ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Christina R. Caul

The Graduate School

Morehead State University

March 30, 2023

LEADING FROM THE MARGINS: BLACK WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES
NAVIGATING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
(HBCUs)

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Abstract of Capstone

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
Ernst and Sara Lane Volgenau College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

Christina R. Caul

Huntington, West Virginia

Committee Chair: Dr. Fujuan Tan, Associate Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

March 30, 2023

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LEADING FROM THE MARGINS: BLACK WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES
NAVIGATING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
(HBCUs)

The researcher used qualitative phenomenology to study southern HBCU

Black women executives' leadership experiences. The researcher sought to validate

Black women's leadership experiences and offer professional advice for aspiring

leaders. At HBCUs, Black women are overrepresented in undergraduate enrollment

but underrepresented in administrative roles. The researcher used Black Feminist

Thought as a framework to interview nine Southern HBCU executive-level Black

women on their careers, experiences, and obstacles. The data analysis identified five

main themes: motivation, positive self-image, chilly climate, network, and strategic

negotiation. Participants regarded motivation as the most crucial aspect of their

growth at HBCUs.

Participants developed their leadership and competence due to increasing

work and creative autonomy. The individuals had a positive self-image and asserted

their agency position without apology. This research found that chilly climate

experiences such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and gender bias hindered

Black women's careers. Networking is crucial to HBCU leadership. To validate,

inspire, and create possibilities, networks mentored and sponsored individuals. Lastly,

participants recommended that aspiring and mid-level leaders prepare for leadership

and engage in professional development for strategic negotiation. The participant accounts in this study affirmed the researcher's usage of Black Feminist Thought. The participants established and validated their leadership at the HBCU through a strong self-identity and personal aim. This study is essential to higher education and HBCUs because it contributes to the ongoing discussion about the paucity of Black women in leadership roles.

KEYWORDS: Black women, HBCUs, executive leadership, Black feminist thought, leadership experiences

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Candidate Signature

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Date

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RULES FOR THE USE OF CAPSTONES

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DEDICATION

"When someone we care about dies, we must learn to live with the love they left behind rather than without them" (Unknown). Until the Lord brings me home, I will yearn for you and lean on the love you left behind. This one is for you, Mom. Although I wish you were here, your reach and love show that you have left me with enough to thrive.

"I have seen further because I have stood on the shoulders of giants" (Isaac Newton). Although the earth has silenced your voice, your legacy lives on. Dr. Gloria Johnson, you prophesied an increase in my life when I began this season. "Be triumphant and joyful," you said, my seer. Because of you, I see further.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Do not fear [anything], for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you; I will certainly take hold of you with my righteous right hand [a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation]" (Isaiah 41:10 AMP). God, thank you for your clarity, assurance, and victory. Olivia and Josiah, I hope I have taught you never to give up. Minnie, thank you for being mommy's personal barista for mid-day and late-night pick-me-ups. Mommy is inspired by you both. Everything I do is for the two of you--my source of motivation. Thank you for sacrificing with Mommy over the past three years. Know that your possibilities are endless. Granny, thank you for always standing in the gap. Tim & Tammy, thank you for your love and support and for resettling your big sister. Aunt Sissy, thank you for investing in my education a decade ago. The adage is true, teach a person to fish, and they will eat for the rest of their lives. Kenyetta, my college sister, your presence has provided oxygen and comfort in numerous life-altering moments; thank you for everything.

Jamie, my sister in the faith and habit, thank you and the Hilliard family for everything you have done for the babies and me and for being a breath of fresh air during this tremendous readjustment. Mary Jackson, thank you. It seemed challenging to juggle a divorce, a pandemic, single parenting, and an EdD program at the time, BUT GOD. Professor Andrew Baskin, your red syntax marks led me here. Drs. Jackie

Burnside, Jill Bouma, and late Dr. Thomas A. Boyd, thank you for enabling me to advocate for educational fairness. Dr. Boyd, your gift perpetuates your legacy.

As a graduate of the TRIO program, I feel obligated to acknowledge the program's role in getting me started in higher education and in assisting me in forming objectives that ultimately affected the caliber of my life. Participants of the Study: Thank you for making this project possible. We often doubt our abilities. Nevertheless, we continue to exceed the wildest dreams of our foremothers. Each of your thoughts and experiences provided me with confirmation and reassurance. I appreciate your support and am eternally thankful for the opportunity to connect. Thank you, Becky, Jamaal, Kim, Kristie, Nathan, and the Home Alone cohort, for your help over the previous three years. As my committee chair, thank you, Dr. Fujuan Tan, for maintaining law and order. Thank you for every exchange and perspective. Dr. Feon Smith-Branch thank you for reminding me to breathe and for your encouragement. Dr. Lee Nabb, I appreciate your assistance, insight, and time. I could thank many more, but it would overshadow the project. Nevertheless, thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter 1: Introduction

"My hope emerges from those places of struggle where I witness individuals positively transforming their lives and the world around them. Educating is always a vocation rooted in hopefulness" (Burke, 2004, p. 1). The pursuit of education can lead to a better life and career. Education by designation corrects past injustices and discriminatory practices. Higher education's mission is to level the playing field by eliminating disparities in equality caused by social and political conditions (*Advancing diversity and inclusion in Higher Education,* 2016). A college degree is critical for Black Americans' social mobility and economic opportunity. In recent years, Blacks in America have received more degrees, increasing their lifetime incomes. Black high school graduates earned $28,439, while Black bachelor's degree holders earned 59,027 (*Advancing diversity and inclusion in Higher Education, 2016).*

Nevertheless, for Black women, disparities continue in education. Professionally, systemic obstacles like gender bias, a lack of institutional support, and competing pressure from dual responsibilities contribute to Black women being marginalized and silenced (Gasman et al., 2014; Hills, 2019; King & Ferguson, 2001). The Black woman assumes the enforced role of subservience to White and Black males and White women (Hills, 2019; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). The Black

woman's gender and race intersectionality conflict and inhibit the Black woman's personal and professional life (Hills, 2019; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Both qualitative and quantitative inquiry suggests that there are barriers, internally and externally, that restrict the upward mobility of Black women in higher education (Gasman et al., 2014; Hills, 2019; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). While a part of a marginalized group, Black women share similar and unique struggles. In literature, the Black woman is aggregated racially with the Black man and by gender with the White woman. As HBCUs seek leaders for their institutions, more efforts to recruit, retain, and support Black women should be a collective priority. The Black woman's experience in higher education needs a closer examination to shape institutional priorities, policies, and programs to address systemic barriers.

Problem Statement

Since 1976, Black female students have made up the majority of HBCU enrollment on a demographic basis (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Black women are more likely than Black males to enroll in and graduate from college. However, Black women hold 6% of senior leadership positions after graduation, placing them at the periphery (Townsend, 2020). Due to the political nature of knowledge, Black women's experiences of oppression are routinely objectified or disregarded as accurate (Collins, 2006). It is essential to examine each group's experiences separately, as Black women's experiences are distinct. Collins (2006) argued that Black women exist at the convergence of two pervasive and oppressive systems: race and gender. Lived experiences are a form of knowledge. To

better understand the theories that Black women attribute to their experiences, this study explored the lived experiences of Black women in leadership positions in Southern HBCUs.

Background of the Problem

The upward mobility of Black women in higher education is multi-dimensional. In the academic and literary analysis, Black women lack a voice and are dismally visible in executive leadership roles. Rarely are Black women's leadership experiences evaluated numerically and qualitatively separately. The double bind of racism and sexism constrains Black women's career advancement (Collins, 2006; Gasman et al., 2014; Hills, 2019). Even when allowed to hold leadership positions, Black women continue to be marginalized by institutional impediments such as gender bias, a lack of equal opportunities, and a lack of institutional support (Hills, 2019).

As the researcher reviewed the literature, there was a dearth of resources on Black women, leadership, and HBCUs. Several doctoral students conducted their research and discovered a gap in the literature that supports Black women leaders and the challenges they encounter (Hawkins, 2020; Horton, 2020). This research examined the intersectionality of Black women's experiences on the path to higher education leadership, focusing on southern HBCUs. While Black women outnumber Black men in college access and completion, they are the minority in HBCU leadership. Historically, Black male leaders have been more successful in obtaining leadership positions than their Black female counterparts, even in HBCUs exclusively

for women (Mathewson, 2017). Although HBCUs appear inclusive, Black women have unequal leadership opportunities (deGregory & Carter, 2016).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the Black woman's professional journey, experiences, barriers, and the need for social support. The research inquiry examined the experiences of Black women in the role of the dean or those who hold higher positions within southern HBCUs. Using the lens of Black Feminist Thought, the research focused on Black women's lived experiences as a leader. While exploring the lived experiences of Black women, this study intended to encourage policy and program development for HBCUs with interest in retaining and promoting Black women within the profession. This study explored the challenges and barriers leading from the margins and navigating historically evasive spaces. The researcher designed this exploration to investigate the current policies and practices at HBCUs and to examine professional counter spaces further to illustrate how it supports Black women pursuing careers in higher education. Lastly, the participants provided recommendations to assist aspiring Black women executive leaders.

Significance of Study

HBCUs are sacred spaces for the Black race. This study is essential to higher education, particularly HBCUs because it adds to the ongoing conversation about the absence of Black women in leadership. While the literature is sparse, the inquiry intends to add to the existing literature, allowing Black women to narrate their lived experiences.

Research Questions

For qualitative research, Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended posing at least one central question that allows participants to describe and explain their experiences. Qualitative research is less limiting and more flexible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research questions investigate the leadership experiences of Black women at southern HBCUs. The following research questions guided the exploration:

Research Question 1: How do Black women perceive their leadership experience at Southern HBCUs?

Research Question 2: What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs?

Research Question 3: What recommendations would Black women upper-level administrators give to aspiring and middle-level leaders?

Definition of Key Terms

To better understand this inquiry on Black women and leadership at southern HBCUs, it is essential to understand key terms and their meanings used in this study. The definitions will help the reader to understand this research inquiry better.

Double-bind/double-jeopardy is the intersectionality of race and gender that keeps Black women subordinate to men and White women (Howard-Milton, 2003).

Barriers are challenges inside higher education that restrict upward career mobility (Gasman et al., 2014).

Black Feminist Thought suggests that most theories treat Black women as monolithic while encouraging Black women to give a voice to their own lived experiences (Collins, 2002).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have provided space for Black scholars excluded from White institutions (Gasman et al., 2014, Wright et al., 2006). Presently, there are over 100 HBCUs across the United States.

Executive/HBCU leadership includes the role of President, Vice-President, Assistant Vice President, Provost, or Dean.

A **mentor** typically provides emotional, professional, or social guidance to populations excluded from higher education (Breeden, 2021).

President is the university's CEO, reporting directly to the university's elected or appointed board.

Professional Counterspace is where Black women find social support to persist in marginalized spaces (West, 2019).

Promotion is progressive career mobility, i.e., dean to the provost.

The **provost** is the chief academic for most institutions.

Queen Bee Syndrome occurs when women in male-dominated industries adopt masculine mannerisms and are unsupportive or harsh to female subordinates (Redmond et al., 2016).

Racism is the exercise of power by persons and groups with cultural support against a racially inferior group (Neblett, 2019).

Sexism is excluding people from certain activities or treating them differently because of their sex (Breeden, 2021).

Southern HBCUs are HBCUs in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework helps sense-making and understanding of the data collection process (Merriam, 2006). Haynes et al. 2020, recommended viewing Black woman's experiences, such as intersectionality, through theories that consider the racial and gender oppression they experienced in society. The theoretical framework grounded in this research inquiry is Black Feminist Thought. In Black Feminist Thought, the Black woman is both the subject and the authority (Collins, 2006). Black women have unique stories (Collins, 2006). Viewing Black women's viewpoints through a single lens may fail to capture the complexities of their voices or actual difficulties.

Limitations and delimitations

The study is restricted to executive-level Black women serving as deans or higher employed at HBCUs in the South. Although this study incorporated the lived experiences of Black women, this small population does not represent all Black women. Another limitation was the geographical location, as it did not include HBCUs in other regions. Lastly, this research did not reflect Black women in leadership roles in PWIs.

Validity and Reliability

The researcher must disclose bias or reflexivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher is a Black woman who now serves as the director of academic support at an HBCU in the South and aspires to attain executive leadership. The researcher has over a decade of experience in higher education, working at HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions. The personal and professional history of the researcher might shape interpretations and preconceptions, which may impact the course of the investigation.

This chapter provided background and context for this research investigation. This chapter briefly describes the research study's topic, purpose, and significance to shed light on executive leadership experiences and recommendations for Black women. The findings can inform policy and practice at the HBCU. This chapter provided the essential concepts for the reader to comprehend this researcher's quest. The next chapter will encompass the literature review, which will explore the history of Black women and what societal factors presented barriers, and what social supports assisted them in their pursuit of leadership.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This qualitative inquiry utilized Black Feminist Thought as a theoretical framework to examine the Black woman's experience navigating executive leadership at southern HBCUs. This chapter explored the literature on Black women in leadership roles at HBCUs. Women's college-going and completion rates supersede men's, yet as the literature reflects, women in higher education organizational leadership charts are scarce (Gasman et al., 2014). Black women experience double jeopardy, the invisible glass ceiling, discriminatory covert and overt policies, and personal barriers (Redmond et al., 2017).

This chapter explored the historical development of Black women in society, higher education, and HBCUs. This chapter discussed institutional impediments, such as gender bias, lack of institutional support, and role conflict, that contribute to the inability for the career advancement of African American women in higher education.

History of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Post-Civil War African American schooling flourished. Black clergy and White donors founded schools throughout the South for formerly enslaved people (Freemark, 2020). The African Methodist Episcopal Church created notable HBCUs such as Edwards Waters College, Morris Brown College, Paul Quinn College, and Wilberforce University (Sanders, 2020). African Methodist Episcopal Zion and Colored Methodist Episcopal Churches built black colleges. Bennett College for Women, Bethune-Cookman University, Claflin University, Clark Atlanta University, Dillard University, Huston-Tillotson University, Meharry Medical College, Paine

College, Philander Smith College, Rust College, and Wiley College are Methodist affiliated (Hawkins, 2012). US Methodist churches have historically supported HBCUs (Hawkins, 2012). HBCUs have distinct social, cultural, political, and economic achievements.

The United States has 102 HBCUs (NCES, 2018). For over a century, HBCUs have provided access and equity for Black students and professionals (Gasman et al., 2014; Wright et al., 2006). The HBCU is a sacred space (Gasman et al., 2014; Wright et al., 2006). HBCUs educate around 280,000 students yearly (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Two hundred ninety-two thousand one hundred (292,100) students enrolled in the fall 2016 semester at 102 HBCUs, 223,500 of whom identified as Black. HBCUs lost 6% of their enrollment between 2010 and 2016 (NCES, 2018). The enrollment decline at HBCUs is due to the rising number of Black students attending other postsecondary institutions.

For over a century, HBCUs, regardless of institutional mission or priority, graduated more leaders than predominately White colleges or universities (Elfman, 2019). HBCUs provide equitable educational opportunities to help Black students to shatter socio-political and economic challenges due to social and racial constructs which previously limited access to education for marginalized populations. Historically Black Colleges and Universities are culturally responsive spaces that promote cultural pride and well-being for Black students (Freemark, 2020). Founded by former slaveholders to educate enslaved people and their descendants, HBCUs have become cultural hubs (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). HBCUs have a historical

pedigree of preparing citizens to succeed within and outside their communities,

fostering brighter futures for Black graduates (Elfman, 2019). Belonging, immersion,

and cultural appreciation are the HBCUs' greatest strengths.

