THE PERCEPTIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE

FACULTY AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL

STUDY

by

Jasmine LaShawn Jackson

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

[Doctor of Philosophy]

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological approach aims to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. The theory guiding this study is intersectionality theory, introduced by Kimberlè Crenshaw, discovering the multilayers of discrimination that women face and providing a template to encourage antidiscrimination. This theory adequately addresses the focus of this inquiry because it highlights the discrimination often experienced by African-American female faculty and the experiences of various individuals from the targeted population. This study's methodology was based on interviews with different African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions. These interviews will include research questions specifically designed to capture the experiences of each participant. The interviews will be captured through virtual meetings with the participants. The results from the virtual calls will be used in data collection efforts to record the actual participant's experiences. The interviews and surveys from each participant will be used to form the analysis and apply theories based on the participants' responses. I will be using descriptive statistics as part of my data analysis.

Keywords: Intersectionality theory, higher education, predominantly White institutions, African American, women, recruitment, retention, mentoring, diversity

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, who strengthened me through this process!

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Emanuel J. Jackson, who has prayed, pushed me, and stepped up and helped when I needed to devote my time to my dissertation. My Husband has genuinely been my peace throughout this entire journey.

To my daughter Aniyah Jackson, who wiped many tears, encouraged me, was full of joy, and so loving to know I could make it. May you pursue knowledge throughout your life and be a success in whatever you put your mind to do. Remember our motto, "You can do all things through Christ that Strengthens you" (Philippians 4:13).

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To all the African-American female faculty who sacrificed their time, took part in the study, and enabled this research to be possible, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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List of Abbreviations

Black Feminist Theory (BFT)

Faculty of Color (FOC)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

National Association of Colored Women (NACW)

Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological approach is to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions (PWI) and the strategies used to overcome barriers. African-American female faculty have been targeted in efforts to add a sense of belonging, support, and relationship in higher education. Many strategic opportunities to advance and become confident in succeeding like their White counterparts have not been enough. History shows the path African American female faculty had to cross to integrate at PWIs successfully. As the world of higher education continues to evolve, there must be a commitment to actively encouraging diversity across all levels. In addition, this chapter introduces this phenomenon by providing background, historical, social, and theoretical contexts, problem and purpose statements, the significance of the study, and a practical approach regarding how this phenomenon can potentially be resolved. This will serve as the foundation for developing a great understanding of this phenomenological study.

Background

The perception and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs have been noted and explored in public research (Edward et al., 2011). The challenges and issues stem from the reflection of institutional climate. Consequently, women faculty of color have experienced inequality and severe marginalization that continues to prove the demand for redefining and supporting their roles at PWIs (Edward et al., 2011). Researchers have reported that women faculty of color have questioned their roles within higher education and the pressure to prove that they are qualified and deserving of their positions (Edward et al., 2011). However, African-American female faculty have continued to stretch and endure obstacles despite the

divide between them and their White counterparts. Understanding and addressing diversity concerns will be integral in furthering career advancement and success for future African-American female faculty. Exploring the historical, social, and theoretical context will highlight the complexities resulting in African-American female faculty involvement and development at PWIs.

Historical Context

History has demonstrated that education has enslaved the African-American culture and its development by prohibiting them from reading and writing (Wright et al., 2006). It is not by coincidence that the structure of higher education has deconstructed and transformed how poorly African-American female faculty are treated in gaining access to predominantly White institutions (Griffin, 2020). African American women in higher education endured racism and sexism, creating an experience in developing and supporting faculty roles (Patitu, 2003). In 1896, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was formed to address the social well-being of African-American women led by Mary Church Terrill and Mary McLeod Bethune (Sulé, 2019). In the late 1960s, African-American women held teaching positions only at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Wright et al., 2006).

History credits the standard practice at African-American colleges or universities to the warrant for separating African-American students at predominantly White institutions (Wright et al., 2006). Around 1985, there were around 43,698 women who were full-time managers or administrators in higher education (Wright et al., 2006). Of those women, only ten percent of them were African American. Consequently, civil rights, the feminist movement, affirmative action, and equal employment opportunities were legislated for African-American women to impede racial discrimination and continue achieving (Wright et al., 2006). However, PWIs were

still reluctant to recruit African-American women as faculty members. Conversely, this pushed the NAACP and Department of Health, Education and Welfare lawsuit Adams v. Richardson, stating that the PWIs failed to implement the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was to eliminate discrimination in higher education (Wright et al., 2006).

