented closer to non-Black identity had an easier time achieving leadership positions. They explained that White males tended to see them as closer to them, which gave them an advantage. The intersectionality of these identities creates several complexities in everyday life and presents several challenges for leaders.

The fourth theme was understanding Black culture. This theme's main subthemes were creating safe spaces, the relatability of Black leadership, and social constructs associated with Black culture. Participants described safe spaces related to leadership in higher education at PWIs as necessary for feeling a sense of belonging. However, the participants explained that their supervisor primarily created safe spaces. A safe space was described as a working environment where individuals could be themselves and did not assimilate. The inequity of what was considered professional was a concern discussed by the participants. They explained that

there were different standards of professionalism specifically relating to dress code, attendance, and communication. The inequities connected to professionalism were identified as another challenge that Black male administrators would have to overcome to move successfully into leadership roles. The participants who currently held senior-level leadership positions explained that one thing that helped them progress was a relatable supervisor; relatability in the sense that they allowed them to be themselves, lead from a space of development, and did not force them to conform to unrealistic standards. This relatability created a comfortable working environment and supported retention of staff.

Cronyism was the final theme identified in this study. This theme was supported by the main concepts of mentoring, leadership pipelines, institutional politics, and positionality. Participants provided limited information about mentoring and leadership pipelines. These seemed to exist very sparingly at the institutions that were represented in the study. There appeared to be a negative perception associated with mentoring at every level. The administrators who had fewer than ten years of experience explained that they often had to seek out mentoring on their own, but mentoring was never structured or driven by the institutions. Participants with more than ten years of experience explained that they often had limited time to invest in mentoring, but they were willing to advise if sought out. Unfortunately, none of the participants offered details about leadership pipelines and felt that this did not exist formally in higher education at their institutions. One of the key observations from the experiences shared about this theme was that individuals were often bolstered or hired because of a leader they were connected to in a place of power and privilege. The current leadership demographics of predominately White institutions in Virginia place a more significant amount of the power and

privilege on White men; therefore, cronyism establishes a disadvantage for Black males despite their experiences and potential to take on leadership roles.

### **Interpretations**

This section places the study results in contextual relationship to empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The findings of this study confirmed and broadened the literature concerning the experience of non-faculty Black male administrators with regards to leadership advancement at predominantly White institutions (PWI) in Virginia. The literature focused on leadership in higher education, the diversity of leadership, cultural taxation of Black leaders, and how leadership pipelines impacted leadership advancement. The literature around leadership also described how complex of an issue it is in an educational setting. The intersectionality of race and gender creates challenges that institutions must address. Yoney (2018) emphasized that higher education institutions are mission driven. Leaders must be intentional with mission development to ensure that they can support the institution holistically and decrease inequity.

### **Empirical**

The empirical literature revealed that higher education is changing regarding the diversity of students, faculty, and staff. Despite this change, leadership practices and policies remain based on traditions that do not promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Leadership practices have a trickle-down effect and impact several other areas, such as staff hiring, advancement, and institutional mission (Wang & Sedivy-Benton, 2016). Although PWIs have increased the enrollment of minority students, the leadership remains dominated by White males (Higher Education Employment Report, 2018).

Overall, this study verifies that the change in the demographics of students, faculty, and staff is occurring in higher education. All participants shared this observation at their respective institutions. It also confirmed that there had been little mobility in leadership shifting to be more racially diverse despite this change. The previous research also highlighted the impact of stereotypes on Black males who seek leadership roles. All participants discussed this in detail, explaining that the history of race, current social constructs, and misperceptions create barriers to leadership advancement. The study extends the previous research on leadership advancement in general and Black women in faculty roles. Examining this population and non-faculty roles addresses the gap in the impact of identities such as race and gender on leadership advancement.

The first theme that was identified in the study focused on cultural taxation. This finding was consistent with the current literature which discussed how institutions use professionals of color to fill roles that often reinforce stereotypes and social constructs (Wright & Garces, 2018). Professionals are in these roles not because they are not qualified for others, but their White counterparts have the power and use this to create barriers. Guillaume and Apodaca (2020) found that cultural taxation is most prevalent for staff who are in the early stages of their career. The study confirmed both ideas; participants with less years of experience seemed to experience greater demands to be experts in all things race or diversity and often must take on the additional role of educating colleagues about diversity and equity. Participants also shared the demand that these roles place on them and the impact of these expectations on their career. The literature also discusses cultural wealth which is the pressure to do more and the fear of losing positionality (Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). This was reflected in the responses of participants who had greater years of experience.

Self-preservation was the second theme identified in the study. The participants discussed questioning their value, seeking to meet expectations that were often unrealistic, and the fear of failure when they were in leadership roles. Madden (2011), focused on how the dominate group, in this case White males, tends to create policies and practices that conflict with Black culture to maintain power and leadership roles. Leadership transformation is impacted by culture. Shifting traditional academic values and adjusting organizational change impacts leadership (Crevani, Ekman, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2015). The polices put in place create barriers to Black males securing access to opportunities to achieve higher level leadership roles. This confirms prior findings that the disparity in diverse leadership is impacted by policies and practices that are created and upheld by the majority group.

Intersectionality was the third theme identified from the study. The current literature around this theme was broad since so many identities can connect and change outcomes. However, social inequity evolving from intersectionality allows leaders to recognize the disparity that exists (Hattery & Smith, 2007). The literature discusses how the intersectionality of identities impacts the success of an employee (Agosto & Roland, 2018). It is important to not simply focus on visual identity but ensure that individuals have space to share about live experiences and identities. Intersectional approaches to social justice cannot take hold in a movement where its members do not divest from White supremacy McLaughlin, 2020). Like the first theme, there was consistency across all participants regarding the impact of the intersection of their race and gender. Some participants, mainly those with more years of experience, had managed to not allow it to define their experiences. However, the study revealed that Black males are often asked to either stifle one identity in certain spaces or be disqualified from positions because of the perceptions and social constructs. Participants described the experiences

as compromising who you are to meet the needs of standards that were designed to not fit Black males. Broom, Clark, and Smith (2017) discussed masculinity and privilege with regards to general leadership. Participants were aware of the impact of male privilege in a higher education setting. This acknowledgement helped to determine how when race is added what changes for the Black men. The study's findings confirm the literature regarding intersectionality and the impact organizational culture and ultimately leadership opportunities.

Understanding Black culture and cronyism were the two final themes that were identified in the study. Both themes are connected to general practices, hiring practices, and supervision in higher education. Participants explained that White supervisors who had diverse teams must be trained or prepared to support non-White employees. It is the institutional responsibility to ensure that they are prepared. Preparation would allow them to create rules, lead teams, and recruit because they understand how to support, be reliable, and promote cultural authenticity. Cronyism, on the other hand, was identified by all participants as something that was common and almost expected. This is mainly seen in hiring practices, especially at the highest position levels. Both understanding Black culture and cronyism create isolation for Black men. Cronyism impacts non-faculty Black males' ability to build strong networks. Strong networks were identified as one of the most remarkable ways to ascend to a leadership role. Collins (1999) uses this concept interchangeably with other concepts such as favoritism or nepotism. Despite these practices creating disproportionate treatment of employees, employee dissatisfaction, and a lack of trust in leadership, they still exist in many organizations (Arasli & Tumer, 2008). The empowerment of interest groups impacts how individuals gain access specifically in the areas of career advancement. Modern advancement is often dictated by who is known and the ideas



associated with next in line for positions of power (Hodgson, 2019). Individuals who fall within minority groups tend to be impacted negatively as it relates to leadership advancement.