HBCUs admit more women than men. Female enrollment has exceeded male

enrollment since 1976. 62% of HBCU enrollment in 2016 comprised female students

(de Brey et al., 2019). Black women graduate in more significant numbers. Despite

this, fewer Black women are in senior leadership posts at HBCUs. Despite their pro-

Black rhetoric, HBCUs uphold traditional western values (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021;

Hills, 2019; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Black men gain from the HBCU's racial fairness,

while Black women grapple with gender equality (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021;

Bonner, 2001; Hills, 2019). HBCUs acknowledge Black inequities but value male

leadership (Hawkins, 2020).

As a culturally safe and responsive space, HBCUs are responsible for

encouraging and providing equitable opportunities beyond degree completion for

Black female graduates. Double jeopardy, the double bind of gender and race,

significantly limits the upward mobility of Black women in leadership at HBCUs.

Even as HBCUs graduate more Black female graduates, Black women are still visibly

absent in leadership roles at these institutions. HBCUs greatly benefit from the

intellectual and fiscal wealth of Black women in the classroom and support roles.

However, there is a need for more clarity between enrollment and leadership

standards.

Suppose a Black woman achieves success and rises in her career. In that case, she will face institutional obstacles such as a hostile culture, gender disparity, excessive expectations, and less opportunity to take on leadership roles (Kersh, 2018). Additionally, Black women experience many external barriers, such as familial conflicts and role ambiguity (Kersh, 2018). Black women in literature cite personal missions and values as core motivators (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021).

Black Women in Society

Black women are less likely to be promoted to executive positions (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). Oppression, racism, and inequitable treatment all influence Black women in society (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). In the US, segregation, discrimination, and historical laws aimed at oppressing Black people—namely women—have resulted in socioeconomic disparities. Black women are more likely to be the head of the family and face wage inequities, which means they have less money to sustain their families and invest in their future (Black women and the wage gap, 2022; Chinn et al., 2021). Black women comprise 7.4% of the US population (Chinn et al., 2021). However, Black women have fewer prospects for advancement than their male counterparts; for every 100 male managers hired, 64 Black women are hired (*The state of Black Women in Corporate America*, 2020). There are fewer possibilities for Black women to take on leadership roles. When they do, there is more scrutiny and potential for conflict between the Black woman's personal and professional life.

There is a strong emphasis placed on the achievement of success by Black women in society; as a result, there is frequent tension between the personal and professional lives of Black women. "Limbo dilemma" occurs when success isolates Black women from their familial or ethnic roots (Allen et al., 2020). Black women experience unique psychosocial effects due to gender bias and discrimination. Success for Black women in society is expensive. In a survey, one-half of all Black women reported experiencing some gender discrimination, and 84% of registered voters named relief as a top policy concern (Black women and the wage gap, 2022).

Black women face racism, tokenism, and isolation while juggling work and life (White et al., 2017). Black women face distinct oppression due to race and gender. Black women face perilous double binds to adhere to cultural standards that frequently contradict their social identities and encounter gender prejudice (Kramer, 2020). Even though they face discrimination because of their gender, White women do so from a position of advantage. On the other hand, Black women come in last place regarding the importance and fall behind White men, White women, and African American males (White et al., 2017).

> I tell you, being a Black woman---be strong, they say. Support your man. Raise a man. Think like a man. Well damn, I gotta do all that—who's out here working for me? Carrying my burden—building me up when I get down? Nobody…We try to help ya'll, even when we get nothing. Is that admirable or ridiculous? (Hills, 2019, p. 5)

Because of restricted opportunities for advancement, Black women experience disregard and invalidation because they are undervalued and slighted (*The state of Black Women in Corporate America*, 2020). Culture discredits Black women's contributions and significance in the United States. For Black women, the workplace is worse (*The state of Black Women in Corporate America*, 2020). Regardless of industry, race and gender expectations impede Black women's professional quality of life (Hills, 2019). As a result, oppression and marginalization continue for the Black woman in society. Black women are underrepresented in authority, less likely to get help or resources needed for employment advancement, and more likely to experience bias. Black women experience higher death rates and poor physical and mental health (Merriam et al., 2006; Spates et al., 2019). Despite this, Black women continue to show resiliency in adversity.

Black Women in Higher Education

White female administrators have increased at all levels, but Black female administrators have remained low, especially at predominately white institutions. Since they make up such a small percentage of the population, African American women must confront several challenges alone (White et al., 2017).

Black women are 'outsiders-within' (Breeden, 2021; Collins, 2002). Collins claims that feminism and black social thought imply whiteness and maleness, respectively; hence Black women cannot fully participate (Collins, 2002). Black women remain outsiders in oppressive places due to their identity and experiences. Black women are stigmatized, but they enrich feminist and social discourse.

Intellectual discourse is devoid of Black women's perspectives. Black women assume "mammy" and "superwoman" roles in professional contexts, often handling difficult problems and complex systems in crisis (Collins, 2002; White et al., 2017). Black women receive praise when compliant and "loyal like Mammy," a phrase that refers to female subservience (Hills, 2017; Tevis et al., 2020, p. 292). Black women work second shifts as role models and mothers and serve on countless committees, unlike many Black male counterparts (Breeden, 2021; Tevis et al., 2020). Black women believe they should take on many tasks and duties when they become student affairs and other higher education leaders (White et al., 2017).

For Black women, persistent stereotypes and entrenched power structures that uphold the status quo continue to exist (Tevis et al., 2020). Higher education is primarily male-dominated (Brower et al., 2019). Black women in higher education have shared experiences and barriers to persistence and career mobility at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Black women lack social support to navigate leadership efficiently. Black women experience gender disparities and discrimination that are psychologically draining (Breeden, 2021). In higher education leadership roles, Black women are undervalued, underrepresented, and underemployed (Herder, 2021).

Black women have fewer leadership chances. The margin "is to be a part of the entire but outside the main body" (Merriam et al., 2006, p.186). Working on the institution's peripheral offers access to the institution but not the power to affect its

policy or practice. The Black woman, who lives both within and externally, must learn to cope with the stress of marginal existence (Merriam et al., 2006).

Few institutions have supported Black women in leadership roles since 1904 (Hague & Okpala, 2017). While college student populations are predominantly female, campus leadership rarely matches the student body's demographics. In higher education, Black women face role bias and ambiguity (Kersh, 2018). Perceptions shape relationships. We view others via the subjective lens of our prior experiences and societal assumptions. Preconceived notions, particularly for Black women, limit their access and mobility in higher education.

The literature on Black women in higher education, their obstacles, limitations, and experiences are scarce. Within this constraint, combining Black women with other women or Black males in research does not allow for an in-depth analysis or proper comprehension of the double bind. Black women face in practically every industry, particularly education. "Black women in senior positions have had to overcome their colleagues' entitlement and privilege" (Tevis et al., 2020, p. 284). The double bind in education manifests in overt and covert discriminatory policies and practices, including gender bias, search committees that miss qualified applicants, and exclusive institutional culture. The experiences of Black women in higher education in PWIs and HBCUs are limited and frequently portrayed from perspectives that fail to recognize the confluence of race and gender (Collins, 2002).

Black Women at HBCUs

According to UNCF, 62% of HBCU students are female. Despite this, women comprise roughly one-quarter of HBCU presidents (Herder, 2021). Black women headed 25 of 100 HBCUs in 2019 (Lessane, 2020). Black women are afforded more leadership opportunities at HBCUs than PWIs but still grapple with isolation and gender discrimination. "No matter how intelligent, how savvy, and how educated, the Black woman in both PWIs and HBCUs are constrained by race and gender" (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021, p. 33).

Two female presidents have served at Kentucky State University since 1886 (*Kentucky State University: Past Presidents*). Gender disparities start early at HBCUs, as early as college readiness, and continue through college enrollment. Ironically, Black women enroll and graduate at a higher rate than Black men. Nevertheless, Black women at HBCUs are less likely to be tenured or president (Gasman, 2014). Black men lead the prestigious well-known HBCUs, leaving the less-known or prestigious institutions for Black women to save (Bonner, 2001).

Churches founded HBCUs (Hawkins, 2012). Because of its origins, the HBCU operates similarly to the Black church (Lessane, 2020). The Black woman works, and the Black man leads in the Black church (Lessane, 2020). Religion affects how people think and act (Wormald, 2022). The church upholds traditional gender roles. Historically, the Black church and HBCUs have been male-dominated institutions.

Social structures exacerbate gender inequities. Gender norming persists as Black females internalize the imposter syndrome and maternal duties that do not pose a challenge to Black men in these settings (Gasman, 2014; Hills, 2019). Promotion generally results in more responsibilities but less income for Black women (Lessane, 2020). After receiving doctorates, many Black women leave higher education (Townsend, 2020). Culture and institutions limit black women's access (Ballenger, 2010). While reviewing the literature, surprisingly, this restriction between race and gender was evident in recent studies on HBCU culture and leadership (Gasman, 2014; Townsend, 2020).

HBCUs must reshape not only racial constructs but also sexist constructs which restrict Black women. Black women need relief, or Black women will exit without proper support and working relationships (Jo, 2008). Black women leave these spaces frustrated. HBCUs must develop policies and programs to retain Black women. HBCUs must intentionally include Black women in leadership program policy and development.

Institutional Barriers

Black women experience many internal and external barriers that derail or deter progressive career mobility. Black women have job growth challenges, including gender discrimination, a lack of professional assistance, and professional networking support (White et al., 2017). Professionally, Black women experience a chilly climate, gender bias, and pay inequities (Bonner, 2001). Within the organization, Black women feel powerless, alone, or isolated. "While we recognized

our titles did not come with the authority we assumed, as they did for our peers, we

felt unprepared to deal with the personal toll associated with the loss of professional

agency" (Tevis et al., 2020, p. 292). A lack of support and professional knowledge are

institutional barriers to professional success for Black women (Breeden, 2021;

Redmond et al., 2016). Black women are less likely to be tenured or president due to

gender bias and stereotypes (Gasman, 2014). Black women compete with Black men

for limited opportunities (Redmond et al., 2016).

Leadership is a social agency (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Black women

are visible yet socially invisible as they struggle with social identity and belonging

(Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). There is a severe paucity of Black women in top-

level executive positions. When Black women assume leadership roles, they wrestle

with experiencing role ambiguity and disenfranchisement (Freeman et al., 2016;

Kersh, 2018). Black women often navigate leadership independently without strong

social support. The acquisition of new leadership skills and responsibilities is

facilitated more effectively by receiving social assistance.

Double Jeopardy

In academic institutions, Black women face a "double whammy" (White et al.,

2017).   The intersectionality of race and gender is the source of double jeopardy,

which maintains the subordination of Black women to both men and White women

(Howard-Milton, 2003; White et al., 2017). Black women have endured oppression.

Cannon, 1985 as cited in Collins 2002,

Throughout the history of the United States, the interrelationship of White

supremacy and male superiority has characterized the Black woman's reality

as a situation of struggle-a struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds

simultaneously, one white, privileged, and oppressive, the other Black,

exploited, and oppressed (p. 26).

Spaces of whiteness and maleness often lead to exclusion and isolation for

Black women. The findings suggest that African American women may overlook

discriminatory conduct (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Black women may not

know if discrimination is gender or race-based (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Sometimes Black women do not realize how their ethnicity or gender affects their

employment. Depending on the circumstances, attributing discriminatory laws and

behaviors to racism or sexism can be complex. Black women often think, "which is it

this time?" and then, with discernment, determine whether or not to respond (Allen et

al., 2020).

Independent of industry, the intersectionality of race and gender plagues

Black women. Historically the racial focus and fight for social justice have united the

Black race. While Black men can work together to fight for racial equality, they are

less likely to support efforts for gender equality (Howard-Hamilton, 2017).

"Patriarchy, gender bias, and sexual harassment" keep black women in support roles

(Maphalalala and Mpofu, 2017, p. 9249).

Gender Bias

Black women in higher education face distinct hurdles. African American women traditionally have been preceded by White men, White women, and African American males in prominence and status (White et al., 2017). At HBCUs, Black women are restricted based on gender and gender bias. Black women face discouraging institutional culture, equity in pay, fear of speaking truth to power, imposter syndrome, and microaggressions because of gender bias (White et al., 2017). Stereotypes and prejudices influence how Black women are perceived. When they assert their position, Black women are frequently labeled as angry (White et al., 2017). In leadership roles, Black women are prone to "disengagement, discrimination, prejudice, and a lack of psychosocial and instrumental support" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 174). Black women must watch their behaviors since preconceptions and sexism mislabel them as hostile. These difficulties and situations make it difficult for Black women to feel supported and respected at work.

The norm in society is male leadership, and leadership characteristics typically are masculine (Brower et al., 2019). Leaders are confident, talented, powerful, and self-sufficient. Men are regarded as natural leaders by society. Women need help in gaining leadership positions (Kramer, 2020). In society, women who lead like men are less acceptable. As a result of gender stereotypes and bias, the job advancement of Black women in society is limited. Furthermore, stereotypes affect how Black women lead, internalize institutional difficulties, and how their colleagues regard them.

Bonner (2001) investigated the gender problems that are prevalent in HBCUs. According to the findings of this study, African American women reported feeling less capable and empowered to exert their influence (Bonner, 2001). Inequitable experiences, according to the perceptions of the women studied, are a primary cause of disenfranchisement (Bonner, 2001). Gender-based societal constructions hamper the path to professional success for a Black woman.

Black women confer more degrees independent of degree type than men (Sharpe & Swinton, 2012). Despite receiving more degrees, Black women remain underrepresented in leadership and tenure in higher education. Black women are often caught in the pipeline as assistant professors or administrative support roles, disproportionately to Black men (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The jobs that Black women occasionally have been not exceptionally straightforward routes to executive leadership positions. As a result, Black women have less opportunity to develop the requisite leadership and competency qualities. Not only do Black women have to struggle with fewer direct avenues to leadership positions, but they also have to contend with relationships with other Black women in the company that are not collegial.

As they pursue professional advancement, Black women face the Queen Bee syndrome inside the organization. The Queen Bee syndrome is the absence of collegiality amongst other Black women (Redmond et al., 2016). Queen Bee syndrome arises when women in male-dominated businesses assume macho demeanors and are unsupportive or harsh to female subordinates (Redmond et al.,

2016). The paucity of comradery among Black women creates tension and another obstacle to career progression. The "Queen Bee" mindset creates leadership uncertainty for Black women leaders (Maphalala and Mpofu, 2017; Redmond et al., 2016). In addition to lacking collegiality, Black women experience more scrutiny while navigating leadership.

HBCUs scrutinize Black women leaders. Black women are being pushed out of their jobs too soon. "Women in HBCU presidencies have not received the same opportunity to get it wrong and to learn how to get it right. They are told to get out" (deGregory & Carter, 2016, p. 1). In addition to being subjected to public scrutiny and having shorter tenures, Black women receive less support from institutions.