Consequently, PWIs account for the tension and fear of engaging as a faculty member. Research studies show that African American female faculty has declined between 1996-2016 (Martin et al., 2019). The benefits of increased awareness will often affect African American female faculty and other faculty to identify problematic limits on academic freedom.

Social Context

African-American women have been underrepresented in higher education for many years. This disproportionality reflects the need for African-American female faculty to work twice as hard on the social hierarchy ladder to be offered a faculty position (Gary, 2021). African-American female faculty have faced both hypervisible and invisible crises that ultimately serve as an attempt to dismantle the success of academic freedom (Martin et al., 2019). Racial differences have shown the unequal treatment of African-American female faculty, making the number of negative experiences greater than their White counterparts (Martin et al., 2019). Over time, higher education has silenced African-American students and faculty through relentless bullying demonstrated by the White race, placing the faculty at risk and causing the African-American community to diminish in exercising their rights to academic freedom (Martin et al., 2019).

African-American female faculty continue to advocate for inequality and combat continuous barriers that PWIs foster to challenge the imbalanced and overlooked need for cultural diversity. This body of research will affect African-American female educators who

receive academic employment and will eventually choose to enter college and university campuses to gain tenure. The research in this study has yielded resources that have put African-American female faculty at a disadvantage for many decades, even our current decade, that further benefits those who have experienced such distress and those who are rising. This research synthesizes the areas that need inquiry and provides insight not only to African American female faculty who desire academic employment but also to PWIs that respond dichotomously by avoiding the racial and sexist challenges presented at their institutions (Truehill, 2021).

Theoretical Context

The world has evolved, with diversity being the driving force behind its evolution. However, despite the world becoming even more racially diverse, American higher education remains primarily White (Orelus, 2020). Unfortunately, this is a very concerning reality due to diversity trends that will continue to intensify. Consequently, the underrepresentation of professors, students, and administrators of color in various academic positions leads to the assertion that institutions were historically designed for White males (Orelus, 2020). Thus, African-American women face challenges primarily due to the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in ways that White faculty will never experience or comprehend (Carroll, 2017).

Among the research that has been performed, it has been discovered that the intersectionality theory is an essential tool to analyze African American women as a marginalized group that is relevant for many contexts. Consequently, the missing voices of African American female leaders, in conjunction with the scarcity of adequate understanding of the contexts in which leaders are and have been successful, limits the ability to contribute to cultivating school experiences and improving the lives in communities that are poor and disadvantaged (Moorosi et al., 2018). Along with the current research, the dual oppression that

intersectionality provokes is an area that should also be considered. Because African American women are both Black and women, they are essentially at the center of racism and sexism, the two of the most pervasive prejudices in this country (Ross et al., 2015).

Emerging from intersectionality theory, Black feminism has been challenging for African-American female faculty. Consequently, the racism endured is most likely not encountered by their White counterparts, and the sexism endured is not accepted by their White peers (Davis & Brown, 2017). Black feminists argue that African American women contend with the "double bind" of being Black and a woman (Davis & Brown, 2017). In addition, issues such as class and sexuality have been added to race and gender, which places African-American women in precarious positions to fight for more than one status. Still, the intersectionality of all labels leads to discrimination (Davis & Brown, 2017). Black feminism and womanism are related in that Black feminism is a Black example of feminism animated by the womanist concept and expressed through womanist frames (Phillips, 2006).

Womanism is also essential to this phenomenological study because it stresses the concept of social change in favor of Black women and other women of color and emphasizes ending oppression for all people (Phillips, 2006). Womanism is related to feminism and social-justice movements. Still, it elevates all instances and forms of oppression and their association with social-address categories, such as gender, race, or class, to a level of equal concern or action (Phillips, 2006). Because womanism is closely related to Black feminism, its total capacity has been ineffectively apprehended (Phillips, 2006). Womanism has five overarching characteristics: anti-oppression, identifying all forms of oppression to extend womanism into areas that language has not even been developed for (Phillips, 2006). Next, vernacular describes how womanism relates to everyday people and everyday life (Phillips, 2006).