### **Theoretical**

This study was guided by Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) critical race theory as a framework. Critical race theory explores the connections between race, racism, and social structures and how this creates inequities in society. This framework is applied to higher education and the role of policy and practice formulation. The data collected in this study confirmed critical race theory as an appropriate framework to examine the lived experiences of non-faculty Black males at predominately White institutions regarding leadership advancement.

The study adds to the body of research on critical race theory and its application to higher education. It supports critical race theory's claim that the history of race and racism has created structures that lead to systematic racism and inequity. This finding was revealed in the themes of understanding Black culture and cultural taxation. Participants during the data collection process revealed that predominately White institutions still allowed historical traditions to impact policies and practices. Participants also gave examples of when they were asked to subdue their identities because of the environment. Several laws have been created to decrease inequity; however, these seem to only create other problems such as tokenism. According to participants, organizations manipulate these laws and hire, recruit, and seek to retain just enough to meet the needs of the law. Tokenism leads to isolation and lack of a sense of belonging.

This study connects the impact of identity, specifically race and gender, and inequities to leadership advancement. Intersectionality of race and gender are key components of critical race theory. The intersectionality of race and gender was an important point of discussion, and participants strongly believed that this intersectionality had an impact on leadership

advancement. The participants explained that it was important to find a balance in those identities to ensure that they were given access to networks or other opportunities to assist with their career. Likewise, Delgado and Stefnacic (2017) explained that “CRT seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the connection between race, power, and racism by using broader perspectives” (p. 15). This connection between each of the areas allows individuals to understand how experiences are impacted by the identities.

Finally, this study also rejected the belief that integration has created a post-racial society where institutional and systematic racism does not exist. Participants also supported the literature that the student demographic is shifting, but that is not occurring on the staff level (Alexander & Arday, 2015). Institutional and systematic racism exist; participants feel that the dominant group creates practices that give White men an advantage. Black men encounter both oppressive and facilitative structures as they navigate the impact of racism on their leadership advancement journey. The restrictions of the system stifle the leadership advancement of Black non-faculty males at predominately White institutions and allow individuals to step into leadership roles solely on the word of another versus having proper qualifications. The current system limits the access, the networks, and the development. These are all areas that participants identified as important for leadership advancement.

### **Implications for Policy or Practice**

This phenomenological study produced findings that have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for higher education administrators and professionals, Black male administrators seeking senior leadership responsibilities, and higher education leaders. This section addresses the implications of the study and recommendations for the field.

### **Theoretical Implications**

### ***Theoretical Implications***

The results obtained from this study have theoretical implications for researchers of higher education, institutional leaders, and the intersectionality of race and gender. Using three of the six tenets of Ladson-Billings and Tate's critical race theory (1995) as a lens to view the lived experiences of non-faculty Black males and their leadership advancement, the study provided a detailed description of non-faculty Black males' leadership journeys, challenges, and barriers faced at PWIs in Virginia. Specifically, it connected the tenets of permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, and the importance of counternarratives and counter stories to inequities in higher education that impact the leadership advancement of non-faculty Black males. The policies and practices that PWIs have set in place create barriers for non-faculty Black males to attain leadership roles. The participants revealed that across institutions, White males still have control over the decision making. This is directly connected to the tenet Whiteness as a property, the idea that the White way is right. This allows White men to create rules and policies that increase inequity to maintain power and control. For example, participants discussed having been passed over for positions and then seeing this position filled with someone who had less experience and education but had deeper connections to the decision makers. Overall, the findings of this study support CRT's claim that race and gender impact experiences, specifically for the non-faculty Black male participants who explained that this intersectionality increased inequities and numerous challenges for taking steps in their leadership. The findings of the study support CRT's claims that systematic racism is part of our society and showcase how systems promote inequity.

### ***Empirical Implications***

Inequities exist in higher education on numerous levels. The responsibility of institutional leaders is to identify the policies, practices, and traditions that allow inequities to exist. There is value in adding diversity to leadership at institutions. However, there is not a simple solution to addressing inequities that have been built into a system for several years. This study focused on the experiences of non-faculty Black males regarding leadership advancement. The results of this study on their experiences have empirical implications that apply to non-faculty Black males and senior-level leaders.

For non-faculty Black males, the results of this study identified some of the potential barriers that an individual seeking leadership advancement may have to overcome. Having this knowledge may serve as preparation for these individuals. Additionally, they may be able to identify solutions to overcome some of the barriers. Non-faculty Black men can also examine the study's results regarding the impact of history and the role it plays in systems of oppression. Finally, the results of this study highlight the characteristics that are deemed most relevant to improve leadership advancement at predominately White institutions.

For senior leaders, the results of this study identify a significant concern that is impacting the learning environment. First, leadership is responsible for not just the experience of students but also all staff members. The experiences of staff reflect on the institution and could have other domino effects. Second, senior leaders are responsible for policy and procedure creation. Having the information from this study regarding inequity in policies and procedures provides perspective and reasons to make the necessary changes. Third, the study's results can assist leaders when creating mission statements, strategic planning, and long-term goals. Finally, leadership defines values, directions, and the priorities of the institution. The study's findings

allow institutional leaders to shift from a diversity agenda built on representational diversity versus race and justice consciousness.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of this study provide practical implications for non-faculty Black males, senior-level institutional leaders, and employees at predominately White institutions. The implications of each of these stakeholders are discussed here.

The practical implication for non-faculty Black males is an awareness that they can hold leadership positions at predominately White institutions. The path to securing these positions will require overcoming challenges and barriers directly related to their identities. All participants indicated that they had worked in higher education in some capacity, from being an undergraduate student to their current role. Twelve of thirteen participants had worked solely in higher education. This large percentage who had worked from early stages was an indicator that these individuals were passionate about working in higher education and committed to the success of their institutions. The findings of this study can also help non-faculty Black males plan career trajectories. Participants highlighted numerous areas of leadership that would benefit from diversification of leadership. This gives non-faculty Black males insight and an opportunity to tailor experiences and networks towards those areas. The final benefit is gaining an understanding of how environmental and cultural factors impact experiences. Although all the institutions in the study were classified as PWIs, there were still differences that existed. Some of those differences influenced environmental and cultural factors which impacted leadership decision-making and potential opportunities for advancement.