Whether the Black woman locates herself at a PWI or HBCU, there is an overwhelming sense of duty or obligation to persist and level the field on the Black woman's shoulders (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021; Richie et al., 1997). The Black woman uses these challenges as fuel to climb higher while lifting others. The review of the literature presents some questions. (1) How are Black women alienated in the academy after degree completion? (2) What type of environment or support would influence career advancement or leadership opportunities? (3) How do Black men perpetuate the constructs that negatively impact Black women? (4) How does a space dedicated to cultural immersion, belonging, and pride, ice the Black woman? (5) How did the oppressed become the oppressor?

Lack of Support

Black women receive less institutional support from men and women in leadership. Black women must work twice as hard to earn half as much as their male counterparts. Limiting career opportunities for advancement has economic implications for Black women. "When I took this job, I did not get paid what I was worth. I should have stood my ground a little harder" (Breeden, 2021, p. 1).

Black women experience oppression in higher education differently (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). Black women regularly point to an unfriendly institutional culture, a lack of professional support, and a lack of professional counterspace as hurdles that have hampered their ability to succeed in their careers (Breeden, 2021). Often, Black women qualified for leadership posts are overlooked or discouraged from applying. Black women in leadership positions at HBCUs face the weight of personal and social duties as they work to tear down barriers to leadership (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). Black women frequently perceive that it is their responsibility to serve as a mother to others and a mentor within the institution (Breeden, 2021). Consequently, being a leader on the periphery may be a burdensome and stressful experience for Black women. Black women can better withstand the pressures of institutions and fight back against repressive systems with social support such as mentoring (Breeden, 2021).

Mentoring helps with leadership efficacy, sponsorship, and development (Jernigan et al., 2020). Mentoring can provide social support for Black women to help increase role efficacy, competence, and leadership development (Jernigan et al.,

2020). "You don't need a mentor; you need an advisory board" (Breeden, 2021, p. 2).

Mentoring provides influence and a pathway to leadership (Holmes, 2004).

Mentoring expands opportunities through self-exposure, self-care, and professional

development. A mentor helps to accelerate career promotion (West, 2019).

Role Conflict

Black women deal with the conflict of career and familial responsibilities that

their male counterparts typically do not shoulder due to social constructs/gender roles

(Breeden, 2021; Hills, 2019). Women occasionally defer their dreams, choosing

domestic support positions to support their partner's career or family needs (Hills,

2019; Maphalala and Mpofu, 2017). Black women assume matriarchal support roles

within their families, whether in a partnership or single.

Leadership roles are equally as time-consuming. Leadership is a high-demand,

high-cost function often infringes on other parts (Redmond et al., 2020). Leadership

requires immense personal sacrifices. Social theory suggests that too many roles can

adversely impact efficacy (Ricco and Baddie, 2020). Role demand begets role

conflict and sometimes role abandonment. Due to familial conflicts, Black women

will assume supportive roles or leave the agency (Breeden, 2021).

Strategies to Support Black Women

To succeed personally and professionally, Black women must overcome

challenges (White et al., 2017). The literature review references several strategies to

support and retain Black women in higher education. Black women have created

counterspaces, mentoring, and sponsorship opportunities to deal with the

psychological anguish caused by gendered racism (Breeden, 2021; Spates et al., 2019; White et al., 2017). Black women also use their faith and spirituality to cope (Breeden, 2021).

Mentoring is a form of social support that provides Black women with coping strategies to persist and resist oppression. Mentoring provides emotional and professional support (Olson & Jackson, 2009). Professional counterspaces are a second type of support that offer affiliation, advocacy, and credibility (West, 2019). Professional counterspaces improve Black women's well-being and career advancement opportunities in higher education (West, 2019).

Expanding Opportunities through Mentoring

Mentoring gives Black women the social capital to access and navigate academic leadership challenges (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Mentoring assists Black women in navigating the personal and professional hurdles of leadership. Black women use support communities to dialogue, support, and refuel (Hills, 2019). Mentoring is vital to career mobility. In a circle of sisterhood, validation, nurturing, and identity negotiation are found (Hills, 2019). Mentoring affects career and emotional success (Olson & Jackson, 2009).

Formal mentoring is required since marginalized individuals explore foreign spaces without a map (Olson & Jackson, 2009). Mentoring facilitates professional development and psychosocial outcomes (Olson & Jackson, 2009). Although mentoring can occur in various ways, shadowing is essential to leadership experience. Job shadowing offers the mentee practical skills and insight into the workplace

culture. Shadowing improves role effectiveness. Champions must serve as role

models (Commodore et al., 2016). Mentoring is not the duty of a single

individual. Mentoring for the mentee is a succession of alliances with individuals

from diverse domains to cultivate deficiencies or aspirations.

Mentoring must be an institution's primary priority and succession plan

(Jernigan et al., 2020). HBCUs should explore mentoring Black female students to

give possibilities for career exploration and leadership development. Black female

students need to witness Black women leaders at HBCUs. Representation is essential.

Black women who head HBCUs must purposefully build counters to help Black

female students. Counters must intentionally affirm meaningfully, leading to overall

well-being and professional success (West, 2019). Several studies relate professional

counterspaces to undergraduate mentorship, although the elements needed to promote

well-being or professional success are less prescriptive (West, 2019).

Counters provide professional validation for shared lived experiences. Being

an outsider within creates role ambiguity and uncertainty about experiences. Counters

provide professional relief and a safe space to center. Centering allows the Black

woman to sit with personal feelings and aspirations (King & Ferguson, 2001). This

place enables deep discussion and intimate discourse for self-discovery, mutuality,

and trust (King & Ferguson, 2001). Deep talk empowers Black women.

Counterspaces encourage professional and leadership development. Seeing other

Black women in successive roles progressively impacting the industry is inspiring.

Counterspace relationships forge lifetime allies that turn into lifelines. Culturally

responsive opportunities and networks provide Black women with adaptation strategies (West, 2017). Counterspaces offer tips, tools, and resources to strengthen professional knowledge.

Notwithstanding the support, counters provide accountability. The sisterhood cultivates brilliance and challenges others to accomplish more. Support may affect one's career and how oppression is viewed and broken.

Personal Observations and Experiences as a Black Woman Leader

The researcher is a Black woman who has worked in various capacities within the higher education sector for over fifteen years, primarily at HBCUs and at PWIs, and community institutions. The researcher analyzed and presented Black women's literary experiences. The higher education environment presents unique difficulties for African American women in professional fields. The uncertainty or lack of apparent capacity to change the desired outcome or reveal the truth about an unjust system is interesting. Based on the researcher's experience, male leadership is preferred and esteemed.

Recently, Black women have been assuming the job of president, albeit under intense scrutiny. Black women comprise most student bodies but are underrepresented and undervalued in HBCU leadership. Black women continue to face the intersectionality of oppression due to their gender and ethnicity. While one might presume safety in the halls of the HBCU, which values racial equity, cultural immersion, and cultural pride, a Black woman is nonetheless subordinate to a Black

man. Distorted perceptions, gender prejudice, organizational structure, and cultural

notions all contribute to Black women's limited access.

Black Feminist Thought (BFT)

Black women have diverse identities, actions, views, styles, dispositions,

complexions, convictions, ideologies, and relationships (Allen et al., 2020). Literature

narrated using Black women's knowledge is limited. Black women are frequently

lumped in with women or Black males in literary studies and seldom analyzed within

appropriate theoretical settings. Many theories preclude the Black woman's

experience and voice. Academic contexts rarely allow Black women to self-value,

self-define, and validate their experiences (Collins, 2002). The intersectionality of

race and gender creates a unique experience to explore for Black women in higher

education. Higher education is restrictive for Black women (Blackshear & Hollis,

2021).

In the United States, Black women experience classism, racism, and sexism

(Breeden, 2021). Black feminist thought centers on five values.

1. Black women should tell their stories (Collins, 2006).

2. Black women have diverse experiences worthy of notable publications
   (Collins, 2006).

3. Black feminist thinking accepts a variety of thoughts and experiences
   (Collins, 2006).

4. The attitudes and actions of Black women oppose injustice (Collins,
   2006).

5. Academically, Black women can contribute theories from their standpoint (Breeden, 2021; Collins, 2006).

Black feminist ideology adapts to Black women's situations (Breeden, 2021). Thus, Collins suggests linking Black women's studies to attempts to change unjust conditions in their communities (2006). Black feminist theory emancipates Black women and combats oppression (Haynes et al., 2020). The Black feminist theory asserts that many theories exclude the experiences and knowledge of Black women. Other theories frequently deny Black women a voice and render them invisible. Collins called this exclusion "outsider-within," excluding Black women from mainstream academic discourse (Collins, 2006).

Black feminist thought empowers Black women to value, define, and affirm their experiences (West, 2019). Black feminist thought acknowledges that oppression is experienced differently by all Black women (Collins, 2002). Frequently racial or gender-based political agendas often disregard the Black woman's singularity (Haynes et al., 2020). The Black feminist philosophy asserts that racism and sexism harm Black women, particularly the poor and working class (Haynes et al., 2020). Black feminist thought challenges negative experiences and oppressive, robust systems that marginalize Black women.

Black feminist thought places the Black woman as a subject and authority. Black feminist thought acknowledges the unique voices of Black women. Black feminist thought concedes that "the connections between what one does and what one thinks, as illustrated by individual Black women, can also characterize the

experiences and ideas of Black women as a group" (Collins, 2002, p. 24). Black feminist theory is culturally sensitive and provides a critical lens through which to examine the lived experiences or encounters of Black women in higher education.

Chapter Summary

The literature evaluation provided a basis for comprehending Black women's experiences navigating professional advancement at HBCUs and hurdles and support mechanisms that hampered or aided career mobility. Black female students enroll in and graduate from these HBCUs at a higher rate than their male counterparts, but the situation reverses upon graduation. There is a shortage of Black women in executive positions at HBCUs. Black women's experiences are unique and warrant independent research to shape policies and practices that promote leadership and acceptance of Black women as experts and competent academic leaders.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The researcher employed a qualitative phenomenological research methodology to investigate the nature of Black women's leadership experiences in southern HBCUs. This section describes the research design rationale, interview questions, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Qualitative Research Design Rationale

Qualitative research investigates how individuals or groups view a social or human issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, data is gathered and interpreted. Perspective influences human behavior, including words and actions, as examined by phenomenology. Owing to the nature of the study, qualitative phenomenology was employed to explore the experiences of Black women who hold leadership roles at southern HBCUs.

There are various features of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Natural research can be instantaneously sensitive and adaptable throughout the data collection (Merriam, 2009). Descriptive qualitative research is emergent. Qualitative research tries to comprehend complex realities and allows subjects to develop their facts. Qualitative phenomenology research aims to understand the essence of a lived occurrence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2009). Despite its less rigorous methodology,

qualitative research provides individuals with meanings associated with the observed event.

This study highlighted the perspectives, characteristics, and recommendations of eight to ten Black female executives from Southern HBCUs who hold positions such as provost, vice president, assistant vice president, or dean. When managing leadership duties at an HBCU, Black women may encounter tremendous emotional issues. Phenomenological research is most suited for studying sentimental, emotional, and frequently intense human experiences (Merriam, 2009).

As highlighted in the literature review, Black women are seldom the object and expert of study inquiry (Collins, 2006). As a result, there are few examples of Black women in senior leadership roles at HBCUs. This study aimed to investigate Black women's perspectives and leadership experiences in Southern HBCUs. Qualitative researchers use rich, insightful participant data to augment the literature or fill gaps (Merriam, 2009).

This study's qualitative research approach focuses on determining the significance that Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs assign to their professional trajectories in managing leadership duties. This study sought to understand the experiences and obstacles experienced by Black women in HBCUs. The researcher explored Black women's leadership experiences in higher education, the characteristics they attach to those experiences, and how those experiences influence their desire to lead or stand down. Black women live in different worlds,

despite being part of the same community. A qualitative phenomenological research

design was ideal for examining lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Researchers investigate the reality of participants. During qualitative research,

participants' thoughts and ideas can freely flow (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The

freedom of information exposes patterns through inductive and deductive analysis

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2013). Qualitative research may categorize,

pattern, and uncover emergent themes when groups respond to a social or human

problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2013). This study technique

synthesized experiences to understand better how Black women experience

leadership at Southern HBCUs (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative research is emerging (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative

data collecting is adaptive regarding participant disclosure and new patterns. Because

the purpose is to understand the lived experiences of Black women, the research

design is customizable and the best tool for looking at lived experiences. Social

construction shapes reality (Merriam, 2009). Leadership is a social activity with

access constraints depending on the dominant ideology (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis,

2010). Participants' personal experiences, emotions, and perspectives can improve

corporate practice and policy.

Discovery is central to a qualitative investigation. The study's goal is to avoid

introducing personal biases or preconceptions into the findings or data analysis.

Instead, the researcher concentrated on capturing the participants' meanings

throughout the qualitative inquiry.

The researcher is the primary instrument in this qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are many different ways to collect data for phenomenological qualitative research. Typically, qualitative researchers collect data from various sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher collected data for this study through in-depth interviews and secondary sources such as resumes, university websites and organizational charts, LinkedIn, Google, and Facebook to analyze participant demographic information.

In-depth Interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews. For participant interviews, the researcher used eight semi-structured, open-ended questions (Appendix G). Interviews are planned discussions (Merriam, 2009). Interviewees create and construct their realities (Merriam, 2009). The research participant should be allowed to freely narrate their experience within the context of the inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Semi-structured interviews are less restrictive and will enable the researcher to tailor the conversation to the participant's responses (Merriam, 2009).

In phenomenology and grounded qualitative research, open-ended inquiries, and interviews are used to comprehend the distinctive experiences of a group or individual (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Merriam (2009) proposed starting questions with what, how, or describe. Because Black women navigate leadership at HBCUs uniquely, a phenomenology qualitative research approach is appropriate for understanding Black women's leadership experiences at HBCUs (Merriam, 2009).

Furthermore, during the participant's face-to-face interview through Zoom, the

researcher could observe and follow up on social cues. The semi-structured

interviews in this study focused on the participants' experiences, challenges, and

recommendations.

The researcher was interested in learning about the participants' leadership

experiences and any problems they experienced. Creswell and Creswell (2018)

recommend that researchers design and build an interview protocol. The interview

protocol comprised information on the research project, introductions, interview

questions, and concluding instructions that addressed the following stages in the

research study. Creating a research protocol for this study was a guide for this new

researcher, ensuring participant interview uniformity, lowering the risk of interview

bias, and maintaining the study's integrity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Jacob &

Furgerson, 2015).

In developing the interview questions, the researcher used the following

procedures: 1) the researcher reviewed qualitative research guides and past research

projects (Hawkins, 2020; Merriam, 2009); 2) the researcher created sub-questions

that explicitly addressed the study topics; 3) the researcher used open-ended questions

to collect rich, consistent data, giving participants time and opportunity to explain or

offer more information about their experiences navigating leadership at the HBCU;

and 4) the researcher piloted the interview questions with colleagues and the study

committee. After assessing the questions, colleagues and the study committee

provided feedback and suggestions for improvement to avoid leading or biased

questions. Finally, Morehead University's IRB authorized the expedited review with no changes after examining the study methods.

To answer the research question (RQ1): How do Black women perceive their leadership experience? The five primary questions provided participants the opportunity to highlight their experiences. The interview questions (IQ) are as follows:

IQ1: Describe your experiences as a Black woman in leadership at the HBCU.

IQ2: How has your experience informed your leadership today?

IQ3: How have your organization's culture or values impacted your career advancement?