On the other hand, womanism is nonideological due to its disinterest in attempting to create lines of distinction; instead, it aims to build structures of inclusion and positive interrelationships from anywhere in its system (Phillips, 2006). In addition, womanism stresses the importance of communitarianism, the collective well-being of all community members (Phillips, 2006). Lastly, womanism acknowledges a spiritualized component to the effect that human life, living kind, and the material world are all connected to the spiritual/transcendental realm (Phillips, 2006).

To address the problem of intersectionality, it is imperative to understand the impact that intersectionality has on diversity policies that affect gender minorities of diverse backgrounds regardless of their privilege levels (Thomas et al., 2021). To capture the essence of the problem of intersectionality, institutions must embrace the issue at an institutional and research level so that methodical, operational, and policy processes and implementation are responsive and inclusive to all (Thomas et al., 2021). Also, intersectionality cannot be fully addressed without incorporating the principles of black feminism and womanism, as they are direct subsections created to address slightly different aspects. On the other hand, more research is needed to understand the effects of intersectionality in various environments. Above all, this research will stress the need to go beyond theoretical applications of intersectionality to develop an educational approach, taking intersectionality from theory to practice and evaluating its impact (Thomas et al., 2021).

Problem Statement

The problem is that African-American women have experienced a disproportionate connection in education due to the overwhelming White privilege illustrated in higher education (Harley, 2008). Colleges and Universities have struggled long enough to address the increase in

diversity in their faculty, hiring, and recruitment for women of color (Griffin, 2020, p. 279). Due to the consequences surrounding the limited employment opportunities given to African-American females, educational law has been implemented to represent the African-American culture.

Additionally, educational law has helped in racial wounds of being inferior to their counterparts. One role of the civil rights and Black movements was to create employment opportunities against the PWIs (Harley, 2008). A great deal of research recommends that attention be drawn toward gender and race, specifically toward African-American female faculty, that provides an overview of their roles at PWIs (Wheeler & Freeman, 2018). African-American women in higher education have been underrepresented among their counterparts (*The NCES Fast Facts Tool,* 2018). Since the 1850s, African-American women have become the center lens of higher education.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of African-American female faculty and the strategies used to overcome barriers at predominately White institutions in the United States. At this stage in the research, barriers will be generally defined as the intersection of race and gender inequality that African-American female faculty face at PWIs through empirical, theoretical, and practical significance.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study is significant because it helps to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. Additionally, this study will support information that can help higher education with the challenges women of color experience while seeking faculty

positions regarding recruitment and retention. This study will capture the voices and power of African-American female faculty members who have been ignored, isolated, and alienated in academia (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). This study is significant to explore the myriad of challenges African-American female faculty endure.

Empirical Perspective

Despite the attainment process and challenges faced by African-American female faculty at PWIs, future research continues to grow to discover how to combat the barriers they face through their lived experiences (Jones et al., 2015). Moreover, African-American female faculty encounter challenges requiring a platform for their voices to be heard that captures the essence through their lived experiences. Despite the efforts to recruit a diversified population of students at PWIs, African-American faculty do not benefit from the same rhetoric (Ross & Edwards 2014). Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) believe that preparing students within a diverse society can best be facilitated when a college or university has a diverse faculty, where the minority faculty contribute to the success of the university as well as being afforded suitable and equal assistance for its various pursuits of knowledge and new scholarship (Ross & Edwards 2014). Within higher education, the diverse faculty can produce further information through multiple channels of scholarship (Ross & Edwards 2014). However, limited resources specifically focus on African-American women and the unfortunate disparities reflected in the lack of opportunities afforded them at PWIs. In recent years, the body of literature has established and heightened the visibility of African-American female faculty, emphasizing the purpose of cultural diversity at PWIs (Jones et al., 2015). With these efforts, it will be beneficial to expound on how cultural diversity is the gateway to abundant success at PWIs.