Participants shared during the data collection method some of the practical recommendations they had taken to achieve leadership responsibilities at predominately White

institutions. Some of these steps would make good recommendations for the future. One recommendation that participants shared was to create and stick to a list of non-negotiables regarding identities. This should be shared with staff, supervisor, and other stakeholders to ensure that the boundaries are set early. This would create the space that needs to be authentic, and this would create rapport. Another recommendation shared by participants was to understand one's own privilege such as being male, even if one has minority identities. The final recommendation is to challenge the color-blind idea using dialogue.

The study's practical implications for senior-level institutional leaders responsible for policies and procedures that affect non-faculty Black males are that each employee's experience is different and has the potential to grow and develop into a valuable leader. Participants highlighted that hiring practices were filled with bias against Black males. These biases tended to be related to social constructs and stereotypes. The study's participants explained that this immediately placed them at a disadvantage and ultimately impacted their ability to secure leadership opportunities. To address concerns around bias, one practical application would be to offer trainings in inclusion, implicit bias, and other areas of diversity, equity, and belonging. The emphasis on the lack of mentoring and leadership pipelines can serve as an opportunity for senior-level institutional leaders to provide support to non-faculty Black males. Although participants had limited experiences with mentoring and pipelines, they explained that they thought mentoring would be beneficial. There was mixed support for pipelines until the current senior leadership became more racially diverse. Creating a mentoring program for non-faculty Black males in mid and upper-level positions will provide Black men in higher education with opportunities for professional development, networking, feedback, and consistent support.

Finally, this study's practical implications for employees at predominately White institutions start with acknowledging that the landscape of higher education from a racial perspective is changing. There are changes in student and employee demographics based on race. These changes will impact policies, procedures, missions, and institutional goals. All these areas can ultimately have a positive impact on the learning environment if done correctly. Diversity cannot be viewed as simply having representation at some levels, but it must be incorporated at every level. Non-White educators are securing terminal degrees at a high rate, which means they will meet the qualifications needed for leadership roles from an educational standpoint. Institutions must each ensure that barriers are not created to exclude specific qualified employees because of their identities. Excluding qualified employees is counterproductive to the learning environment and does not support students' holistic development. Diverse leadership would bring greater depth and breadth of experiences. This leads to innovation which prepares students to truly be positively active, informed members of the world. Black men are actively seeking education, Black men can be empathetic, Black men can be more than the negative social constructs, but this is impossible unless systematic changes occur. Limiting the ability of Black men to lead only perpetuates systems of inequity which creates unequal competitive environments like slavery did; overcoming these environments is extremely challenging.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

The delimitations of the study are the boundaries that were put in place for the study that limited its scope and applicability. Unlike limitations that arise from research method and design (Patton, 2002), delimitations result from the decision made relating to the study setting and participant selection. For example, the study setting selection was restricted to predominately White four-year institutions with a significant percentage of the student population identified as

non-White. The percentage of students who identified as non-White was an essential delimitation for the setting because institutions should have leadership that represents the population in terms of race. Similarly, the participant selection was delimited to non-faculty administrators, who had a minimum of five years of experience in a leadership role. Setting this boundary allowed this researcher to select administrators with more experiences that could provide depth about decisions involving their careers.

Additionally, this boundary allowed for the inclusion of senior-level professionals and omission of any new professionals. Finally, a phenomenological approach was selected to understand a specific population's perspectives based on their human experiences about a problem. Moustakas (1994) explained that a phenomenology is a form of inquiry that seeks to understand human experience in the context of a specific issue or phenomenon. This design allowed the flexibility in collecting information using various sources.

This study is limited in transferability and application because it was limited to study settings in a specific location of the country. Additionally, this study is limited in its results due to limitations in the sample. Participants selected had to meet criteria, which was specific to Black males. These limitations were set because the study was geared towards a specific population to address a gap in the literature. The findings may not be transferable to non-faculty Black men at PWIs in states outside of Virginia.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The study focused on the experiences of non-faculty Black males at predominately White institutions in Virginia. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are proposed.



This study focused on the experiences of non-faculty Black males and their leadership advancement at PWIs in the southern region of the United States. Future research of a similar population in a different country region where the history of education was not so closely connected to race could add transferability. Future studies can also be strengthened by incorporating various PWIs in size and primary focus, such as research versus land grants or liberal arts institutions.

Another area of interest to be considered for research is using a quantitative study to examine the number of non-faculty Black males that have held senior leadership positions at PWIs over the last two decades. This would provide details on their career trajectory, rate of advancement, barriers they overcame, and leadership values they represented. This study may also explain why some individuals with these specific identities can ascend to leadership roles at PWIs.

The third recommendation would be to replicate this qualitative study in ten to fifteen years with different participants, but with the same criteria. Between 2015 and 2020, several situations have drawn attention to systematic and institutional racism. This is not claiming that this was not an issue before this timeframe; however, the intensity of these situations may have impacted participants' experiences and responses. It would be interesting to see if tension around equity decreases if the participants' experiences are the same.

Another area of interest to be considered for future research would be a qualitative study that compares the experiences of Black females versus Black males in non-faculty roles at PWIs. The double minority identities are the focus of a significant amount of literature on leadership. However, the career trajectory and barriers they overcome would provide insight into whether it

is the intersectionality of identity or one identity that has a more significant influence on leadership advancement.

The final recommendation for future research would be to conduct a qualitative study on the experiences of non-faculty Black and White males. This study revealed that White males have an advantage because of history, cronyism, traditions, standards, and the continued presence of leaders who share their identity holding senior positions. It would provide insight as to if these are true factors that impact inequity. It will also allow the research to examine institutional systems and policies and impact different identities. Additionally, it would provide perspective on how leadership is viewed and defined based on racial identity.

### **Recommendations for Institutional Leaders**

The study's findings apply to administrators and can be used to assist in creating equitable practices that will foster a sense of belonging and positively impact the overall learning environment. Based on the findings, there are two practical recommendations that can be implemented. The first recommendation for institutional leaders would be to offer all staff training opportunities based on identifying exploration and development, cultural appreciation, and sense of belonging. These pieces of training focus on identifying areas in which individuals are similar versus solely focusing on differences. A sense of belonging aims to provide security and support for employees; when employees feel accepted and included and their unique identities matter, they are more committed to the organization's mission and vision. Training must move beyond teaching tolerance, awareness, or appreciation, and challenge employees to dig deeper. Simply creating training followed by policies does not remove implicit bias. Training should be intentional, timely, and easily accessible. Finally, training should not be made mandatory; instead, training should be incorporated into the organization's culture, a standard

that should be set by the leadership (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). This researcher agrees with Dobbin and Kelev's (2016) recommendations regarding incorporating the training, adding that they should be instituted at every level of the organization.