IQ4: How do you personally affirm your leadership role?

IQ5: Share with me some examples of professional support from others. Who are they, and how have they helped you?

The second research question (RQ2) for this study was: What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs? This question focused on demographical information. The researcher reviewed resumes, university websites, organizational charts, LinkedIn, Google, and Facebook. Additionally, the researcher used this impromptu question:

IQ6: Please tell me about your educational and professional journey.

This study's third research question (RQ3) was: What recommendations would Black women administrators give to aspiring and middle-level leaders? The

two interview questions below aided in the identification of challenges, strategies, and advice for overcoming adversity.

IQ7: What barriers or challenges, if any, have you experienced as a Black woman leading at the HBCU? What strategies did you use to overcome those challenges or barriers?

IQ8: What recommendations would you offer for young aspiring leaders? In addition, the researcher added a final question, "Do you have anything else that you want to share?" to allow the participant to share anything not already mentioned.

Interview Participants

The study anticipated a group of eight to ten executive-level Black women in leadership at southern HBCUs. Because no organization tracks the number or location of executive-level Black women employed at HBCUs, a non-probable sampling strategy was acceptable for this research inquiry (Merriam, 2009). The researcher used purposive sampling. Nine executive-level Black women in southern HBCU leadership positions participated in this study. Each participant satisfied the following requirements for research participants:

1. Executive-level leader, which includes any role at Southern HBCUs of Dean or higher

2. Identify as a Black woman, African American, and female

3. Ability to participate in the entire interview process

4. Participants must work in the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana,

Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia,

and West Virginia.

On May 28, 2022, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Morehead State

University approved the research method for this study (see Appendix A). Due to the

intimate nature of the HBCU community, the researcher anticipated some participant

reluctance. Recruitment continued until September 2022 due to participant reluctance

and scheduling issues. After IRB permission, the researcher identified 103 Black

women in higher education leadership at southern HBCUs using each HBCU website

in the foci states, organizational chart, LinkedIn profile, and Google search. The

researcher emailed 103 Black women in executive leadership (see Appendix H). After

this initial email, three participants consented to participate in this study. The initial

group received two further emails. No one replied to subsequent emails.

On August 8, 2022, the researcher submitted a change of status request to

Morehead State University's Institutional Review Board to expand the participant

pool to include additional southern states. Morehead State University's IRB reviewed

and accepted the change of state request. This request permitted the researcher to

contact 122 different Black women executive leaders in the foci states. The last

recruitment garnered an additional six participants.

There is no directory of Black women in leadership roles at the HBCU. The

researcher reviewed every HBCU website directory and organizational chart in the

foci states. Some university websites were exceptionally researcher-friendly,

providing titles and pictures of professionals. In contrast, other universities listed

personnel and their leadership role on their websites. From here, the researcher used

LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google to ensure that women who self-identified as Black

or African American received the study solicitation email.   The researcher reached

out to their personal and professional networks to find volunteers. The researcher

circulated the recruitment image through social media (Appendices C and D). The

researcher posted the ad in three different Facebook communities to reach a wider

audience: Black Student Affairs, Delta Dissertation, and Cohort Mommas.

More than 13,000 Black professionals working in academic and student

affairs roles in higher education are members of the Facebook group Black Student

Affairs. It is a closed group. This organization was established as a counter space to

assist higher education professionals at PWIs and HBCUs. The Black Student Affairs

Professionals (BLKSAP) group offers support, guidance, and a venue to recognize

and honor the experiences of Black individuals in higher education.

The researcher expected student affairs staff to notify non-Facebook group

members who met the participant description about the study. The Delta Dissertation

group is for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. members of the sorority working on

their doctoral degrees. This group met bi-weekly and provided support during this

researcher's formative process. The cohort momma's group is a group of mothers

pursuing postgraduate degrees. This group provided support for mothers questioning

how to do it all. The researcher initially used a participant screener for online

recruitment posts (see Appendix E). The screener's data helped the researcher ensure

that the participants met the research criteria. Participants that fulfilled the

requirements received an email invitation to participate in this study.

Data Collection

Nine Black women in the role of a dean or higher participated in interviews

from June 2022 to September 2022. Before scheduled interviews, participants

received an electronic informed consent form (Appendix F). Each participant signed

and returned their form electronically. The researcher analyzed the participant's

resumes and published publications, such as taped interviews and panel discussions.

The researcher conducted one-hour interviews with individuals. Most interviews

lasted forty to sixty minutes. The researcher conducted six interviews via Zoom. The

other three interviews were performed via telephone to accommodate the travel

schedules of the participants. For reflection, the researcher used Zoom

videoconferencing and voice notes. The researcher recorded descriptive and reflective

material in a journal.

Respondent validation eliminates the risk of misinterpreting the meaning of

what participants say (Merriam, 2009). The researcher followed up with each

participant for accuracy and thoroughness. Participants reviewed their transcripts for

reliability and trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were also

able to redact any self-identifying information during the member-checking process.

Qualitative inquiry is not without error. In contrast to a computer or analytical

software, it is possible to misunderstand a participant. Credibility for qualitative

inquiry is essential for the data analysis to ensure trustworthiness. Member checking

was necessary for this research project to ensure that participant meaning was adequately recorded and conveyed during the data analysis process of the research study.

Data Analysis

The primary goal of data analysis is to make sense of and meaning from the obtained data (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, verbatim transcription is the most effective technique of data analysis (Merriam, 2009). The researcher used Zoom teleconferencing to record six of the nine participant interviews. The three remaining interviews were recorded solely by the voice memo application.

Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. After each interview, the researcher transcribed and checked participant transcripts to ensure accuracy. Constant data review helped the researcher recall participants' activities and unique ideas. The researcher used an online transcription service, Otter Ai, to transcribe all nine interviews. After transcription, the researcher listened to the audio, reviewed the transcription, and rectified transcription errors. The researcher sent the transcripts back to the participants for verification. Some participants modified and eliminated further identifying information. The researcher took advantage of this to ask clarifying questions. Participants elaborated in response to the researcher's inquiries and discourse.

The researcher reviewed the transcripts for understanding after the participants returned them. The researcher manually reviewed participant responses. Saldaña suggested manually coding initial or small-scale studies (Saldaña, 2015).

Manually coding provided the researcher with more project control and responsibility. If it moved, the investigator recorded the observation (Saldaña, 2015). As a result of examining participant responses, the researcher could better identify participant reactions and patterns.

The researcher utilized memos, a notebook, sticky notes, and Microsoft Excel to document recurring ideas, experiences, and suggestions during the second cycle review. Writing analytic messages requires initial and extensive data readings (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher's assessment included personal annotations, highlights, and circling of significant parts. The researcher wrote a study cover sheet with the research topic, importance, and questions and reviewed it for patterns or themes in the data (Saldaña, 2015).

After manual coding, the researcher summarized each participant's response to each interview question in an Excel spreadsheet. Each column was printed on a separate page, allowing the researcher to compare and contrast participant replies for trends. After identifying common and distinguishing remarks, the researcher utilized a notebook to determine the frequency of the same or similar participant utterances.

The researcher re-read the passages, considered the participant's comments, and developed themes. This review assisted in sifting through the data. The researcher employed In Vivo coding for a subset of participant statements due to their force. In Vivo uses the participant language and terminology to code instead of researcher-derived codes (Saldaña, 2015). Saldaña proposed emotion, values, versus, or evaluation coding for affective methods (2015). Because this is an emotional study,

the researcher utilized various coding methods, including In Vivo, emotional, and value coding.

The researcher used peer debriefing to validate themes and subthemes and shared participant remarks and patterns with colleagues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). Based on participant interview frequency, the researcher developed themes. The researcher selected data that stood out and then returned to the three overarching research questions to check that the study themes fit the research and Collin's Black Feminist Thought (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2015).

Trustworthiness/Reliability

Triangulation, constant observation, and member checks can help to enhance qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher interviewed nine participants and analyzed the respondents using the same data collection and analysis methods to establish patterns beyond the shared leadership experiences. The researcher used peer debriefing for credibility (Nowell et al., 2018). The researcher shared the researcher's preliminary findings and interpretations of participant data with colleagues and peers independent of this project to enhance this project's reliability and authenticity. The researcher codes, themes, and decontextualizes data during data analysis. Qualitative researchers can document, standardize, and share data analysis techniques to build credibility. The researcher employed member checking to verify data interpretation and findings (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher checked each transcript against the recording to ensure the correct meaning was captured and presented during data analysis. The researcher allowed the

participant to authenticate and affirm their truth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Under

the heading "Personal Observations and Experiences as a Black Woman Leader," the

researcher clarified bias.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the sensitive nature of this study's data, the researcher protected and

respected the participants' rights. The researcher's IRB clearance ensures that

participants' rights and welfare are respected. Owing to the highly classified nature of

this study, the researcher made sure that each participant was anonymous by giving

them a pseudonym. Before the interview, each participant was presented with and

signed an informed consent form**.** The researcher guaranteed participant privacy and

information security by keeping the information on a password- and fingerprint-

protected electronic drive. The researcher returned the participant transcripts for

member verification to ensure the research's legitimacy and accuracy. The researcher

redacted the official transcript of any delicate or personally identifiable material.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology design rationale, data

collection process, participant recruitment process, data collection, data analysis, and

ethical considerations. The researcher employed a qualitative phenomenology

approach to explore in-depth the experiences of Black women navigating leadership

in southern HBCUs. This approach is especially applicable to this study because it

allows people with lived experiences to gain an insider's view on information sharing,

which needs improvement in the literature. Responses from this study's participant

interviews could potentially argue for institutional support for Black women in higher

education, especially at HBCUs, or leadership advancement for aspiring executive-

level Black women leaders.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study sought to understand the leadership experiences of Black women in Southern HBCUs. Nine Black women in the role of a dean or higher participated in this research study. The following three research questions guided this exploration:

RQ1:   How do Black women perceive their leadership experience?

RQ2:   What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs?

RQ3:   What recommendations would Black women in leadership give to Black aspiring and middle-level leaders?

The data analysis facilitated five themes and fifteen subthemes from the nine participants who shared their unique leadership experiences at Southern HBCUs. The following section will capture each leader's profile.

Leadership Profiles

Because the researcher was required to submit an addendum to the IRB to increase the number of participants in the study, the recruitment process included two cycles. The rationale for using two cycles was to expand the geographical location to include additional Southern states to obtain a sufficient population to substantiate a qualitative research study. The participants represented the following states: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. This inquiry piqued the interest of fifteen African American women.

As a result of performing the two cycles, the researcher successfully recruited

nine Black women from multiple HBCUs in the South to participate in this study.

Although the researcher set realistic goals to interview Deans for this study, the

recruitment process allowed attaining five Black women participants representing

HBCUs in a vice president capacity. All participants were over the age of 40, and all

women who participated identified as Black. Each participant's executive experience

span was between 10 and 30 years. Three participants wanted to become college

presidents at an HBCU. Six of the nine individuals acquired their official education

from predominantly white institutions. The researcher excluded information such as

influential supervisors, responsibilities, and workplaces to guarantee anonymity and

assigned each participant a pseudonym.

Table 1 includes the participant's leadership profile. The researcher uses participant

pseudonyms throughout the study discussion.

Table 1: Leadership Profile

Participant's Assigned Pseudonym	Title	President Aspirations	Education	HBCU Or PWI Education	Years of Experience
Grace	Vice Chancellor	No	Master's	PWI	31
Melody	Associate Vice President	No	Doctorate	PWI	23
Esther	Vice President	No	Doctorate	PWI	30
Joy	Vice President	Yes	Doctorate	PWI	22
Serenity	Vice President	Yes	Doctorate	PWI	30
Lydia	Provost	No	Doctorate	HBCU	20
Faith	Vice President	No	Doctorate	PWI	12
Kim	Vice President	Yes	Doctorate	Both	20
Jocelyn	Dean	No	Doctorate	Both	10

Grace has over thirty years of expertise in the field of higher education. Grace obtained her qualifications from predominantly white educational institutions. She reflected on how her overall experience at the HBCU was rewarding. In addition, this participant demonstrated knowledge of alumni affairs, student affairs, and development. Grace exhibited how she is not interested in pursuing the presidency at the HBCU. She added sarcastically, "I've never encountered a college president with a master's degree." Grace felt that pursuing any presidential position would require obtaining a doctorate. Consequently, she was interested in something other than attaining this level of education. Grace expressed how she is content with her current role as a Vice Chancellor and attributed her career advancement to a male supervisor who was instrumental in her career progression.

Melody is a vice president of a Southern HBCU, a position she has held for the past two years, but she has been a leader in higher education for 23 years. Melody obtained her degrees from predominantly white colleges. Melody heavily emphasized self-empowerment, expressing truth, and demonstrating her value to others. Melody attributed her positive experiences to benevolent supervisors. Melody has expertise in academic affairs, remote learning, and student affairs. Melody's experience is unique because she has reported solely to female supervisors at HBCUs. Melody reflected on her career growth and attributed her success to female role models who supported her professional goals. At this career stage, Melody is not interested in applying for any college president posts.

Esther holds a position as a vice president of finance and brings thirty years of expertise as a finance administrator in higher education. Esther has served in numerous leadership capacities for several organizations, including less than one year serving as interim president. Esther stated that her time at the HBCU had been beneficial. In her interview, Esther noted unpleasant experiences with her Black male supervisor early in her career. Esther was the first person to bring up experiences of sexism at the hands of African American male superiors. Esther referred to the opportunity she now possesses as a "once-in-a-lifetime chance." Esther has no other professional aspirations. Esther believes that African American leaders in today's culture must continue developing others while taking the initiative. During her interview, Esther emphasized the relevance of mentoring and the influence it has had on her professional development.

Joy is presently a vice president at a southern HBCU. She has sixteen years of experience in higher education. Joy's leadership experience has been both humbling and enlightening. Joy stated that her work at the HBCU "opened her eyes to chances to influence college students." Joy brought up concerns regarding equity, such as the discrepancies in income at the HBCU and the possibility of earning more at the PWI. Joy will not pursue wealthy chances; instead, she will remain dedicated to the purpose of HBCUs and hopes to become a college president one day.

Serenity is a vice president at a southern HBCU. Serenity has more than 30 years of experience in higher education and has been in an executive leadership role for eighteen years. While the only Black woman on the cabinet, she is more conscious

of her race. Serenity identified as gender-neutral during the interview. Serenity's

background in intercultural affairs and academics is strategic, given that she wants to

become a college president someday. Serenity detailed how the PWI equipped her

with the mental strength to persevere through periods when she was isolated. One of

the difficulties that Serenity faced was avoiding or managing conflict or confrontation

with females.

Lydia is currently serving as provost at an HBCU in the South. Lydia has

been working in the field of academic administration for more than twenty years now.

During her interview, Lydia brought up the uncomfortable atmosphere at the HBCU,

which included sexual harassment and board politics. Lydia's interview discussed the

development of the industry. She became interested in gender disparity while working

on her dissertation. The research was discouraged since it would harm her career at

the HBCU. This assertion was the most unsettling and possibly even motivating part

of her response to this question. A move of this nature would be counterproductive to

her efforts to advance her career at the HBCU.