Theoretical Perspective

Crenshaw (1991) conceptualizes intersectionality theory as being a race and gender discourse in the lived experiences of African-American women (Nash, 2008). This research study will use intersectionality theory to underpin the empirical research of African-American female faculty perceptions and lived experiences at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. For non-African American culture, this research will enlighten and support the need for discussions on how to keep the success of African-American female faculty through the perception and lived experiences at PWIs. The conditions and experiences of African-American female faculty are often isolated and influenced by separate identities (Griffin, 2020). Intersectionality will address the realities where the system of race, gender, and discrimination in higher education focuses on developing an outcome and not ignoring the status and power of White male dominancy in higher education (MacKinnon, 2013).

On the other hand, womanism is a transformative concept rooted in African American women's experiences and proclivity for capturing results that support communal balance, uphold one's humanity, and focus on the spiritual dimension (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019). Although womanism places a spotlight on the experience of African-American women and the African-American race, it is also concerned with humanity (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019). Womanism is affiliated with feminism and Black Feminist thought (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019). Black feminism developed apart from feminism because it specifically examined the struggles faced by African-American women and how the issues they met affected women globally (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019). Black feminism is positioned to carve out a space in higher education for African-American women using culturally relevant practices to negotiate their identities (Ferguson et al., 2021). These areas set a great example of the principles that should be practiced at PWIs. With

this awareness, it would be most beneficial to implement it in various levels of higher education to create a sense of belonging in people from all walks of life.

Practical Perspective

To improve the conditions of higher education, requiring various professional development training and strategies on cultural responsiveness can bring awareness to PWIs, intentionally hiring African-American female faculty and their overall experience in White academia (Dade et al., 2015). In addition, influence on African American female faculty can be done by evaluating hiring practices, equality in advancement, and time considerations in encouraging non-mandated mentoring of African-American students (Townsend, 2020). Crenshaw (1991) captured the synergistic relationship between intersectionality and African-American women faculty by expressing their perceptions and lived experiences at PWIs (p.1283). Unfortunately, having to overcome unique challenges that highlight race and gender discrimination, the plight of academic success for African American women faculty has been a troubling experience (Haynes, 2019). Although PWIs have made strides in diversifying their faculty, there remains a gap in the percentage of African-American female faculty at PWIs (Reddick et al., 2020). With such disparities, this study would be beneficial on a broader scale so that the decision-makers can see the trends, and such modifications would be most beneficial for African-American women as they navigate their careers within higher education. However, due to the intersections of race and gender gap, empirical literature embodies the inequality African-American women faculty must endure at PWIs by sharing their experiences through their lens (Haynes, 2019). Therefore, retention practices must be implemented to effectively retain African-American female faculty once they are hired for a position (Townsend, 2020).

Research Questions

This study explores the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. A framework consisted of intersectionality theory to discover the multilayers of discrimination that African American women face, along with providing a template to encourage antidiscrimination at PWIs. To expound on the literature, it is essential to create overarching questions that explore the lived experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs. The research questions are as follows:

Central Research Question

What are the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at Predominantly White institutions?

Sub-Question One

What challenges are faced by African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions?

Sub-Question Two

What forms of support do African American women have to navigate their professional roles as faculty at predominantly White institutions?

Definitions

The following terms provide an understanding to support research development through this phenomenological study.

1. *African American*- An individual with sub-Saharan African ancestry descent brought into the United States of America involuntarily as an enslaved person. (Nelson, 1986).

2. *Faculty Diversity*- Enhances the depth and quality of research and teaching. Increases faculty and students' experiences, perspectives, and scholarly interests (Trejo, 2017).

3. *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are institutions* for African Americans and the nation that help students become self-efficacy, balance racial pride, provide psychological wellness, and develop persistence (Johnson et al., 2017).

4. *Intersectionality theory*- Intersectionality denotes various ways of social identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability), known as the interlocking system of oppression (Carastathis, 2014).

5. *National Association of Colored Women (NACW)*- Organized group of African-American women who stood against sexism and racism while encouraging self-determination, community development, and self-improvement (Shaw, 1991).