The second recommendation would be to create formal mentoring programs for Black male non-faculty administrators and equitable succession plans for current leaders. Creating formal mentor programs that are evaluated and have a genuine investment from the institution will help create a sense of belonging and provide Black male employees the opportunity to build connections. These formal connections can offer support in navigating career fields. These mentoring programs can span multiple units, creating opportunities to explore other areas and easily connect to the organization's mission and goals. Participants described feeling isolated as one of the challenges they had to overcome to advance in their careers. Having a mentor or a network of peers who share similar identities is a step in removing the barrier of isolation. Institutions should also seek to create cross-institution mentoring programs. This will increase the connections and breadth of experiences that could be shared. Cross-institution mentoring also would provide employees insight into other institutions' organizational culture and practices. Changing culture around diversity, inclusion, and equity will take time. It is important that institutional leaders provide space for true learning to take place and recognize the time it could take. Black male non-faculty members must also allow for allyship to occur. Growth will be required from leaders and administrators for these recommendations to be successful.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators with their leadership advancement in public, predominantly White institutions in Virginia. A transcendental phenomenological research

approach provided non-faculty Black male administrator's space to share their experiences so their stories could be heard clearly. Five themes emerged during the coding and analysis process: cultural taxation, self-preservation intersectionality, understanding Black culture, and cronyism. The stories and experiences of these administrators have provided an opportunity to understand how the intersectionality of gender and race has a significant impact on leadership advancement. The shifting of the student racial demographic at predominately White institutions is a positive sign; however, the underrepresentation of Black males in leadership roles indicates that there is still room for institutions to grow.

The first significant finding of the non-faculty Black male experience regarding leadership advancement was that the access to advancement opportunities was not equal. Non-faculty Black males were excluded or denied access because of stereotyping, cronyism, and their inability to meet standards set by their White counterparts—factors such as stereotyping, and cronyism impacts non-faculty Black males' ability to build strong networks. Strong networks were identified as one of the most remarkable ways to ascend to a leadership role. The stories shared provided details of how these factors create an imbalance in hiring practices and policy creation. The characteristics of leaders also differ based on race. Non-faculty Black males often must demonstrate a sense of resiliency and compromise their cultural authenticity.

The second significant finding of this study was that the history of education in the South had had a considerable impact on present-day higher education. Despite numerous steps towards more inclusive learning environments and integration of schools, the power to make any significant change has been limited. The policies, procedures, and customs support the majority in terms of race. History has created systems of oppression that cannot be dismantled by making inclusive mission statements. It will require intentionality on the current leadership to ensure that

non-faculty Black males are treated fairly and allowed to lead. Institutions must look past the cultural norms and traditions of the institution to make this change. Many participants highlighted the impact that institutional culture has on shaping careers and ultimately impacting leadership advancement.

The third significant findings were connected to mentoring and a leadership pipeline. It was consistent among participants that formal mentoring did not exist, and they did not find it beneficial. Participants also explained that the responsibility to find a mentor was on the mentee. Since there are limited leaders who identify as Black males, it creates a complex process. Despite the standard leadership pipelines in other fields, participants consistently responded that it was not a thing, and they weren't sure if it would truly benefit them. They felt that pipelines may be one of the reasons why norms are so challenging to break. Leaders groom others to be similar versus preparing them to lead through their lens.

Finally, the current climate around race, equity, and gender issues in the United States has impacted higher education. Leaders have an opportunity to address the raised concerns and create learning environments that give everyone an equal chance to be successful. Highlighting the impact of racism cannot be denied; however, it should not be used as a weapon to divide, but instead as a tool to teach about injustice as we move towards racial progress.

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doi:10.3102/0002831214563063

## Appendix

### Appendix A: IRB APPROVAL

Liberty University Institutional Review Board

April 13, 2021

Lerone Joseph  
Floralba Arbelo Marrero

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-640 Leadership Advancement: A Phenomenological study of non-faculty Black male leadership in higher education

Dear Lerone Joseph, Floralba Arbelo Marrero:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: April 13, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## **Appendix B: CONSENT FORM**

**Title of the Project:** Leadership Advancement: A Phenomenological study of non-faculty Black male leadership in higher education.

**Principal Investigator:** Lerone Joseph, Liberty University

### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a full-time employee at a public, predominately white institution in Virginia; identify as a Black male; serve in a non-faculty role; and have supervisory responsibilities. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

### **What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study will be to understand the lived experiences of non-faculty Black male administrators about leadership advancement at public predominantly white institutions (PWI) in Virginia. The study will be guided by the central research question: What are the leadership advancement experiences of non-faculty, Black, male administrators at public, predominately white institutions in Virginia? The study is significant because it is designed to understand how leadership advancement in higher education is impacted by identity and race. While the higher education student population is increasingly representative of the U.S. demographics, inequalities at the leadership levels persist. The study's practical significance is that the findings can be used to support higher education policies about leadership advancement as it relates to non-faculty Black males at predominately white institutions.

### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an online, demographic survey that will take you about 15 minutes to complete.
2. Complete a virtual, one-on-one interview with the researcher that will take you about 40 minutes to complete. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed.
3. Participate in a virtual focus group meeting with other participants. This will take 30 minutes to complete. Focus groups will be recorded.

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include using findings to support higher education policies on the subject of leadership advancement as it relates to non-faculty Black males at public, predominately white institutions.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted virtually; participants will be asked to use headphones so that others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

#### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Each participant will receive a Visa online gift card of \$15 upon completion of the study as a token of appreciation for participation.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you apart from focus group data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Lerone Joseph.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

#### **Your Consent**



By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

**APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. What gender do you identify as?
2. What is your age range?
  - a. 21-30 years old
  - b. 31 – 40 years old
  - c. 41+ years old
3. Please specify your ethnicity.
  - A. Caucasian
  - B. African American
  - C. Latino or Hispanic
  - D. Asian
  - E. Native American
  - F. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - G. Two or More
  - H. Other/Unknown
  - I. Prefer not to say
4. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?"
  - a. Bachelor's Degree
  - b. Master's Degree
  - c. Ph.D. or higher
5. Briefly describe your current responsibilities.
6. Please list all leadership roles or jobs you have held in higher education.
7. Please identify the institution(s) that you have worked at previously based on the following classification (HBCU – Historically Black College and University, HIS – Hispanic Serving Institution PWI – Predominately White Institutions, Other).
8. How many years have you served in a supervisory role (supervisory had 1 or more employees directly report to you)?
9. Briefly describe what steps you have taken to support your career advancement (for example, training, certification, additional education etc.).
10. Can you describe how satisfied you are with the opportunities offered by your institution for career advancement?

11. How do you think your racial and gender identity has impacted your career advancement journey?
12. Based on your experiences, can you describe your thoughts on how stereotypes of Black males impact the perception of Black male leadership in higher education?

**APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as tell me about your current role or position.
2. Tell me about your decision to pursue a career in higher education?
3. Outline the steps that you have taken personally, academically, and professionally to prepare you for your current role?
4. Tell me what opportunities your institution offers to you which may help your ability to advance in your career?
5. Describe the current hiring practices at your institution?
6. Describe how would someone in your role progress into a leadership role?
7. What steps would you have to take if you were interested in taking on a larger leadership role at your current institutions?
8. Describe how you would gain and maintain access to a leadership role at a PWI?
9. Describe how representative you think the current leadership of your institution is representative of the student population?
10. Describe your experience over been promoted or passed over for a leadership role?
11. What do you think impacts leadership advancement for Black males at PWIs?
12. Describe the barriers that hinder non-faculty Black males from holding leadership roles at your institution?
13. When you think of the concept of tokenism and leadership what comes to mind?
14. Please list some examples of things you did or stances you took to deal with the racialized or gendered experiences.
15. Based on your experiences what do you think is the reason for the disparity that exist in terms of leadership not been representative of student populations?

16. What role does race and gender play in leadership advancement in higher education at PWIs?
17. How should your institution address the social justice rationale?
18. Please describe how any form of mentoring has impacted your career advancement?
19. The leadership pipeline seeks to create opportunity and mentorship for future leaders, how does your institution use this strategy for supporting leadership development and career advancement?
20. Please tell me anything else that you would like to about this topic that I have not asked

**APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. *The major themes identified from questionnaires and interviews were cultural taxation, intersectionality, self-preservation, understanding of black culture, and cronyism. Please identify three of these which most connect with your experience.*
2. *Describe the impact of creating a leadership pipeline on career advancement and the success of institutions.*
3. *What are some examples of cultural taxation that act as a barrier to leadership advancement of Black males in higher education at PWIs?*
4. *Discuss how the intersectionality of other identities other than race and gender impact career advancement of Black males in higher education at PWIs.*
5. *What policies or practices can be instituted to address the concerns around tokenism of Black males in leadership roles?*
6. *Are the themes that were identified representative of your career advancement experience?*
7. *Which of the themes identified are most important or impactful to your career advancement experience?*
8. *After this discussion, please select one theme from our list which most relate to your experiences regarding career advancement.*

**APPENDIX F: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

Participant M

Interviewer: Lerone Joseph

May 10<sup>th</sup>

Interviewer: Please introduce yourself to me, as tell me about your current role or position.

Participant M: I'm an assistant director for residence life. I supervise live in professional staff who work with several partners. I also try to create an equitable experience for all students to learn and gather the skills that they need to gather to hopefully not only pursue necessarily a career path but more importantly figure out their God given purpose in life.

I: Tell me about your decision to pursue a career in higher education?

PM: I was an undergraduate student; I was a non-traditional student. A lot of my personal development bleeds into my professional development. I focus on what my philosophy is not only as a leader but as an individual working on trying to bring my authentic self to work which we know can cause problems. As a Black person you know I do a lot of trying to read in and stand up. Not only just in higher education but outside of it. I think sometimes student affairs we get caught up in what other schools are doing. We begin to not pay attention to what you know. Other companies' other sectors are doing regarding a lot of the things that we do that are the same. For example, training recruiting all those things, right and so those are the things that I tried to do to prepare me for this position. I think it's about just being prepared for the process of being in the position right. I knew at one point my last year as a resident director when I knew I was ready for that role. It was that year when everything goes right.

I: Outline the steps that you have taken personally, academically, and professionally to prepare you for your current role?

PM: I was always told that securing degrees would be the best thing for me to do. I completed my bachelors and master's degree in education. I was also able to complete multiple certifications that I thought were relevant to student affairs. Such as crisis management, conflict resolution, and counseling related trainings. I have been given the suggestions that I should connect with others who have gone before me to be successful.

I: Tell me what opportunities your institution offers to you which may help your ability to advance in your career?

PM: I will always say have something to do with my identity, but I think more to do it how my identity shows up. Being a black man, proud to be a black man I let people know that I have a black man. I am not ashamed to advocate for my people. I will always continue to advocate for my people. It doesn't mean that I don't have a case for those that are LGBTQ or Asian American or have disabilities of things of that nature. But when we talk about black folks, I'm going to talk about it. I think that there's opportunities here if you don't shake the boat. If you don't ruffle any feathers. I think there's opportunities so I can't say that you can't because I've watched others. Black men get opportunities at the institution of career advancement in things appointed to serve jobs. I also know that it's certain times when show up and they don't right they're going to they're going to make sure that my comfort is preserved. I don't really try to preserve anybody's comfort not even my own right because I think that's where the growth comes from. Those uncomfortable situations, your identities would gain access to a leadership role at a predominantly White institution not specifically.

I: Describe the current hiring practices at your institution?

PM: Jaded is the word I would use to describe them. Often it is more about who you know rather than what you know. Especially for non-entry level positions. I think I see more people of color



in the applicant pool for entry level roles. Depending on the position the time frame for posting and location is impacted. Some positions are also made available to current employees. Most positions have a search committee, or a board and they make the decision. However, the hiring manager has the final decision. Lots of higher-level positions are filled with individuals who have a network with the individuals who make the decisions. Even after positions are filled individuals often bring in their own team to assist them which eliminates individuals like myself from having a chance at applying or stepping into those roles.

I: Describe how would someone in your role progress into a leadership role?

PM: Network and get connected. I have learned that to capitalize on opportunities you have to know about the opportunities. If you are not connected, then you cannot learn about these.

Friends help friends get where they need to be without any qualifications in some case. There is no accountability.

I: What steps would you have to take if you were interested in taking on a larger leadership role at your current institutions?

I: Describe how you would gain and maintain access to a leadership role at a PWI?

PM: I think that it will depend on the institution in terms of what they truly value. In terms of what can you get access to. I think someone like myself can get access to anything, but it just depends on the day, if they value that right if they don't then me myself but I think most people most black people get leadership opportunities they probably have at least come off as threatening. I mean I've been called hostile while advocating for my White female staff member. I'm advocating for the person that looks like you, it's like the irony so it's like OK that's just what you think about me. It didn't matter what I was doing, just what you think about me. I think you must come off as not as threatening they want you to feel a sense appreciation. I was told that at

a previous institution it was like when you got this institution's name on your resume now like that was like well did you a favor. You can't be seen as threatening. I mean it's still a slow process, but some are making good headway, but I think it's going to depend on if the school truly values diversity equity and inclusion. It's really going to depend on that more than anything. If you're going to get it at any school depending on the school, you're probably going to have to be one of the safe ones. I think that's probably the biggest thing I would say is that the White people would have been very safe individual yeah could literally be the higher like we go we going to get to that cause that's happened to me no black person

I: Describe how representative you think the current leadership of your institution is representative of the student population?

PM: The current leadership is White and male. When I think of specific departments who may interact more with diverse student populations, I think some of them are nonWhite and female. I think traditions of hiring play a role in this. We live in the south some things are hard to change. We must remember that integration is still new in education especially in southern states.

I: Describe your experience over been promoted or passed over for a leadership role?

PM: I personally have not experienced this in my career. I have heard others who mentioned that they felt it was associated with their race and gender.

I: What do you think impacts leadership advancement for Black males at PWIs?