At the moment, **Faith** is holding the position of vice president at an HBCU in

the south. Faith has spent the last 18 years fighting on the front lines, and the lessons

she has learned there have been incredibly motivational. In addition, Faith received

her official education at primarily white institutions. Faith talked about her challenges

as the only woman in a male-dominated field. The task given to Faith is the one

everyone in this group will find the most peculiar. Ten years have passed since Faith

first started working for her current employer. She attributes this to her reliability and

ability to maintain her composure. According to Faith, who is generally the youngest

person in the room, ageism is the most significant barrier at the HBCU. As a result of

the challenging nature of the job and the demanding nature of the work, she has

absolutely no interest in being a college president.

Kim is the vice president of an HBCU in the South. Kim has twenty years of

experience in higher education and has held various advancement-related positions. It

is challenging to maintain a balance between leadership responsibilities and implicit

gender stereotypes, the Queen Bee syndrome, and toxic masculinity at HBCUs. Even

though men dominate the profession, Kim considers the ascension of women to top

positions to be positive. Kim was the first participant to address juggling work

objectives with parental and marital obligations. She discussed the unfairness of

juggling personal and professional gender roles simultaneously. Sometimes Black

female leaders must choose between family and career. Undoubtedly, she has

accomplished both with the aid of her devoted partner. She emphasized that males

rarely consider their relationships or partners while assuming leadership positions.

Jocelyn is a dean at an HBCU. She has worked in higher education in

information technology and library services for ten years. Jocelyn viewed her

experience at the HBCU as outstanding, with numerous opportunities for growth and

advancement. Jocelyn discussed how Black women in the agency could be visible but

silent. Jocelyn occasionally felt that her voice was muffled or unheard during round-

table meetings. Jocelyn's response was to express herself and speak up. Her

organizational and professional support also contributed to her leadership

development. She advised the personnel of HBCUs to be well-informed and seek innovative ideas outside the institution.

Major Themes

Three research questions guided the investigation. "How do Black women perceive their leadership experience at the HBCU?" The second question asked, "What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs?" The third question asked, "What recommendations would Black women in leadership give to aspiring and middle-level leaders?" While Black women's experiences at HBCUs are similar, each participant's advice for aspiring leaders shows originality or genuineness. Each participant often reinforced the concepts of empowerment, self-actualization, and self-definition in Collin's Black Feminist Thought.

In this study, Black women demonstrated their potential for leadership and self-empowerment to validate their leadership styles. All participants succeeded by articulating a distinct personal goal and vision, shaping their leadership pathways. Despite racism and gender preconceptions, the African American women in this research understood their leadership potential and overall worth to the organization. In addition, all participants voiced how their mentors provided access to promotional opportunities. Although the participants did not see their potential to lead, their mentors assisted them in reflecting upon their ability to grow in a leadership capacity.

For participant interviews, the researcher utilized eight semi-structured, open-ended questions (Appendix G) to understand how the nine participants reflected upon their leadership experiences. These interviews were resourceful in understanding the

career explorations of nine African American women who occupy executive-level positions and what self-empowerment strategies were substantial in their professional growth within the HBCU organizational structure.

The data analysis was impactful as the following themes emerged from the data collection process: (1) Motivation, (2) Positive Self-Image, (3) Chilly Climate, (4) Network, and (5) Strategic Negotiation. The subthemes include the following: empowerment and autonomy (motivation); personal commitment, speak up, I am who I am (positive self-image); sexism, politics, and Queen Bee syndrome (chilly climate); mentoring, sponsorship, organizational impact (network); and interpersonal skills, do not compromise, stay relevant, and know who you are (strategic negotiation).

Table 2 presents the emergent themes.

Table 2 Research Themes and Subtheme

Research Question	Theme	Sub-theme
Experiences	Motivation	Empowerment Autonomy
Leadership Affirmation	Positive Self-Image	Personal Commitment Speak Up I am who I am
Barriers	Chilly Climate	Sexism Politics Queen Bee
Professional Support	Network	Mentoring Sponsorship Organizational Impact
Recommendations	Strategic negotiation	Interpersonal Skills Do not compromise (integrity) Stay Relevant Know who you are (purpose)

Theme 1: Motivation

All of the participants discussed a variety of illuminating experiences that assisted them in determining what leadership pathways led to their current roles. During the interviews, the participants shared what supportive leadership was instrumental, which facilitated growth in their careers at HBCUs. The supervisors of each participant assisted them by providing opportunities for skill and leadership development which led to their current professional position. Because the supervisors acknowledged the participants' ability to flourish in leadership tasks, this type of awareness was a motivating factor in their career aspirations. Additionally, all participants were vocal about how on-the-job training accelerated their ability to acquire leadership skills, contributing to their current professional development paths. The following subthemes, empowerment and autonomy, reflect the shared participant experience that emerged in the discussion about what motivating factors have added to their professional success.

Sub-theme: Empowerment. While working at the HBCU, participants regularly cited prospects for professional growth and advancement. Participants regularly noted helpful bosses who validated their place within the organization. Participants underlined the need to be cognizant of their leadership potential. The supervisors of the participants benefited the participants in acquiring self-awareness of their actual leadership abilities to foster career development strategies. For example, Melody shared, "I had supervisors who were extremely supportive of my goals and vision."

Additionally, the participants did not realize their potential to grow in a leadership

capacity,

As Joy shared:

> Sometimes you don't realize that sometimes people see something in you that
>
> you don't always see in yourself. It has been an experience that encourages me
>
> to strive to reach even more, like finding opportunities to lead and grow as a
>
> leader (Joy, personal communication, September 2, 2022).

Consequently, Joy reflected upon what strategies helped motivate her to continue her

leadership pursuit. Lydia shared these sentiments by describing how mentorship by

her supervisor increased her ability to see herself as a leader.

Lydia presented a concrete illustration of how her president-level supervisor at

an HBCU validated her leadership potential. "Sometimes people see something in

you that you do not always see in yourself." Consequently, Lydia attributed her

leadership acceleration to her president. Faith shared how she used the weight of the

assignment as fuel in her leadership journey. With pride, she said, "I keep that in the

back of my mind to know that I'm being watched, right? There's nothing that I don't

ask them to do that I won't do" (Faith, personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Every participant recounted vastly rewarding and motivating experiences

navigating leadership at the HBCU. Sometimes the motivation resembled supportive

mentors or supervisors; at other times, barriers or challenges served as motivation.

The participants in the research were motivated toward job growth via encouragement

and autonomy. Fortunately for the Black women who participated in this study, their

immediate supervisors inquired about and engaged in their future by helping

participants overcome skill gaps and attitudes that impeded their professional

progress. Participants also noted the HBCU's creative and inventive freedom.

     Sub-theme: Autonomy. Autonomy is the freedom to exercise creativity and

authority at an HBCU. In their leadership reflections, Melody, Joy, and Lydia noted

how job autonomy fueled their career progress. Supervisors provided most of the

participants with on-the-job training. Melody, in her reflections, attested to the

support received from a supportive supervisor with the following statement:

> I have directly reported to individuals who have allowed me to make decisions
>
> that are beneficial not only to myself professionally but to the institution and
>
> have given me the freedom to explore different things and to build different
>
> programs or initiatives in a way that I think is the culture of the individual, not
>
> necessarily the collective culture of the institution (Melody, personal
>
> communication, August 18, 2022).

The freedom to explore supported Melody's career aspirations at the HBCU. Lydia

supported Melody's statement, noting her disdain for micromanagement. "He was

like, it is yours. Go do what you need to do. I learned a lot. And that jumpstarted my

career" (Lydia, personal communication, September 8, 2022). The participants

repeatedly displayed their leadership and autonomy-handling abilities. Joy spoke to

the Black woman's knowledge or necessity to demonstrate their leadership capacity.

Joy shared, "I like to go against the grain. I don't meet a stranger. I try to engage with

people. I let my actions speak louder than my words. I grind" (personal

communication, September 2, 2022). The capacity to demonstrate and lead without

limitations increased role effectiveness and the participant's tenure at the HBCU.

Certainly, autonomy is a motivator for development and retention at the HBCU.

Theme 2: Positive Self-Image

Each Black woman who participated in this research felt more pressure to

succeed. Black women acknowledged the significance of their work and the lack of

public scrutiny faced by their male colleagues. The objectives of HBCUs are crucial

for Black women in this research. Their resilience and capacity to endure misfortune

derive from their positive self-perception. "I am who I am" seems to foster a good

self-perception. Throughout this study, Black women reported instances in which

they asserted their leadership by affirming their skill set and agency membership in

the face of doubts from others. The resultant theme is an optimistic view of oneself.

Sub-theme: Personal Commitment. The research participants highly valued

their personal and professional vision. When questioned about their desire for

leadership, the research participants noted that the destination was obscure. Each

individual regarded their HBCU experience as a personal goal or passion. The

participants used expressions such as "the Lord put me here" and "I have a heart for

first-generation Black college students." Many participants had clear professional

objectives, including preferred institutions, schools, and positions. Joy explored

discrepancies in compensation at the HBCU. Joy loves the HBCU despite wage

inequities. She shared, "I know that I could go somewhere else and almost double my

salary, but I choose to stay in the difficult situation because I believe it is best for my

growth and development" (personal communication, September 2, 2022). Melody, Faith, and Joy wanted to assist first-generation and underprivileged students. Faith desired to help Black students and shared, "I wanted to help students, specifically Black" (personal communication, September 13, 2022). Lydia and Melody shared that they had no intention of returning to the HBCU after adverse experiences, but the Lord brought them back to the agency. This effort is a spiritual responsibility and a personal commitment for the majority.

     Sub-theme: Speak Up (Assert Your Voice). The participants discussed occasionally feeling silenced or ignored and having to assert their voices. There is constant pressure to demonstrate skill and contradict observers. To the participants' credit, they authenticated their leadership in the agency. Participants urged that one convey truth, assert their voice, and demonstrate to others. Serenity highlighted how Black women in the margins are often invisible or voiceless with the following statement:

> You know, as Black women, we know that a lot of people don't see us. They
> don't see us as educators; they don't see us as professionals. But you have to
> make sure that you show people who you are. As our grandmas and mamas
> told us, I can show you better than I can tell you (Serenity, personal
> communication, August 18, 2022).

Participants sometimes wanted to speak up. On occasion, participants admitted to playing it safe or small. Joy acknowledged at times that she played small but is

"learning to toot my own horn. I am learning that sometimes I think I've been too humble" (personal communication, September 2, 2022).

Frequently, others question the knowledge and standing of Black women in the organization. Several interviewees described instances in which Black men questioned their leadership abilities. "We're always challenged about our knowledge base. Men don't experience this in my opinion. I find that I have to rattle my resume. And it becomes nauseating at times" (Kim, personal communication, September 17, 2022).

Participants described being shocked by statements about their belonging or requirements in various institutions. Melody described an event in which a manager questioned the relevance of her role at the time. Although taken aback, Melody immediately reaffirmed her job, just like the other participants in this study. To each participant's credit, they exhibited devotion and determination as they worked to carve out a place for themselves inside the organization. Participants could make their voices heard, secure a place for themselves inside the organization, and earn the respect of their peers. Participants on the margins could gauge when to speak and keep quiet. Surprisingly, the vast majority of respondents said that they had no trouble making themselves heard.

Sub-theme: I Am Who I Am. Collin's BFT was most visible in participant remarks and ideas in this phase. The researcher asked each participant how she validated her position as a leader. The responses of each participant revealed a strong sense of self. Melody expressed, "I hate to sound like this, but I am who I am. What

you see is what you get" (personal communication, August 18, 2022). Joy shared a

similar sentiment: "Take me as I am or have nothing" (Joy, personal communication,

September 2, 2022).

All participants' responses demonstrated a strong sense of self, purpose, and

honesty. Personal and professional progress served as a source of affirmation. The

HBCU validated and fostered a feeling of community. For example, Lydia shared: "I

feel like at the HBCU, you can bring your authentic self to that environment. I can be

my authentic self" (personal communication, September 8, 2022). Lydia contrasted

her experiences navigating leadership at the PWI and HBCU and then expressed her

delight at returning to the HBCU. The participants pointed out that the HBCU

provided an atmosphere that supported authenticity, which, in turn, strengthened their

sense of self and self-identity and made it feasible for them to operate, for the most

part, in an unapologetic manner.

Theme 3: Chilly Climate

Black women in this study mentioned cold climates as a barrier to

professional advancement. Discrimination, sexual harassment, the Queen Bee

syndrome, and unfavorable gender stereotypes are all part of the chilly climate. While

the climate at the HBCU was a barrier, it also served as a personal source of

motivation for several research participants. According to the participants, people

react differently to male and female leadership, and not in a positive way. Black

women in positions of leadership are frequently mistakenly regarded as rivals. The

idea of a chilly climate acting as a barrier seems reasonable.

Sub-theme: Sexism. While the participants reported many prospects for progress, they also mentioned silencing experiences and disdain due to their gender. "There have been opportunities to lead in other areas outside my academic area," Jocelyn said. But I have also had times when I felt like I could not shine" (personal communication, September 15, 2022).

Three of the nine participants reported experiencing sexual harassment. The interviewees described the challenges they faced after reporting sexual harassment occurrences. According to participants, reporting such violations is not well received on a systemic level. One participant stated that she filed a sexual harassment claim and left since the allegation affected her leadership experience at the school. Lydia mentioned male opponents' uneasy hovering, especially board members. She continued and said:

> They undress you with their eyes. So, I never allowed myself to get in those
> situations where I would be compromised, where I feel compromised, or
> anyone else would question my integrity, my values, or how I was moving
> (Lydia, personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Sexist discrimination exacerbated wage disparities. Joy spoke with a male organization employee at the start of her leadership tenure. She revealed:

> At the onset, I was hit with you're never going to make this much money or
> have an opportunity as a man in leadership. However, I used that as my
> continuing focus and drive. You know you got to show them better than you

can tell them. So that has been my motivation (Joy, personal communication,

September 2, 2022).

Black women face salary inequities and the extra pressure of being lone women in a

male-dominated field. Faith revealed that "it was shocking for them that the second in

command to the president was a woman because all they had known were men"

(personal communication, September 13, 2022).

Another barrier at HBCUs is gender stereotypes and gender disparities.

Participants expressed heightened scrutiny and caution in their style and behavior.

Serenity reinforced this sentiment, "I believe people react differently to women in

leadership, and I believe they react differently in a negative way when women are

strong leaders" (personal communication, August 18, 2022).

Male and female subordinates experience conflict as a result of gender

stereotypes. Esther spoke of a strained relationship between her male supervisor and

her. "The mere presence of my first male supervisor terrified him. I overcame that by

always treating him with respect" (Esther, personal communication, August 28,

2022). Kim went on to express her struggle with masculinity and gender

subservience. Kim revealed:

> You have the fight with masculinity from your male counterparts that you
>
> have to be on guard with. You have the stereotypical type of subservient or
>
> expecting subservient role that you have to play or assume that you have to
>
> play with your male counterparts (personal communication, September 17,
>
> 2022).

Black women at HBCUs are visible yet, at times, voiceless. Jocelyn described instances in which she felt silenced and neglected at the organization. "And then somebody else of the male persuasion would come along and say the same thing, and it was like, oh, the light bulb went off then," she explained (personal communication, September 15, 2022).

According to the research, there are distinctions between male and female leadership styles. Serenity validated the research. She revealed: "I definitely see a distinction between male and female leadership. Male leaders tend to either over-communicate or overlook" (Serenity, personal communication, August 18, 2022).