6. *Predominantly White institution (PWI)* – Desegrated institution of higher learning that dismantled dual educational systems that once excluded certain minority groups (Hannon et al., 2016).

Summary

African-American female faculty have been underrepresented at PWIs. Through the challenges and continuous struggle that dismantles the success and advancement of African-American female faculty, the intent to break barriers has been the number one identifier in implementing diversity. Female faculty of color at PWIs have faced their roles head-on while experiencing a sense of isolation and being undervalued. Research has focused on the barriers of inequalities and career advancement of African-American female faculty, but limited research has captured the perception and lived experiences (David, 2015). The significant challenge is to discover the role of becoming committed to understanding the issues and barriers that have

engulfed a community of minorities within the world of academia. In essence, there is a significant need to address the lack of diversity among predominantly White institutions, which has caused a demand and need for African-American female faculty. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to discover the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This qualitative study focuses on the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. Diversity within an institution is essential for multicultural experiences on campus. This chapter will highlight the challenges African American females face teaching in a predominantly hierarchical society. In the first section, the theory relevant to intersectionality, womanism, and Black feminism will be discussed. This literature review will be grounded on the historical overview of African-American women in academia, racial microaggressions in higher education, coping with racial microaggressions in higher education, diversity in higher education, African-American women faculty, institutional challenges, recruitment, and retention, mentoring African-American female faculty in academia, barriers to mentorship, and the future of Black female faculty in higher education. Since there is limited literature on the success of African-American female faculty overcoming barriers, minimum data regarding this area of literature is addressed.

Theoretical Framework

Long-established theories such as intersectionality theory attempt to fill the literature gap of perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers (Crenshaw, 1991). This allows new ways and approaches to resolve insoluble issues within higher education. This theoretical framework is organized to provide insight into the experiences of African-American women and their challenges. Overall, it appears that the development of this theory is an attempt to gain and create an experience through the lens of equality and diversity.

However, it is important to note that this theory is often never completed and can be considered an analysis-in-progress (Carbado et al., 2014). In other words, there is always another set of concerns to consider, other places the theory may be moved, and other structures of power it can be positioned to observe (Carbado et al., 2014). Adopting and embracing this theory will intersect with the identities of African-American women, authorizing issues to be addressed effectively by valuing cultural differences.

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality which stems from critical race theory, is credited by Kimberlè Crenshaw in higher education during the late 1980's. Intersectionality has been long rooted in the legacy of Black feminism, which shaped and employed the perception and lived experiences of African American women and their positions (Crenshaw, 1991; Haynes et al., 2020). For example, Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells are leaders who experienced intersectional oppression while fighting slavery and advocating for women's rights (Haynes et al., 2020). Sojourner Truth, in legacy, delivered speeches and used her platform to challenge the racial and gender inequality that was perpetuated by the White slave owners (Haynes et al., 2020). Furthermore, Sojourner Truth drew attention to the many political movements that abolished women's rights and made African-American women seem invisible (Haynes et al., 2020). Ida B. Wells used her platform to engage in protecting the African American race and theorizing about intersectionality, when religion, particularly Christianity and racism, was used in lynching (Haynes et al., 2020).

Intersectionality theory has been used to ground studies related to the perception and lived experiences of marginalized groups of individuals and addresses the inequalities of women. Kimberlè Crenshaw, who published *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine* in 1989 introduced intersectionality (Cho,

2013). Kimberlè Crenshaw expressed the multilayers of discrimination women must face while also being women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). Also, intersectionality theory purports that all women experience relationships of power differently. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) took the intersectionality concept and addressed the complex issues that shaped the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. African American female faculty face systematic racism in ways that intersect between sexism, race, and discrimination compared to their White male counterparts (Griffin, 2020, p. 283).