PM: What is the value of diversity at the institution. It also depends on if the Black male is willing to go above and beyond to assimilate or conform to the role. The perceptions of a Black male are hard to overcome. Not to mention the stereotypes associated with those identities. We are labeled as aggressive, unable to lead because we are insensitive, and not intelligent. The

history of Black people in America also plays a role in this. The connection between race and gender impacts leadership opportunities.

I: Describe the barriers that hinder non-faculty Black males from holding leadership roles at your institution?

PM: To start it must be access to opportunities especially if you are unwilling to sacrifice your identity and not assimilate. In addition to access there are stereotypes and societies perception. I also think there is a lack of guidance from supervisors. For example, I once had a supervisor who told me I did fit what the next steps were looking for because of my aggression and how I dressed.

I: When you think of the concept of tokenism and leadership what comes to mind?

PM: It happens in every area. This is not a new idea or concept. I think in terms of the state it really depends on what part of the state you're in. The concept of tokenism in leadership means checking the box and predominantly White institutions do. I think it's up to you to decide to be a token. I always tell myself I did not come here to be a token I came here to do a job. I'm a box check for them but I'm also going to do my job. I'm going to speak out, I'm going to share my true opinion, I'm going to speak for the voices of color, the voices of faculty and staff that don't always have a seat at the table. You can tokenize but I'm also going to use my token label to do the work.

I: Please list some examples of things you did or stances you took to deal with the racialized or gendered experiences.

PM: I speak up and I do not sacrifice my genuine self for anything. I try to always be authentic especially in spaces where I know that Black men are underrepresented. It is important to speak

up in the moment and be willing to potentially challenge traditions. I also try to share feedback about spaces that are uncomfortable for Black men and how we can fix this problem.

I: Based on your experiences what do you think is the reason for the disparity that exist in terms of leadership not been representative of student populations?

PM: There is a lack of understanding of how to support Black males. It also goes back to gaining access to positions and creating an environment for Black men to be successful. You may enter the role but the pressure to be successful is overwhelming that you underperform, and this becomes the label for everyone with the identity. That is the challenging aspect of holding these identities you often represent the entire race and gender, which is unfair. I also think that at PWIs traditions impact hiring and representation. They do not want to challenge what has always been done because of potential impact it may have on other areas. This is connected to the politics in higher education.

I: How should your institution address the social justice rationale?

PM: I think we've done some things; it is very hard to capture everything that's happening around social justice and inclusion work. There is a council that does a lot of the work in addition to the departments in our academic units there are diversity representatives. It is important that institutions allow the conversations around inclusion to exist across our campus in different areas that need a lot of these discussions. We are looking at curriculum, conversations in the classroom and faculty connections to there's affinity groups within our alumni are getting more engaged. I have seen us do some work, but we have a lot of ways to go because there are a lot of things, we have tackled in conversation, but we haven't tackled them in action and so while we're doing some things or a lot of ways in which we need to go to create more of a universal design. Universal design you're thinking about this without me having to talk about it, without me

having to say enhance our missions process. Thinking about areas such as how we make our admissions process more inclusive and more equitable to students of color. How do we intentionally recruit them and retain them? I hope we can normalize equity without me having to tell you to do it. How do you how do you manage is always having to ask the question it's difficult that goes back to that normalized equity and it makes me often realize that people are raised differently. People come from spaces of privilege, and they don't always have to think about others they don't always have to think about the student who is lower social economic status or is first generation they don't always have to think about it when it's not your story when it's not your experience I come from marginalized backgrounds, so I've always had to think about it.

I: Please describe how any form of mentoring has impacted your career advancement?

PM: I had no desire to get a PhD. I moved to live on position at an institution, my mentor was a Black man with a PhD, he was very young. He introduced me to the professional network, and he showed me the social norms. Networking is important because that is part of the process. It builds a defense that is needed when you are a Black male. Without that mentorship and that nudge of how you navigate White spaces, or how to operate in black spaces I would not be in the position I am in. Years later I can reach back to those things in my toolkit when it was time to interview and when I got the job and had to figure out how to navigate the campus. This is my only experience it has not always been easy to find mentors. I know of other colleagues who have never had a mentor or speak poorly about mentor experiences.

I: The leadership pipeline seeks to create opportunity and mentorship for future leaders, how does your institution use this strategy for supporting leadership development and career advancement?

PM: I don't know that we have it. There are only few black men in leadership roles at my institution and that includes me and two others who have been at the institution for very long time. They've been in this culture in this space and ingrained in what is happening they have lost their identity. I am probably the first black man to come into the leadership capacity that didn't rise the ranks. I came into the position at the other two did not. They've been here a long time and rose the ranks I came directly into my role. I would say I don't think there is a pipeline, and I don't think that it's something that's thought about or considered in most White institutions. Yes on the flip side of that I do you think there's a pipeline for White people absolutely for them and it doesn't require this as much as it requires from us.

### APPENDIX G: Audit Trail

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date of Contact</b>	<b>Collection Method</b>	<b>Notes/Reflection</b>
Participant I	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 28th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 4th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 4th	Focus Group	Recorded group responses and backed up file on secure laptop. Discussed themes
Participant M	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 28th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 10th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	May 20th	Focus Group Email	No response
Participant L	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 30th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 13th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 10th	Focus Group	Recorded group responses and backed up file on secure laptop. Discussed themes
Participant B	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 30th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 6th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 10th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant G	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 29th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 15th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 10th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop

Participant_J	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 18th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 15th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_H	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 3rd	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 21st	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 4th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_N	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 17th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 23rd	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 15th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_P	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	May 24th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 15th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_C	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 18th	Confrimed Interview	
	June 25th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_Q	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 10th	Confrimed Interview	



	June 26th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_R	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 10th	Email of interest	
	June 28th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_W	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 10th	Email of interest	
	June 28th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	No Show

**APPENDIX H: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewer: Lerone Joseph

Interviewer: The major themes that are coming out of the interviews, what I've found so far.

Please let me know if any of this sound familiar, may kind of make sense with what you shared

and then we'll dive into some questions. First one is cultural taxation. That's come up a lot

talking about the pressure that is put on black folks or people of color to be representative for

their whole ethnicity. Intersectionality between the two identities. Can't be ignored when you're

talking about leadership, tokenism, it's been more focused on send the black to deal with the

black to put it quite frankly. Self-preservation has been one of the larger conversations in terms

of when black males gain access to leadership roles. They try to hold onto it mainly for self-

preservation more than anything else. Male privilege and male, and the masculinity complex and

how that impacts mentoring leading through the lens of understanding black culture. So, the one

word that you, that I would say forever for the rest of my life or ones, he taught me cronyism.

Um, several people have brought that up. And then the last theme is the stereotypes and social

constructs, uh, and how that impacts the unwillingness to assimilate. So, do those sound

familiar?

PI: This sound strong and based on what I remember from the interview I agree with these

themes.

PN: I agree with these, I am intrigued to talk more.

PH: Yes, these are good and sound familiar.

I: Do you think that cultural taxation presents a barrier to leadership advancement for black males?