According to the participants' responses, sexism and gender stereotypes occasionally irritate Black women. At the board table, Black women encounter implicit and explicit gender role demands. Although sexism is a barrier to career progression, the participants used the opposition as motivation.

Sub-theme: Politics. Sometimes the waters of higher education and HBCUs become muddy and political. Every disagreement is not yours. Navigating HBCUs and HBCU leadership requires a high level of situational awareness. "Know which hill you'll die on today" (Grace, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Mistakes in judgment can significantly impact a person's career or advancement. Not only do the participants note the need for situational awareness. Kim shared how frightening the political climate can be at times. She revealed: The waters can be politically stifling and perilous. I have recognized that my age, politics, and understanding of political

waters, within and outside organizations, help you tremendously" (Kim, personal communication, September 17, 2022).

Faith highlighted the significance of politics and connections in job advancement. "It's important to build bridges and to maintain them," Faith said. You never know what door that foot in will be that gets you on the platform" (personal communication, September 13, 2022). Coalition building is critical to success. Alliances safeguard position.

Sub-theme: Queen Bee Syndrome. Queen Bee syndrome occurs when women in male-led businesses develop patriarchal attitudes and become antagonistic or unpleasant to their female employees. The responses of the participants were mixed in this case. Some participants described Black male and female managers who sometimes made their jobs difficult. In contrast, others noted the help of supportive Black women in their career advancement. The Queen Bee syndrome, gender roles, and perspectives were all examined. Kim spoke about the absence of collegiality among Black women in the field. She disclosed:

> The most support I have received from my colleagues in the field has been
> from men. And I love us as women. But sometimes, we can be so threatened
> by ourselves that we will not lend any assistance. We will not say there are
> land fields here (Kim, personal communication, September 17, 2022).

Faith confirmed the hostile or confrontational relationships with Black women at the agency. She disclosed: "They often see me as adversarial or a conflict because they can only have one of us. So, we fight, and those who supported me were usually

definitely male or gender identified as men and White" (Faith, personal communication, September 17, 2022). Serenity concurred, "I think the biggest challenge is when I am at a table with women, women of color, especially African American women, and they see me as a threat and just learning how to navigate that relationship" (personal communication, August 18, 2022). Joy agreed, "In the workplace, Black women tend to be the hardest to work for, and I have experienced that some. But there have been a few that have had my back" (personal communication, September 2, 2022).

While participant admissions about confrontational relationships among Black women inside the agency were diverse, it was a frequent experience shared by many. According to the participants' responses, interactions among Black women at the agency appear more hostile and less amicable.

Theme 4: Network

Networking is essential for navigating leadership at an HBCU. Networks allowed participants to negotiate the social agency required for leadership progression. Networks provide individuals with validation, motivation, and opportunities for professional advancement. Every participant mentioned the impact of a network on their job advancement. Participants said managers who provided expansion through extra duties. Kim understood the importance of networking with this statement: "Network with positive people. Understand very quickly who is for you and who isn't. But at the same time, you have to work with all personalities, even those that aren't with you" (Kim, personal communication, September 17, 2022).

Whether the participant was an extrovert or an introvert, they recognized the social

aspects of leadership, such as relationships and the ability to negotiate shareholder

meetings.

     Sub-theme: Mentoring Mentoring offered participants with a leadership

template, success resources, and agency sponsorship. Every participant cited a

plethora of professional mentors and support. Participants were encouraged early in

their careers to seek assistance from an advisory board of mentors. Lydia shared how

her mentor helped her to identify professional gaps in her résumé and connected her

to her network of advisers. Faith described how a board liaison assisted her with

board etiquette. Faith said, "She taught me about interactions, motives, and

appearance" (Faith, personal communication, September 13, 2022). As Lydia stated,

the mentoring experiences for the participants were "invaluable." The participants

benefited from various mentoring options, which enhanced their productivity and

progress. Mentoring aided in overcoming professional inadequacies, changing views,

and broadening career alternatives.

     Not only did the participants grasp the value of getting mentorship, but they

also exhibited the value of mentoring others. "Because leaders above me really

benefited me in that area," Jocelyn said, referring to what every participant said about

mentoring others. So, whether official or informal, I want to ensure that mentoring

occurs" (Jocelyn, personal communication, September 15, 2022).

     Sub-theme: Sponsorship. The professional growth of the participants

benefited from the sponsorship of supervisors and mentors. Because of support,

participants described job opportunities, professional advancement, and even being

insulated from the volatility of administration changes. Each participant

acknowledged significant professional assistance throughout the collegiate and career

accounts, with several indicating membership in organizations that

fostered leadership development. Supervisors pushed participants beyond their

limited skill sets and comfort zones early. Participants' use of networks provided

them with access to leadership positions and frequently expedited their career growth,

as evidenced by their professional and personal support narratives. All participants

echoed Esther's statement, "I could not have gotten where I am without having the

right folks helping me along the way" (personal communication, August 28, 2022).

There is a shared intent among the participants to mentor and sponsor others.
"I try to be a sponsor for those because I want to speak their names in spaces where

they are not at the table, right? I am intentional about it" (Kim, personal

communication, September 17, 2022).

During her interview, Jocelyn underlined the importance of civic engagement

to her leadership development and promotion. Jocelyn analyzed the influence of

professional assistance due to her participation in groups outside the agency.

> I have had a lot of professional support because I am very active in
>
> organizations. And a lot of the organizations had structures like leadership,
>
> leadership training, and leadership development. Within my institution, as I
>
> said, I was very fortunate to have leaders who saw something in me (Jocelyn,
>
> personal communication, September 15, 2022).

Grace referred to the confidence and legitimacy that her supervisor offered as she navigated leadership at an HBCU. "He was always, you know, just really trying to encourage me to like, don't limit myself in terms of my skills and trying to help me build confidence" (Grace, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Sponsorship helped participants acquire confidence and navigate challenging circumstances.

Sub-theme: Organizational Impact. The differentiation made by participants regarding the organizational impact on their professional advancement was the most concerning and intriguing. Melody credited her bosses for her career advancement.

I have personally reported to individuals who have given me the flexibility to explore other things and establish different programs or initiatives in a way that is the culture of the individual, not necessarily the collective culture of the organization (Melody, personal communication, August 18, 2022).

Like Melody, Jocelyn attributed the group's influence on her career advancement to the beliefs of its members, not the organization itself.

I am unsure if it is so much the organizational values as those of the people in the position. I don't know so much that the organization had anything, you know, to promote and support that. I believe it was more the person (Jocelyn, personal communication, September 15, 2022).

Likewise, Serenity ascribed her professional development to her own culture, not the culture of her company or organization. "I think it is the individual culture, not necessarily the collective culture and institution" (Serenity, personal communication, August 18, 2022).

Individuals are responsible for creating corporate culture, although it is

essential to note that each participant credited their progress to their superiors. The

exclusion reveals that some systems are less open to Black women as leaders and may

emphasize the need for collective policies or practices that facilitate the ascent of

Black women. Most respondents highlighted involvement in civic organizations as a

source of leadership development. Again, this involvement is external to the

organization. Participants recommended that aspiring leaders and current

administrators seek external leadership development and assistance.

Theme 5: Strategic Negotiation

Each participant focused on strategic negotiation as they navigated career

progression at the HBCU. The participants deliberately positioned themselves by

investing in their overall professional development. The participants challenged

future and current leaders to take charge of their professional development. The

participants emphasized the significance of interpersonal skills.

Sub-theme: Interpersonal skills. Because leadership is dependent on

persuasion, emotional intelligence is critical to success. "You know, be courteous and

pleasant. Listen, those fundamental qualities, the intangibles, will benefit you. You

should employ discernment if you are spiritual" (Kim, personal communication,

September 17, 2022). Faith was a welcome refreshing change as a leader because she

touched on the humanity of leading. "Let me begin by acknowledging that we are all

human. We are, at our essence, human. When people are treated with dignity and

respect, they take pride in their work" (Faith, personal communication, September 13, 2022).

Interpersonal abilities inspire and empower others to collaborate to achieve a common objective. Many participants attributed their growth to their professionalism and collaboration. Participants regularly discussed cooperation and consensus-building. Grace highlighted how important it was to have a wide range of skills.

> No one should work their whole life only knowing how to make one widget, like learning to make a complete silverware set, not just forks. You should do that and when you can create professional development opportunities for people (Grace, personal communication, June 20, 2022).

While navigating the leadership landscape at the HBCU, Lydia emphasized the significance of having strong social skills. "I think when you work at an HBCU, your people skills better be on point. I always say that the HBCU prepared me to be an administrator at a predominately white institution" (Lydia, personal communication, September 8, 2022). Empathy, friendliness, approachability, attention, and adaptability were common leadership traits. Interpersonal skills are essential.

Sub-theme: Do Not Compromise. African American colleges and institutions foster community. The participants recommended that future leaders be dependable and uncompromising. Lydia addressed the community's cohesiveness and reputation at HBCUs. "HBCUs are close-knit, and people talk" (Lydia, personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Similarly, Grace emphasized the significance of professional and personal ethics, which act as a compass for leadership. "I am not going to conform. I am not going to change my character. I am not going to conform to fit in. I cannot do things that I know are wrong" (personal communication, June 20, 2022). Trust is also a currency type, and integrity appeared to enhance leadership chances. Faith revealed that her employer retained her in his cabinet due to her determination and honesty. "For him, it was very much my demeanor. I was a hard worker. I was not messy. I focused on getting the work done" (Faith, personal communication, September 13, 2022).

     Sub-theme: Stay Relevant. The participants acknowledged the long hours and challenges of leadership. Complacency and burnout are two potential outcomes that might result from leadership issues. In contrast, Joy advised against becoming complacent and switching jobs frequently.

> Remain committed for the next five to seven years. Then you have the opportunity to enhance what is current or evoke change. Maybe it is just me, but when you move around, it makes you or the institution look unstable. We need individuals to remain and remain relevant (Joy, personal communication, September 2, 2022).

The participants' responses regarding the help received at the HBCU remain relevantly varied. Lydia mentioned that although leaders should be interested in the growth of their employees, this is only sometimes the case. She continued, "Even if no one else is worried about your professional development, you should always be

concerned about your professional development" (Lydia, personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Sometimes, organizations place a higher value on qualifications than experience, which can negatively impact the organization's efficiency. Grace stated that some people have the necessary academic credentials but need more leadership skills or expertise based on her past experiences. "If we base positions on credentials, we may not have the best person in the world" (Grace, personal communication, June 20, 2022). Serenity recommended that leaders validate their knowledge and skills to "establish competence and technique" (Serenity, personal communication, August 18, 2022). Participants advised future leaders to be creative, adaptable, and capable. Participants encouraged aspiring and current leaders to invest in their professional and personal growth by learning as much as possible.

Sub-theme: Remember Who You Are. Self-awareness was prevalent among the individuals. Participants in this student affirmed their leadership and Collin's BFT self-identity and self-awareness. Participants encouraged aspiring leaders to remember their purpose and utilize it as a personal compass. A strong sense of purpose helped participants succeed. "Do some soul-searching and make sure you have a religious foundation" (Joy, personal communication, September 2, 2022).

Positive attitudes aided participants in navigating leadership issues. The participants' sense of purpose kept them grounded despite the difficulties. Jocelyn advised leaders to remember who they are. "You must realize that you are there for a purpose, that you are in that position because of your talents and who you are"

(Jocelyn, personal communication, September 15, 2022). Others questioned the

worth and participation of Black women in this study as they navigated leaders due to

gender preconceptions. Serenity advised aspiring leaders never to doubt their abilities.

Others may have doubts but never doubt yourself. "You must know who you are and

understand what you offer" (Serenity, personal communication, August 18, 2022).

> Sometimes Black women give in or play it safe. Melody cautioned against
>
settling for a lesser version of oneself or accepting the goals of others.

> Do not talk yourself out of it. We always second-guess whether or not we can
>
> do something. I think sometimes Black women lack the confidence to know
>
> that we change the world. We do it every day, unconsciously. Do not talk
>
> yourself out of what you can do. And two, be honest about what you want to
>
> do (Melody, personal communication, August 18, 2022).

Additionally, while pursuing a leadership position, do it for the sake of helping

others. Leadership is more than a mere designation. Joy urged participants to evaluate

their motivations for wanting to be in a leadership capacity and to seek more than just

a leadership post or title.

> Do not just want the title. Remember, if it is your passion, you should pursue
>
> it if you believe in higher education, particularly in the role of an HBCU.
>
> Strive for it. I see a brighter future for us as women, particularly Black
>
> women, even in PWIs (Joy, personal communication, September 2, 2022).

Summary

The findings of this qualitative study illustrate the experiences of African American women who hold leadership roles in southern HBCUs. Most research participants described their leadership experiences at HBCUs as positive and enlightening. The participants agreed that the challenges posed by gender norms and perceptions are a barrier to professional achievement for Black women. The interviews revealed that the interviewees' extensive professional networks helped HBCU leaders advance their careers and develop a firm foundation for themselves through sponsorship and mentoring. Participants have a strong sense of self that supports their leadership and purpose at the HBCU amid difficulties. Participants remained committed to the HBCU.

Each participant enhanced their experience by developing relationships and engaging effectively. Black women, in general, were ecstatic about their achievements at the agency. Despite this, they ascribed their career advancement to individual and not collective culture. Respondents attributed their job success primarily to individuals within the institution, most typically their immediate supervisors, rather than to organizational or cultural support, even though individuals contribute to the collective culture.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have a shortage of Black women in top leadership posts. This qualitative study investigated the leadership experiences of nine Black women who now serve as deans or higher at HBCUs in southern states. As part of a qualitative study, the researcher used semi-structured in-depth interviews. The researcher examined the intricacies of Black women in leadership posts at HBCUs through the prism of Black Feminist Thought. This chapter includes a discussion, a summary of the research questions, limitations, and recommendations.

The researcher investigated the experiences of Black women in the hopes of convincing HBCUs to reexamine their policies and institutional support for Black professional women. In addition to confirming the experiences of Black women in leadership at HBCUs, the researcher hoped to assist existing and aspiring administrators with guidance on how to progress their careers and respond to impediments. This study is significant because it corroborates previous research on the scarcity of Black women in management positions at HBCUs (Gasman et al., 2014; Hawkins, 2020; Redmond et al., 2017). Black Feminist Theory acknowledges and affirms Black women as experts and scholars (Collins, 2006). The participant replies revealed five significant themes: motivation, positive self-image, chilly climate, network, and strategic negotiation.

Discussion

While the Black race ascribes to racial equality, gender inequality still exists at the HBCU. Male leadership is preferred in HBCUs (Hawkins, 2020). Black women in leadership positions at HBCUs confront a "double bind" of gender and race (Redmond et al., 2017). The double bind of gender and race restricts Black women's advancement opportunities. A frigid atmosphere, gender discrimination, high demands, a lack of choices, family difficulties, position instability, and insufficient support help limit Black women's ability to function in the workplace (Gasman et al., 2014; Kersh, 2018).

Black Feminist Thought was a suitable framework for this inquiry. The whiteness of feminist thought, the masculinity of Black social and political thought, and the combination of mainstream research invalidate the experiences of Black women (Collins, 2002). The invisibility of Black women contributes to societal injustice and perpetuates oppression (Collins, 2002). BFT validates Black women's knowledge and experiences (Collins, 2006).