Murtadha and Watts (2005) argued in the literature review that:

> The missing voices of African-American female leaders, in conjunction with the lack of adequate understanding of the contexts in which leadership has been or is successful, constrain our abilities to contribute to ways that improve schooling experiences and advance lives in communities that are poor and disadvantaged. (Moorosi, Fuller & Reilly, 2018, p.153)

Intersectionality theory addresses the experiences that are unique to each individual woman and their experience of discrimination and oppression. Moorosi et al. (2018) stated, "Crenshaw argued that by looking at gender and race separately, legal frameworks tend to ignore the experiences of women who are African American" (p.153). As a result, this theory helps the world recognize and understand the system of women's rights (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991). Additionally, intersectionality addresses the needs and experiences of women as an inclusive group that has things in common, treating this group of minorities as problematic (Griffin, 2019). It is most accurate to conclude that African-American women experience added

marginalization compared to their White counterparts due to exposure to racism and minoritized identities (Griffin, 2020).

Crenshaw introduced a three-dimensional intersectionality framework that has been applied in research and empirical study on African American women in higher education described as structural, political, and representational. In literature, Crenshaw's three-dimensional intersectionality framework explains the challenges African American women encounter daily (Crenshaw, 1991; Haynes et al., 2020). Crenshaw explained that structural intersectionality is a form of structural oppression that addresses racism, classism, and sexism, which shapes the lives of African-American women (Haynes et al., 2020). Structural intersectionality draws a closer lens to make a distinction between the perception and lived experiences of African-American women and those of White women and African-American men. Structural intersectionality focuses its attention on the uniqueness and how African American women's experiences are not recognizable compared to their counterparts (Haynes et al., 2020).

Crenshaw argued that political intersectionality is the reinforced approach of ensuring that African American women are disempowered and voiceless in ways that their counterparts do not experience (Haynes et al., 2020; Crenshaw, 1991). The last dimension that Crenshaw refers to is representational intersectionality. Representational intersectionality paints a stereotypical picture of African-American women's lives in public discourse (Crenshaw, 1991). There are public images such as--superwomen, Jezebel, and Sapphire--that reinforce sexism and racism, which give a depiction of African American women being loud, angry, aggressive, and violent (Haynes et al., 2020; Patton & Haynes, 2018).

This theory influences institutional leaders and those outside higher education to explore various resources that shape and converge the social identity of those individuals who are grouped within minority groups (Griffin, 2019). While useful research and practices address race and gender, this related literature will explore and offer insight into how African-American women have embodied the marginalized identity of professional success. Within the U.S., African-American women are the most marginalized group (Proctor et al., 2018). However, the ultimate purpose of intersectionality is to bring the most marginalized individuals to the forefront to inspire positive outcomes for them (Proctor et al., 2018). Intersectionality will continue to remain a key topic in higher education that will cultivate the study of the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers in academia.

Within intersectionality theory, womanism and Black feminism are perceptions associated with Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectional relegation African American women face, and theoretical concepts scholars have used to explore gender racism and race-based oppression broadly (Joseph et al., 2021). However, womanism is active in dismantling systems of racism and sexism and serves as a protective factor for women's body esteem (Matsuzaka et al., 2022). Womanism has also been discussed as a protective factor for women's health (Matsuzaka et al., 2022). On the other hand, womanism is also concerned with all humanity continually increasing with political concern, empathy, and activism (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019).

Womanism

According to Edwards (2018), "Blackmore agitates for a reconstructed view of leadership and argues in favor of feminist leadership that counters the emphasis of individualism

hierarchical relationships, bureaucratic rationality and abstract moral principles" (p.1620).

Women of color have had limited access to prominent positions within academia. African-American women foster a willful way for women to express the oppression of African-American integration, implying the need to address womanism (Izgarjan & Markov, 2012). Womanism seeks to define the superiority of feminism to the difference of White women in the history of racism (Izgarjan & Markov, 2012). Womanism sheds light on the African American communities and presents a broader humanity for people of color through the perception and lived experiences. Womanism creates a concept of space that reflects the promises to African-American women for partial reconciliation of oppression without attacking African-American men (Izgarjan & Markov, 2012). Womanism helps foster issues associated with interracial cooperation by fixing the ethical system. Retaining African American culture evokes the social and political thoughts of racial and gender oppression, committing to social justice (Izgarjan & Markov, 2012).