PI: I think it's something that is very conscious to people, in the moment, but I don't see it as a roadblock. I think it's one of those things that at least for me, it just kind of is a reality given the territory. So, I guess for some folks it may be a roadblock if you're not able to keep the right perspective on it, but I don't think it necessarily has to be a roadblock given the environment.

PN: Sometimes it is, depending on the situation, are you the token, do you have support, is the support reliable, do they truly want inclusion?

PH: It is a barrier at least from my experiences, it creates additional challenges.

Interviewer: Regarding the intersectionality of the identities, talk to me a little bit more about how career advancement for individuals with these identities often can't be separated with regards to hiring practices or when folks are thinking about hiring practices.

PN: I think of the identities that are perceived versus what is real. Think about masculinity and how that is perceived. Even in terms of it being a good thing you must tone it down significantly or it is seen as a negative thing.

PH: I agree with the perspective about masculinity, but I think privilege is also connected to that approach. Although we are minorities, we still recognize in some situation there is a tremendous amount of privilege.

PI: There is also the concerns that we deal with internally when it comes to difference shades of our skin. I have had experiences where I know I am treated differently because I am a lighter skin tone. I think that impacts perception and ultimately the image of the institution. You can be Black but not too Black, in terms of skin tone.

Interviewer: Examining hiring practices and data, things are categorized things through the lens of race and gender. So, we look at our numbers, broadly how many people of color, how many black people do we hire, as opposed to having it broken out to the individual, relationships that

form per employee. Do you think this is taken into consideration when hiring or when they are writing policies?

Participant I: For the most part I would say yes, but I think sometimes again, the policies being written are so disconnected from day-to-day interactions. I think that's probably where there's an opportunity for more growth there.

Participant H: Social constructs, other experiences, internal bias also impact hiring and policies. I am not sure that they can be 100% removed. There is also no checks and balances for those things. A lot of the policies and practices are guided by tradition.

Participant N: To lead, you must understand Black culture. This creates a space of comfort. There are stereotypes and social constructs associated with Black males and how that impacts a situation. Then you must consider the who you know versus what you know. Lot so individuals unfairly giving friends jobs or promotions that they may or may not be qualified for.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on tokenism? Have you experiences it?

Participant I: Well, I absolutely have. I've experienced that on several Asians in several fields as well. I think it is becoming more common with the attention the media is giving to Black individuals.

Interviewer: How'd that make you feel?

Participant H: Like a token, that I there for show and not valued.

Participant N: I think it took me a few situations to recognize that this was the situation I was part of what is the value? As the token you have some powers so how you use that to make change.

Interviewer: The message about identity or race. Do you think who delivers the message matters? And do you think the message could have been delivered by an individual who doing the share that those identities

Participant N: Absolutely, easily the individual must be aware of the situation and understand Black culture.

Interviewer: Thinking about reflecting on your own experience in the situation of working with supervisors to understand Black culture, what did you do?

Participant I: Communication, training, and boundaries.

Participant N: I agree it is important to set those standards as soon as possible and ask for what you want.

Participant H: I see that point; I think someone else would accept that message better than I can. I think where I am now. I don't think so. So, it's almost like that the other hand, like who else at this point would be able to deliver that message or do I trust the message the way that it shouldn't be done?

Interviewer: That's a good point, the trust issue that comes up. Self-preservation, responses were given that if I make this decision, what am I doing to impact the entire system? What do you, think about that response of when I get here, I now have to think about how my decisions will impact, the whole culture?

Participant I: I see that. Obviously, but I also think that while doing that, you must maintain, understanding that it is impacting as a Black man or a Black male for referring to them who it's impacting. There must be a little part of where I am that has that in mind. I think I can't separate that from myself, I think in the position that I've been hired and I have to keep that in mind always, or I'm not staying true to myself and professional has that in the past inhibited my

growth maybe. I think that is the kind of trade-off that sometimes either I still am a representative of the place that I work, but at the same time, how do I maintain my identity within that? That's kind of the juggling act that we face.

Participant N: I think it's also important to scale the expectations, you know, around that self-preservation and understand, what part is expected for you to succeed in your job. So like keeping a good balance of all those. I also think those expectations as a result, whether that be to whoever you're working for or to in this case, constituents or whatever that you're working with.

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Participant H: I agree. I also think though that when we take a position as this kind of already know what you would know with meaning that, I mean maybe not to that extent, but we already know that we're already looked at it a certain way and that we need to almost work as harder. We haven't talked about this in our interview, worked harder to ensure that, you know, we are view from a credible lens, at least where I am in my, my, my experiences. Every person, when they come into a culture, they must learn that culture, learn the people way. How things interact. I

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Participant N: I think there's a game. Yeah.

Participant I: Maybe game's not the best word to use, but systematic things that happen that you must learn to navigate. That's a much more academic way to put it.

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the quick answer is going to take years and decades, but I think it's going to be a combination of those interactions helping turn the tide.

Interviewer: So, of the, of the nine themes that I mentioned at the start, again quickly just to review them, I just want to know which if you had to pick one of the nine which one would you say would be the most impactful reasons why black males may not advance to leadership roles in higher education?

Participant I: Intersectionality of race and gender.

Participant H: Lack of mentoring.

Participant N: Lack of understanding culture coupled with intersectionality.

Interviewer: This brings us to the end. Thank you for participating. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## APPENDIX I: SIGNIFICANT WORDS

<b>PRIMARY THEME</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
Cultural Taxation	Tokenism, Diversity consultant, forced to understand all races, history with identities
Self-Preservation	Show casing self-worth, mental health, fear of failure
Intersectionality	Male Privilege, Masculinity, Colorism
Understanding Black Culture	Creating space for comfort, Relatability, Social Construct, stereotypes
Cronyism	Mentoring, pipelines for leadership, institutional politics, positionality

## APPENDIX J: SIGNIFICANT WORDS

<b>Word</b>	<b>Similar Words/Phrases</b>
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<b>Token</b>	Singular, individual, representative, symbol
<b>Identity</b>	Known for, recognition, specific
<b>Intersectionality</b>	Connection, combination, connectedness, relationship, togetherness
<b>Privilege</b>	Advantages, benefit, entitlement, rights
<b>Stereotypes</b>	Misperceptions, perceptions, type, categorized, pigeonhole
<b>Culture</b>	Society, social society, civilization, environment, traditions
<b>Cronyism</b>	Favoritism, nepotism, patronization
<b>Networking</b>	Connections, meet and greet, circle of influence
<b>Racism</b>	Prejudice, hate, creating disparity
<b>Equity</b>	Justice, fairness value, worth, rights

## APPENDIX K: JOURNAL NOTES

### *Notes from Pilot Study*

1. Emphasize the location of institutions when asking about experiences, this provides perspective to participants
2. Understand the topic is emotional and can be triggering for participants based on their experiences. Keep that in mind when asking questions especially when associated with race.
3. Be prepared to define race, ethnicity and other complex terms that may not be common knowledge to all participants.