Despite barriers or challenges, Black women resisted injustice, demonstrated their leadership talents, and made significant contributions to the HBCU community, notably in this study. The researcher provided five emergent and fifteen subthemes highlighting respondents' unique experiences. This section summarizes the three main research questions' primary findings.

Research Question 1

How do Black women perceive their leadership experience at southern HBCUs?

Nine African American women participated in this study. The participants'
responses varied about their experiences at the HBCU. The majority of participants
highlighted rewarding and positive experiences. Participants' reflections on their
leadership experiences at HBCUs revealed empowering and autonomous experiences
that motivated career advancement and affairs that supported leadership and skill
development. The participants affirmed their leadership with a positive self-image
and had a network of sponsors and mentors that legitimized and fueled their career
progression at the HBCU.

The Black women addressed how their experiences at the agency influenced
their current leadership. Many interviewees mentioned having a strong sense of
purpose and a personal mission at their HBCU, which informed their leadership
practice. Negative presumptions about the nature of Black women led to frequent
questions about their intelligence and academic prowess. Specific actions and
behaviors are perceived as dangerous. Due to increased scrutiny, the Black women in
this study expressed concern about how they portrayed themselves. Black women
who take charge appear aggressive, whereas men who exhibit comparable leadership
traits are admired. However, participants responded with self-affirmation rather than
allowing this to develop self-doubt. Most participants viewed this effort at the HBCU
as God's work and a special mission.

When asked about the impact of individual and collective culture on their
professional advancement, every participant attributed their achievement to
individuals rather than collaborative culture or support. Participants were recruited for

their existing positions, emphasizing the importance of maintaining connections. Lifelong allies establish vital counter-space relationships. These landlines help negotiate treacherous and risky political waters. The literature supports the participants' assertion that culturally pertinent opportunities and networks provide Black women with adaptative resources (West, 2019).

In this study, Black women stressed the significance of sponsorship and mentorship in their career promotion. Networks provided a road to advancement and, in some cases, hastened their progression. Assistance, direction, and advocacy contributed to the participants' success (Jernigan et al., 2020). Mentors provided participants with a map to help them navigate landmines. According to participant after participant, mentors supported participants in navigating the rapidly changing political scene. The interviewees stated that they often seek advice from their mentors.

Research Question 2

What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at southern HBCUs?

Most participants obtained their academic qualifications from predominantly white institutions, and eight of the nine individuals possessed doctoral degrees. The participants ranged in age from 40 to 60 years old. The participants were married, divorced, and single. Four of the nine participants had children. The participants occupied diverse positions in student affairs, multicultural affairs, and academic affairs throughout their careers. Student affairs participants said they still use such experiences. The transferable abilities that the individuals in the research acquired in

these occupations proved valuable in their following roles. The majority of

participants advanced via conventional routes, which afforded them information and

the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills. Some participants recounted

deviating from the norm and experiencing opposition from colleagues about their

belonging and knowledge.

Research Question 3

What recommendations would Black women upper-level administrators give to aspiring and middle-level leaders?

During their interviews, the Black women discussed their challenges and

barriers while navigating leadership. The participants experienced a chilly climate,

including sexism, politics, and the Queen Bee syndrome. The participants

recommended strategic negotiation. Amidst their recommendations, the participants

recommended strong interpersonal skills, professional integrity, relevancy, and

purpose.

The participants recounted obstacles experienced during interviews but

suggested strategies for overcoming prejudice and opposition. Due to their gender,

participants disclosed instances of silence and contempt. Participants discussed their

experiences with discrimination and harassment. Participants revealed alarming

instances in which coworkers questioned their relevance and competency. Often, the

participants asserted their position inside the organization through their work and

competence.

Participants advised strategic negotiation: use your networks to advance your career at the HBCU. According to participant accounts, supervisory and mentoring connections improved participant growth. Each participant reported numerous mentors and sources of professional aid from institutions outside of their HBCU. Most suggested an advisory committee. To develop your career, seek mentors or sponsors inside and outside the HBCU.

The participants provided numerous recommendations to succeed at the HBCU; be sure about what you want, toot your own horn, demonstrate your leadership capacity and competence, and remain relevant. Black women may sometimes shrink or pretend to be modest or submissive to society. The interviewees supported Collin's self-validation. As a leader-in-training, individuals must understand their value, acknowledge their talents, and exhibit their value to others. Many participants credited their success to being genuine and bringing their entire selves to work. Their assertions of leadership also revealed personal acceptance. Black women are usually perceived as unpleasant or difficult to deal with, and the participants identified this unique problem as a barrier. Black women respond with a positive self-perception. A positive self-image seemed to fuel self-advocacy and resiliency among the Black women in this study. To prosper at an HBCU, a unique individual is required. The participants' affirmations were enormously affirming, both emotionally and professionally.

Participants stressed individual responsibility. One must gain information and skills to exhibit leadership competence and rationale. In addition, being an industry specialist is encouraged. Participant's responsibility allowed for their personal and professional development. Participants in the study received extra opportunities because they demonstrated a propensity for learning and accepting challenges outside of their job description. As a result, most participants suggested being open to new initiatives beyond one's responsibilities.

Ironically, the literature addressed the silencing of Black women, especially in disadvantaged areas (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Participants generally encouraged aspiring Black female leaders to speak up. Societal and gender constructs muffle the Black woman's voice. Their relevance, significance, and credentials are often questioned (Bonner, 2001). Black women must assert their authority within the organization by speaking up. Surprisingly, the Black women who participated in this study knew when to say something and when to remain silent.

Personal Reflections

The participant interviews were the most enjoyable aspect of this study. The researcher documented the participants' experiences in a journal during the interview. This study motivated and validated the investigator's inquiry based on experience and observation. On the birthday of the deceased researcher's mother, Melody was interviewed. Melody's interview reassured the researcher as a student and working professional. She discussed the unsurmountable problems that Black women experience, professionally and personally. She then described her mother's passing

weeks before defending her dissertation. I inhaled deeply and fought back the tears.

The interviewee's candor inspired me to work on a particularly challenging day.

Black women can survive adversity and yet produce.

At the HBCU, an individual's network equals their net worth. Participants

highlighted human capital and promotion as professional growth impacts. Numerous

participants are members of professional and civic groups that promote and cultivate

leadership. Membership in their different organizations provided preparation for their

current leadership paths. Their encounters continue to foster social initiative and

leadership growth.

In recent years, individuals have yet to pursue jobs actively. The majority of

respondents reported being recruited for their current positions. The literature does

not describe this. Some leaders have succeeded their predecessors in cabinet-level

roles. The longevity of relationships with superiors indicates the importance of human

capital and the need to avoid burning bridges. Due to the tiny size of HBCU

communities, individual connections offer the necessary social support for leadership.

Interpersonal and people abilities may substantially impact a person's career

advancement.

Literature often emphasized the necessity for professional counterspace for

Black women (Olson & Jackson, 2009). Counterspace relationships develop lifetime

allies who become lifelines. Culturally sensitive opportunities and networks equip

Black women with adaption options (West, 2017). Counterspaces provide

recommendations, methods, and resources for enhancing professional expertise.

Sponsorship and mentorship helped each participant and fostered progress and strategic planning. In times of comfort, a mentor might encourage one to reassess one's work path or ambitions, while sponsorship gives legitimacy. Mentors can help mentees through difficult circumstances when they emerge.

According to the research, Black women face a hostile environment marked by toxic masculinity and the Queen Bee syndrome (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017; Redmond et al., 2016). Several participants' accounts included references to sexism. Some interviewees acknowledged how difficult it might be to work with and for Black women, but one participant referenced the Queen Bee syndrome. The participants' experiences are varied. According to several respondents, female supervisors have given endless prospects for promotion. Others have mentioned conflictual partnerships. The psychology of rivalry among certain Black female coworkers is intriguing and disheartening.

It is stressful and challenging for a Black woman in a senior leadership position at an HBCU to constantly demonstrate that she belongs. The HBCU must try to comprehend the Black woman's experiences at the HBCU (Tevis et al., 2020). When the Black woman's credentials are at stake, comparing or being aware of the qualifications of others in the boardroom can be pretty unsettling and aggravating. Black women are likelier to succeed if they do not linger on this concept for too long. Despite efforts to authenticate their identity, Black women continue to face prejudice and gender inequity.

Challenges

In this study, Black women encountered a range of obstacles and hurdles. Perception and reality are commonly confused. A solid moral compass, an optimistic outlook, and faith helped Black women overcome hardship. Being both Black and female at an HBCU poses unique obstacles. Participant interviews enriched the study of the gender-race dichotomy. Failure of Black female agency is perceived differently than that of Black male agency (deGregory & Carter, 2016). At HBCUs, Black women compete for restricted executive leadership roles alongside Black males and other Black women (Redmond et al., 2016). As a Black woman working among Black males, some participants acknowledged coping with mandatory gender norms and toxic masculinity. Furthermore, Black women stated that working with or for Black women may be just as problematic (Redmond et al., 2016).

Limitations

The study is limited to executive-level Black women employed at HBCUs in the South as deans or above. Despite the inclusion of the lived experiences of Black women in this study, this tiny sample does not reflect all Black women. This research sought to understand how Black women perceived leadership at HBCUs. As emphasized by BFT, Black women are not a homogeneous group; therefore, the experiences shared during the project do not always represent the ideas or perspectives of all Black women in leadership.

Another constraint was the region-specific exclusion of HBCUs from other areas. This research did not represent the presence of Black women in PWI leadership

positions. Although there are no means to check participant claims independently, the researcher believes all participant accounts are accurate. Since the researcher is a Black woman employed at an HBCU in the South with aspirations for executive leadership, the inquiry may contain some subjectivity.

The investigation was conducted remotely through Zoom video teleconferencing and the telephone. In addition, because of a lack of resources and financial support, HBCUs have a more significant burden, characterized by constant work. It always appears to keep going. During several interviews, interviewees interrupted the conversation to attend to telephone calls and concerns. Others may have wanted to participate but could not because of the volume of work. The community of HBCUs is small and firmly connected. According to many potential participants, they were inundated with identical requests and so declined all study opportunities. This study recruited nine African American female executives as research participants. The researcher emailed more than 215 Black women in the target states, but only nine agreed to participate in the study. Over time, more Black women would join if they did not fear the effects of this study on their career development or the stigma connected with it. It may be advantageous to include the viewpoints of recently retired CEOs to reduce the risk of "professional suicide" associated with involvement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Two recommendations for future research are provided based on the study's findings. One, examining or comparing the leadership experiences of Black women in

religious HBCUs, and two, looking at or comparing the leadership experiences of Black women supervised by Black women.

The Black church and the HBCU. Religion influences mindset and practice (Wormald, 2022). Many HBCUs originated from the church (Hawkins, 2012). The church upholds gender roles. Some bi-vocational HBCU leaders are clergymen. Historically, the Black church and HBCUs have been male-dominated organizations. Investigating the leadership atmosphere or experiences of Black women in religious institutions might be intriguing and merits further investigation. According to one interviewee, the individuals and atmosphere may be terrifying. A board meeting may start with a prayer and conclude with a verbal dispute. Investigating the link between HBCUs and the Black church may be prudent. Typically, Black males take the helm of their community's churches. Both the Black church and HBCUs rely heavily on the contributions of Black women. Operating the HBCU as a Black church may continue the societal standards that marginalize and silence Black women.

The Black woman and the HBCU. During her time at the HBCU, one of the respondents indicated that she solely reported to Black women. Given that it is a male-dominated business, her experience with Black women at HBCUs is unusual and needs additional examination. The literature discusses the differences between male and female leadership styles. Research shows that women tend to be more collaborative and collegial than men (Breeden, 2021). Black women in the study seemed hardworking to overcompensate for criticism. A participant stated that she spent eight hours assisting her staff and another eight hours on tasks directly related

to her position. Another participant reported returning from a break to a mountain of difficulties. Everyone felt a significant need to maintain and level the playing field. The job is strenuous and challenging, but it has a purpose.

During interviews, some participants claimed that their Black female bosses supported their vision and fostered a work-life balance. The participants' responses describing the support for Black women in leadership varied. A few individuals admitted how difficult it is to work with or for a Black woman—exploring the professional connections of Black women warrants more research.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

Cultural Competence Training. Interviewees underlined the significance of their tasks explicitly and indirectly. Frequently, prejudice and gender stereotypes doubt the knowledge and feeling of the identity of Black women. Black women tread a narrow line, and many around them rarely try to understand them. Instead, they permit gender prejudice from the past to impact their relationships and impressions. By analyzing programs and practices restricting Black women's success, institutions must intentionally attempt to alter the culture.

Professional Counterspaces. According to the participant data, mentorship and sponsorship helped Black women navigate professional progression at HBCUs effectively. Mentoring enhances leadership performance, support, and growth (Holmes, 2004; Jernigan et al., 2020; Olson & Jackson, 2009). Mentors advise and support growth, especially during challenging circumstances. Mentoring provides accountability, support, and guidance. To enable the transfer of influence and power,

those in positions of authority should mentor and foster the vision and professional

development of rising Black women leaders at the HBCU. Leaders must support and

develop aspiring Black female leaders to increase their collective influence and

power.

       Foster leadership development. While higher education provides the space

and training to address accessibility and equity issues for marginalized people,

universities and colleges must revisit their mission and vision statements on diversity,

focusing on leadership development and equity training for Black women. Black

women are under significant public scrutiny and enormous pressure to succeed in

HBCUs (Breeden, 2021). Both personal and social anxiety exists. As a result of social

construction, Black women are under intense pressure to perform and disprove their

critics (Merriam, 2009). These perceptions create unnecessary obstacles for African

American women pursuing professional advancement. Leadership is a social activity

to which dominant ideology restricts access (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). The

participant data supported the literature evaluations, highlighting the significance of

validation and support. Participants shared personal experiences, emotions, and

perspectives that can enhance corporate practices and policies.

       Create systemic opportunities for Black women. For Black women to attain

leadership positions, they require space. HBCUs must intentionally provide equitable

experiences and opportunities for Black women to lead. While it is the mecca of

cultural immersion, racial inclusion, and pride, HBCU culture can no longer slowly

redress or ignore gender disparities. Through systemic initiatives, Black women

should be drawn to and maintained in executive-level roles at HBCUs. Black women

have a higher graduation rate from HBCUs. There is an abundance of qualified

African American female executives. HBCUs provide marginalized populations a

sense of belonging, access, and opportunity to affirm their experiences. This behavior

is dismissive of the commitments and goals of Black women and undermines the

HBCU mission of equality.

   The data reveals that Black women in leadership had a different experience at

HBCUs than their male counterparts. Hence, the researcher asserts that HBCUs

provide systematic leadership opportunities for Black women. Seven interviewees

stated they did not attribute their professional progress to structural support. Instead,

the individuals attributed their achievements to their immediate bosses. Existing

institutions did not specifically encourage Black women's professional advancement,

which raises the possibility that HBCUs explore the leadership and personal

development opportunities available to Black women in the agency.

Conclusion

   Historically, there has been a shortage of Black women administrators in the

history of higher education administration. The results of the study are consistent with

the present body of knowledge. In the workplace, Black women have traditionally

been servants and caregivers. This study emphasized African American women's

higher education gains, notably at the HBCU. Black women executives with more

than two decades of expertise in the business stressed the advantages of literary

discovery and professional exposure for Black women at HBCUs.