As it relates to Black feminism, the description captures the intersection of gender and women, where the discourse on intersectionality is arguably the most developed (Chambers, 2020). Also, African-American women have developed a complex understanding of their societal challenges that are rooted in Black feminist thought (Haynes et al., 2020). Although womanism and Black feminism vary in emphasis, Black feminist epistemology can be associated with womanism (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019). They work together to inform African American women's culture, survival, and liberation (Fraser-Burgess et al., 2019).

Black Feminism

The prominent power of African-American women despite the ambivalence of dealing with race and gender taboos, Black feminism believes that women have the full capability of

leadership. Hook (2000) asserts that feminism is a movement to end sexism and the isolation of women of color. Black feminist theory contends for the justice movement of African American women to fight gender discrimination (Davidson et al., 2010). Black feminist theory is tied to social transformation and class oppression of the growth and development of African American women. Feminism paves the way for African-American women to be centered around recognizing the deprived barriers of race and gender (Davidson et al., 2010). African American women have been at a disadvantage socially and economically while occupying social hierarchy at predominantly White jobs. History assumes that Black feminism is rejected in sex discrimination as a traditional outlook from racial solidarity (Crenshaw, 2018). Black feminist theory examines the consciousness of gender equality and the influence of feminist support.

Related Literature

Leadership is one of the most influential topics in education, fostering a wealth of mainstream approaches responsible for developing women into trailblazers along various career paths. The available literature highlights the inaccessibility of African-American women as their role in attaining prominent leadership positions in higher education. Much of the literature has addressed the history of African-American women in academia, the evolution of diversity, African-American women faculty, the challenges they face, and how to overcome those challenges with success. Within higher education, there are several articles that explore the interest of women's leadership in higher education. However, there is a scarcity of literature that concentrates on African American women breaking the glass ceiling as women faculty. This literature provides foundational truths to the challenges faced during the history of African-American women in academia.

History of African American Women in Academia

As the world of academia continues to evolve, African-American women have seized every opportunity to enhance their abilities despite the plethora of notable challenges they have encountered. The marginalization of African-American women as faculty at PWIs has been well noted among researchers (Baxley, 2012). During the 1960's, African American women, considering the elements of desegregation and a system built for the wealthy White males at Oberlin College, was the first college to adopt a policy to allow the African American race to attend. Out of the African-American students who attended Oberlin College, 140 of them were women (Diepenbrock, 1993). This was a monumental accomplishment for African-American women, bringing light to a situation that appeared to be dark for years. As a result, African American women have played a considerable role in the history and the importance of decisions that are awarded to them today. Although African American women have taken interest in prominent positions in academia, over recent years, the misuse of historical references limits their ability and role in higher education. There has been limited acknowledgment of African American females' struggling in silence, both personally and professionally (Wright & Salinas, 2016).

By the twentieth century, African Americans were able to begin participating in higher education (Franklin et al., 1991). In 1909, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded, increasing, and promoting social change within the African-American community (Merrill, 1979). Several significant events during the 1950s and 1960s have increased the participation of African-American women in higher education. One step leading to the equality of education started with the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education, the emergence of desegregation (Green, 1988). The Brown vs. Board of Education helped African

Americans reclaim what was lost and what was never afforded to them (Harvey et al., 2004). Proceeding this case, historically, African American women in higher education were considered trailblazers and inspired through the achievement of becoming leaders, but systematically, in the United States, that was not the case.

The second wave of legislation for women introduced the Jim Crow law of affirmative action in the South and among the neighboring states to cast away the racial system that was forced to bring about segregation (Bernstein, 2004; Merrill, 1979). In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson mandated an executive order putting affirmative action in place. Affirmative action has ensured that there were no biases that prevented the participation of African-American women from being employed (Ballam, 1997). Affirmative action has played a pivotal role in boosting minority and female representation across American businesses (Allen et al., 2000). In 1967, the Civil Rights Act nudged more colleges and universities to recruit more African-American faculty and administrators (Mosley, 1980).

However, since the 1960s, long-term trends have highlighted the growth of employment for women trending in a positive direction (Kurtulus, 2016). African-American female faculty were nonexistent in PWIs until the 1960s due to legislation that addressed race and gender within the African-American community (Sulé, 2009). Mary Francis Berry was the first African American to serve as the chancellor of the University of Colorado (Littlefield, 1997). The Economic Employment Act and the Education Act of 1965 paved the way for more opportunities for African-American women to serve in administrative positions at prestigious colleges during the 1980s (Noble, 1988). These groundbreaking events were encouraging signs that helped to drive efforts of diversity as an attainable goal in higher education.