### *Notes from Interviews and Focus groups*

Participants used cronyism, favoritism, and nepotism simultaneously to describe a lot of their experiences. More context is needed regarding literature around cronyism. Intersectionality was discussed beyond race and gender.

Participants discussed their experiences with Black females and gave perspective on what they witnessed. It was important to redirect conversation in the focus groups. One commonality among participants was they all held positions/ jobs while they were undergraduate students. The concept of pipeline was not initially familiar but after discussions participants was able to relate.

Review the difference in responses based on years or experiences, regarding authenticity and assimilation.

### APPENDIX G: Audit Trail

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date of Contact</b>	<b>Collection Method</b>	<b>Notes/Reflection</b>
Participant I	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 28th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 4th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 4th	Focus Group	Recorded group responses and backed up file on secure laptop. Discussed themes
Participant M	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 28th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 10th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	May 20th	Focus Group Email	No response
Participant L	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 30th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 13th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 10th	Focus Group	Recorded group responses and backed up file on secure laptop. Discussed themes
Participant B	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 30th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 6th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 10th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant G	April 28th	Email of interest	
	April 29th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 15th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 10th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop

Participant_J	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 18th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 15th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_H	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 3rd	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 21st	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 4th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_N	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 17th	Demographic Survey Complete	Met all requirements to participate
	May 23rd	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 15th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_P	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	May 24th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 15th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_C	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 18th	Confirmed Interview	
	June 25th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant_Q	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	

	June 10th	Confrimed Interview	
	June 26th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant _R	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 10th	Email of interest	
	June 28th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
Participant _W	April 28th	Email of interest	
	May 8th	Email of interest	
	June 10th	Email of interest	
	June 28th	1 on 1 interview	Recorded interview and backed up file on secure laptop
	June 30th	Focus Group	No Show

**APPENDIX H: SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

Interviewer: Lerone Joseph

Interviewer: The major themes that are coming out of the interviews, what I've found so far.

Please let me know if any of this sound familiar, may kind of make sense with what you shared and then we'll dive into some questions. First one is cultural taxation. That's come up a lot talking about the pressure that is put on black folks or people of color to be representative for their whole ethnicity. Intersectionality between the two identities. Can't be ignored when you're talking about leadership, tokenism, it's been more focused on send the black to deal with the black to put it quite frankly. Self-preservation has been one of the larger conversations in terms of when black males gain access to leadership roles. They try to hold onto it mainly for self-preservation more than anything else. Male privilege and male, and the masculinity complex and how that impacts mentoring leading through the lens of understanding black culture. So, the one word that you, that I would say forever for the rest of my life or ones, he taught me cronyism. Um, several people have brought that up. And then the last theme is the stereotypes and social constructs, uh, and how that impacts the unwillingness to assimilate. So, do those sound familiar?

PI: This sound strong and based on what I remember from the interview I agree with these themes.

PN: I agree with these, I am intrigued to talk more.

PH: Yes, these are good and sound familiar.

I: Do you think that cultural taxation presents a barrier to leadership advancement for black males?



PI: I think it's something that is very conscious to people, in the moment, but I don't see it as a roadblock. I think it's one of those things that at least for me, it just kind of is a reality given the territory. So, I guess for some folks it may be a roadblock if you're not able to keep the right perspective on it, but I don't think it necessarily has to be a roadblock given the environment.

PN: Sometimes it is, depending on the situation, are you the token, do you have support, is the support reliable, do they truly want inclusion?

PH: It is a barrier at least from my experiences, it creates additional challenges.

Interviewer: Regarding the intersectionality of the identities, talk to me a little bit more about how career advancement for individuals with these identities often can't be separated with regards to hiring practices or when folks are thinking about hiring practices.

PN: I think of the identities that are perceived versus what is real. Think about masculinity and how that is perceived. Even in terms of it being a good thing you must tone it down significantly or it is seen as a negative thing.

PH: I agree with the perspective about masculinity, but I think privilege is also connected to that approach. Although we are minorities, we still recognize in some situation there is a tremendous amount of privilege.

PI: There is also the concerns that we deal with internally when it comes to difference shades of our skin. I have had experiences where I know I am treated differently because I am a lighter skin tone. I think that impacts perception and ultimately the image of the institution. You can be Black but not too Black, in terms of skin tone.

Interviewer: Examining hiring practices and data, things are categorized things through the lens of race and gender. So, we look at our numbers, broadly how many people of color, how many black people do we hire, as opposed to having it broken out to the individual, relationships that

form per employee. Do you think this is taken into consideration when hiring or when they are writing policies?

Participant I: For the most part I would say yes, but I think sometimes again, the policies being written are so disconnected from day-to-day interactions. I think that's probably where there's an opportunity for more growth there.

Participant H: Social constructs, other experiences, internal bias also impact hiring and policies. I am not sure that they can be 100% removed. There is also no checks and balances for those things. A lot of the policies and practices are guided by tradition.

Participant N: To lead, you must understand Black culture. This creates a space of comfort. There are stereotypes and social constructs associated with Black males and how that impacts a situation. Then you must consider the who you know versus what you know. Lot so individuals unfairly giving friends jobs or promotions that they may or may not be qualified for.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on tokenism? Have you experiences it?

Participant I: Well, I absolutely have. I've experienced that on several Asians in several fields as well. I think it is becoming more common with the attention the media is giving to Black individuals.

Interviewer: How'd that make you feel?

Participant H: Like a token, that I there for show and not valued.

Participant N: I think it took me a few situations to recognize that this was the situation I was part of what is the value? As the token you have some powers so how you use that to make change.

Interviewer: The message about identity or race. Do you think who delivers the message matters? And do you think the message could have been delivered by an individual who doing the share that those identities

Participant N: Absolutely, easily the individual must be aware of the situation and understand Black culture.

Interviewer: Thinking about reflecting on your own experience in the situation of working with supervisors to understand Black culture, what did you do?

Participant I: Communication, training, and boundaries.

Participant N: I agree it is important to set those standards as soon as possible and ask for what you want.

Participant H: I see that point; I think someone else would accept that message better than I can. I think where I am now. I don't think so. So, it's almost like that the other hand, like who else at this point would be able to deliver that message or do I trust the message the way that it shouldn't be done?

Interviewer: That's a good point, the trust issue that comes up. Self-preservation, responses were given that if I make this decision, what am I doing to impact the entire system? What do you, think about that response of when I get here, I now have to think about how my decisions will impact, the whole culture?

Participant I: I see that. Obviously, but I also think that while doing that, you must maintain, understanding that it is impacting as a Black man or a Black male for referring to them who it's impacting. There must be a little part of where I am that has that in mind. I think I can't separate that from myself, I think in the position that I've been hired and I have to keep that in mind always, or I'm not staying true to myself and professional has that in the past inhibited my

growth maybe. I think that is the kind of trade-off that sometimes either I still am a representative of the place that I work, but at the same time, how do I maintain my identity within that? That's kind of the juggling act that we face.

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