This research aimed to understand better Black women's professional paths, experiences, problems, and need for social support. The study focused on the leadership experiences of Black women in positions of dean or above, using Black Feminist Thought as a lens. Many ideologies disregard the Black woman's experience and voice. Black women can seldom analyze, articulate, and confirm their experiences in academic environments. BFT views the Black woman's background and voice as valid. BFT argues that the twin bind of gender and race has a distinct influence on the life of a Black woman.

While examining the lived realities of Black women, the purpose of this study was to support policy and program creation at HBCUs interested in retaining and advancing Black women within the profession. This study examined HBCU culture and professional counter spaces to see how they help Black women in higher education. The participants closed by offering to advise aspiring Black female executives.

Nine Black women in executive leadership roles at Southern HBCUs contributed unique insights into three research questions: (1) How do Black women perceive their leadership experience at Southern HBCUs? (2) What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs, and (3) What recommendations would Black women upper-level administrators give to aspiring and middle-level leaders? The interviews revealed the following themes: (1) motivation, (2) positive self-image, (3) chilly climate, (4) network, and (5) strategic negotiation. The participants received additional responsibilities and the opportunity

to be creative, contributing to their skills, leadership development, and career motivation. The participants held a positive self-image, often asserting and affirming their position in the agency unapologetically. Black women in this study mentioned chilly climates as barriers to professional advancement. Nevertheless, essentially the walls served as another motivation to disprove the naysayers. Networking is essential to navigating leadership at the HBCU. Networks provided the participants with mentoring and sponsorship to validate, motivate and provide career advancement opportunities. Finally, participants recommended strategic negotiation through personal responsibility and professional development. The research participants recognized autonomous, motivating experiences that aided their professional advancement. Due to their heightened self-awareness, the participants seized their authority and position. Participants mentioned hostile workplaces marked by discrimination and gender prejudice. The participants emphasized the necessity of a network for job success at HBCUs. Networks provided adaptative strategies to help participants successfully navigate personal and systemic challenges. Furthermore, participants strongly advocated for strategic negotiation through subject matter competency growth and professional integrity.

HBCU leadership experiences inspired the research participants. Supportive leadership gave HBCU leaders the freedom to innovate and succeed. On-the-job training from supervisors boosted participants' career readiness and career advancement opportunities. A collaborative spirit led to greater responsibility. Each

participant's professional growth and the agency's success were driven mainly by personal motivation.

Each Black female research participant felt pressure to achieve. Black women understood the value of their labor and the lack of public scrutiny of their male colleagues. Black women showed leadership in this study by affirming their skill set and agency membership despite others' doubts owing to a positive self-image.

Participants described navigating leadership in a chilly climate at the HBCU. As obstacles, participants cited discrimination, sexual harassment, Queen Bee syndrome, and overcoming gender stereotypes. Difficulty fostered the development of a strong will. Everyone agreed that male and female leadership generated different responses. Black women in leadership positions are frequently mistaken for competitors, which can be damaging to their careers.

Success at HBCUs requires networking. Influence and networks provided individuals with social leadership agency. Career progression was supported, promoted, and given via networks with sponsors and mentors facilitating leadership development opportunities. Key supervisors enabled respondents to pursue opportunities outside of their present work. All participants placed a premium on mentorship and sponsorship.

Black women with considerable knowledge supplied potential leaders with personal and professional guidance. The participants emphasized fostering interpersonal skills and individual involvement in professional growth. Executive leaders who are currently in place urged prospective and mid-level leaders to

prioritize their professional and personal growth. The primary emphasis is on

strategic negotiation. The participants strategically positioned themselves

advantageously by investing in professional development and broadening their

professional networks and experiences.

As both the expert and the subject, Black women provided insightful personal

perspectives of their leadership experiences, challenges, and recommendations for

aspiring administrators. The outcomes validate the usage of Collins' Black Feminist

Thought. Black women are experts on their own experiences and warrant an

independent investigation. This study's participants validated, verified, and criticized

oppressive regimes. To enhance their professions at the HBCU, Black women

strategized and were determined to refute skeptics while demonstrating crucial

interpersonal skills. Participants empowered themselves, maintained an appropriate

self-image, and ensured that others did the same.

Black colleges are sacred. Higher education, especially HBCUs, needs this

study to continue discussing Black women in leadership roles. Despite the paucity of

research on the topic, this study allowed Black women to offer their perspectives. The

professional progress of women with more than a decade of experience inspires

aspiring Black executive leaders. This study provided practitioners and HBCUs

insight into Black women's leadership experiences. There has to be more discussion

about the extent to which HBCUs offer leadership opportunities. As HBCUs seek

new leaders, they must prioritize recruitment, retention, and support for African

American women. This information is essential to address systematic discrepancies in the leadership of Black women at HBCUs.

Most HBCU respondents had favorable leadership experiences. According to the participants, HBCUs struggled with sexism, ageism, and the Queen Bee syndrome. Ironically, when confronted with hurdles, the Black women who participated in this study increased their leadership and participation in the organization. Their capacity to react to challenges with political acumen and technical competence has shown to be a viable approach for advancement. This study featured inspiration and preparation for Black women to negotiate the political context of leadership by offering guidance on how to flourish at an HBCU. In addition, the research provided insight for Black women to deal with the political context of leadership. Black women are resilient; as Justice Ketanji Brown asserts, Black women "persevere."

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval

MSU Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research **NOTIFICATION OF EXEMPT PROTOCOL REVIEW**				

Principal Investigator/Researc

First Nam	Christina	Last Nam	Caul	Title:	Student-Doctoral

Campus Addres		Campus Phone:	▮▮▮▮▮

E-Mail:	ccaul-jackson@moreheadstate.edu

Department:	Foundational & Grad Studies in Ed

CITI Trainin	Yes	Date Completed	06/22/2020

Other Personnel   Other Personn

Purpose:

Title of Project/Course:	Leading from the Margins: The Black Woman's Experience Navigating

Funding Source/Agenc	NA	N/A

Protocol Review Num   22-05-100

The human subject use protocol described above has been reviewed by the MSU Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research with the following results:

The IRB determined the project, as stated, is exempt based on federal regula 46.101 (2)
Federal regulations require that the IRB be notified if anything in the research changes, as additional review may be necessary.

	Yes	Approved, may proceed as writte
Begin Dat	5 /25/2022	End Dat	5 /24/2028

In accordance with new procedures instituted by the IRB, and because your study is exempt, you are not required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or convened review. Your exempt protocol is approved for six years. At the end of six years the protocol will close and interaction with human subjects must cease. If you would like to continue your project, you must submit a new exemption application and have it approved before the project can continue.

N/A	Regulatory requirements have been met for the waiver of documentation of cons
N/A	Regulatory requirements have been met for the waiver of informed consent
N/A	Criteria for use of children has been met

Signed: _Elizabeth B. Perkins_____   Date: 05/28/2022_____
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Resear
ch

Please refer to the protocol review number in any future references to this protocol. If any revisions are made to a project or if any unforeseen risks arise during an investigation, the principal investigator must submit Form H to the IRB, fully explaining all changes or unexpected risks.

pc: Protocol Fi

Appendix B: IRB Change of Status Request

For office use only

Morehead State University
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

PART H: CHANGE OF STATUS / CONTINUING REVIEW / FINAL REPORT

ONLY COMPLETE FORM AFTER PROTOCOL HAS BEEN APPROVED AND WHEN NECESSARY TO OBTAIN IRB APPROVAL FOR CHANGE OF STATUS OR ANNUAL CONTINUING REVIEW OR TO PROVIDE THE FINAL REPORT:

(Please Mark Choice[s]) ☑ Change of Status   ☐ Annual Continuing Review   ☐ Final Report

Principal Investigator(s)/ Researcher(s):	Christina Caul	PI Title:	Student (Doctoral)
Department:	Foundational & Graduate Studies in Education	E-Mail:	ccaul-jackson@moreheadstate.edu
Campus Address:		Phone:	▇▇▇▇▇▇

Title of Research Project:	Leading from the Margins: The Black Woman's Experience Navigating Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Original Period of Research Project:	From: 05/25/2022		To: 05/24/2028
Original Protocol Number:	22-05-100	IRB Initial Review Date:	05/28/2022

Yes	No	Request to Change Identity/Identities of Principal Investigator(s)/Researcher(s)
☐	✔	☐ Add ☐ Remove

IMPORTANT: If you are requesting that the Principal Investigator(s)/Researcher(s) for the approved protocol be changed, you must attach a memorandum from the original Principal Investigator(s)/Researcher(s) giving permission for the change.

Yes	No	Request to Extend Ending Date of Project
☐	✔	From: To:

Yes	No	Section I – Change of Status
✔	☐	Are there any proposed changes in the research procedures not included at the time of initial IRB review? If yes, provide committee with detailed explanation of changes (attach explanation).
☐	✔	Has there been any major change in the research project since its most recent review? If yes, describe changes in procedures/risks used with human subjects (attach description of changes).
☐	✔	Has there been any adverse reaction or other indication of risks to subjects since last review? If yes, describe the adverse reaction or other indication of risks to subjects (attach description).
☐	✔	Have increased risks occurred in above mentioned research project? If yes, explain and provide appropriate remedies (attach explanation and recommendations).

Yes	No	Section II – Annual Continuing Review (i.e., due annually for multi-year projects – approval is only for one year or less based on level of risk)
☐	☐	Has there been any major change in the research project since its most recent review? If yes, describe changes in procedures/risks used with human subjects (attach description of changes).
☐	☐	Has there been any adverse reaction or other indication of risks to subjects since last review? If yes, describe the adverse reaction or other indication of risks to subjects (attach description).
☐	☐	Have increased risks occurred in above mentioned research project? If yes, explain and provide appropriate remedies (attach explanation and recommendations).

Yes	No	Section III – Final Report
☐	☐	Project completed?
☐	☐	Has there been any major change in the research project since its most recent review? If yes, describe changes in procedures/risks used with human subjects (attach description of changes).
☐	☐	Has there been any adverse reaction or other indication of risks to subjects since last review? If yes, describe the adverse reaction or other indication of risks to subjects (attach description).
☐	☐	Have increased risks occurred in above mentioned research project? If yes, explain and provide appropriate remedies (attach explanation and recommendations).

☑ **BY CHECKING THIS BOX AND TYPING MY NAME BELOW, I AM ELECTRONICALLY SIGNING THIS FORM.**

Christina Caul   08/08/2022
Signature of Researcher(s) _____   Date _____
Please e-mail to jl.cline@moreheadstate.edu

Revised 6-19-2018

IRB Chair: _____   Approval Date: 8/8/22

Christina Caul
Protocol Number: 22-05-100R1
Change of Status Request

The initial research included the following states: Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky. However, the researcher continues to struggle with volunteer participation in the states since the IRB approval. The researcher sent 103 emails to potential participants, three times now over the span of nine weeks. One participant was interviewed. Three participants agreed to participate but since are unresponsive to subsequent communication. During a meeting with other doctoral students, we discussed the potential of requesting additional states to garner more participants. The initial study goal is eight to ten participants. By adding more states, the researcher hopes to meet the study goal by expanding the target region, which permits more contact with potential research study volunteers. The researcher wants to add the following Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia., Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Florida, West Virginia, Virginia, and South Carolina. With this status change, the research would include the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The research procedures outside of the request for additional states remain the same. I am including the new recruitment image.

Appendix C: Survey Advertisement for Study Volunteers (initial)

Appendix D: Survey Advertisement for Study Volunteers (final)

Appendix E: Screener Questions

1. Do you identify as an African American or a Black woman?
- Yes
- No

2. What category best describes your job function?
- Other: ____
- Dean
- Provost
- Chancellor
- Assistant Vice President
- Associate Vice President
- Vice President
- President

3. How many years have you held your current role?
a. less than one year
b. one to two years
c. three to five years
d. more than six years

4. What state do you currently work in?
- Alabama
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- North Carolina
- Tennessee

5. The study will require you to share your leadership experiences in HBCUs openly. Do you agree to share honestly about your experiences?
- Agree
- Disagree

Appendix F: Consent Form

This research is being conducted by Christina Caul, a doctoral candidate in the

College of Education at Morehead State University. As a part of the doctoral inquiry,

I am interested in exploring the experiences of Black women in leadership at

Southern HBCUs. The data collected will be used in the research topic entitled

"Leading from the Margins: The Black Woman's Experience Navigating Historically

Black Colleges and Universities."

The interview will be recorded via Zoom and last no more than 60 minutes.

You are not obligated to participate in this interview. At any time during this

interview process, you can elect to discontinue this process. As a participant in this

inquiry, I want to assure you that the information that you share will be protected.

Participants will be coded with fictitious names. Your responses are confidential.

Transcribed interviews will be deleted after the completion of this project.

Participant Printed Name: _____

 Participant Signature: _____   Date: _____

Researcher Contact Information:
Christina Caul
ccaul-jackson@moreheadstate.edu
██████████

MSU Institutional Review Board Office:
606-783-2278

Appendix G: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Based on Research Question 1: How do Black women perceive their leadership experience?

1a. Describe your experiences as a Black woman in leadership at the HBCU.

1b. How has your experience informed your leadership today?

1c. How have your organization's culture and values impacted your career advancement?

1d. How do you personally affirm your leadership role?

1e. Share with me some examples of professional support from others. Who are they, and how have they helped you?

Based on Research Question 2: What are the characteristics of Black women in leadership at Southern HBCUs?

2a. Demographical Information (collected from screener and participant resume)

- Age

- Education

- Current Position Title

- Professional Resume

- Institutional types

- Professional Affiliations

Based on Research Question 3: What recommendations would Black women administrators give to aspiring and middle-level leaders?

3a. What barriers or challenges, if any, have you experienced as a Black woman

leading at the HBCU? What strategies did you use to overcome those challenges or

barriers?

3b. What recommendations would you offer for young aspiring leaders?

3c. Do you have anything else that you want to share?

Appendix H: Email Message to Participants

Dear [First Name, Last Name],

You are receiving this correspondence because you are a Black woman leader at a Southern Historically Black College and University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study if you are in the role of Dean or higher. Please complete the questionnaire here: https://forms.gle/izTb9t8KcaR1VKPc8 to determine if you meet the study criteria. The study consists of 7 questions, with an interview approximate time of 60 minutes.

I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at Morehead State University. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Dr. Fujuan Tan. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. No personal information will be identifiable in any reporting. The IRB of Morehead State University approved the implementation of this study. If you have any comments or questions, please get in touch with my research supervisor, Dr. Fujuan Tan, Committee Chair, at 606-783-2998 or email f.tan@moreheadstate.edu.

VITA

CHRISTINA R. CAUL

<u>EDUCATION</u>

May, 2004   Bachelor of Arts
                         Berea College
                         Berea, Kentucky

December, 2007   Master of Public Administration
                         Eastern Kentucky University
                         Richmond, Kentucky

Pending   Doctor of Education
                         Morehead State University
                         Morehead, Kentucky

<u>PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES</u>

July 2019-Present   Director of Academic Support
                         Kentucky State University
                         Frankfort, Kentucky

2015-2016   Assistant Director of Academic Success
                         University of Kentucky
                         Lexington, Kentucky

2014   Student Success Navigator
                         Kentucky Community & Technical College System
                         Ashland, Kentucky

2011- 2013   Coordinator for Student Involvement
                         Marshall University
                         Huntington, West Virginia

2009-2011   EEO Specialist I
                         Department of Transportation/Division of Highway
                         Charleston, West Virginia