Racial Microaggressions in Higher Education

Throughout history, African-American women have increasingly faced a myriad of challenges in academia that have produced unsatisfactory results in their growth and ascendency of professional leadership. Many African-American women at PWIs have experienced and suffered from what researchers call "race fatigue syndrome" (Coker et al., 2018). Race fatigue syndrome is when an African-American woman feels that she is isolated, undervalued, used, and unappreciated (Mullings et al., 2021). Racial Microaggressions have been a pertinent issue as a commonplace at PWIs within higher education. According to Sue et al. (2007), racial microaggressions have been the new face of racism, defined as verbal, behavioral, and environmental insults, whether it has been communicated intentionally or unintentionally (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019). Despite the challenges that African-American female faculty face, they are not immune to racism and internalized oppression prevalent at higher education levels. Furthermore, higher education has fewer strategies in contributing to the call to action related to the experiences of African-American female faculty in higher education and their interaction to navigate through institutional culture (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019).

African-American female faculty members have an increased risk of experiencing racial discrimination at their workplace in higher education (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019). Consequently, dealing with the two-headed monster of racism and sexism is something African-American women are all too familiar with. African-American women faculty have participated in higher education for years, but they are excluded from the research literature, and why they face racism and sexism in academia (Benjamin, 1997). Many people think of racism as clear and

apparent. However, aside from obvious instances of racism, African Americans endure constant, abundant, and monotonous racism (Gorski, 2018).

With these constant occurrences of racism, African Americans experience racial battle fatigue due to the physical and emotional stress that is provoked by such constant streams of microaggression (Gorski, 2018). The racism that is endured by African Americans in their professional lives, combined with what they experience in their personal lives, can take its toll. Faculty of color face a myriad of assumptions as it relates to their intellectual abilities, academic credentials, and scholarship and are often minimized and devalued (Gorski, 2018). Additionally, faculty of color face hiring and promotion discrimination, bullying of colleagues and students, and dealing with expectations to commit to unpaid mentoring of students of color (Gorski, 2018).

Conversely, these conditions may be intensified for women of color (Gorski, 2018). This unfair treatment can also be considered cultural taxation. In 1994, Amado Padilla described cultural taxation as a unique burden assigned to ethnic minority faculty to carry out certain responsibilities as a service to the university (Gooden et al., 2020). Performing these service requirements boosts the reputation of the institution by hiring outside of the norm and providing a diverse cultural perspective outside of the status quo (Gooden et al., 2020). Although African-American women may not be opposed to performing these services, it adds pressure on how much time they will have for research and the other duties that are essential for their careers (Gooden et al., 2020).

Within the academic arena, theories involving academic career advancement often overlook the convergence of race and gender that are considered in the process and, therefore, are deficient in understanding how African-American women navigate advancement as professors (Croom, 2017). Gendered racism is a combined system of oppression that uses racism

and sexism simultaneously to frustrate African-American women (Okello et al., 2020). To capture the realities of why racism and sexism exist within higher education, Critical Race and Feminism are theories that can be implemented to reveal the collective experiences of women of color and help to unveil the systemic effects of racism and sexism (Croom, 2017). Racism and sexism share commonalities in stereotyping, but they take on different forms at the interpersonal and institutional levels (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Women of color undergo drawbacks from predominantly White institution that diminishes their efforts as definers, producers, and conduits of knowledge (Samuel & Wane, 2005). For most African-American women, racism and sexism are not always distinct, but they often exist in tandem (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

In addition, African-American female faculty put unnecessary pressure on themselves to be better than their White counterparts. Particularly, in navigating intersections of racism and sexism, participants in a study shared that they are better than their competition because they simply must be (Breeden, 2021). Participants also described that aside from their credentials and years of experience that qualify them for their roles, they felt responsible for additional physical and emotional roles regarding advocating for students with a special emphasis on students of color (Breeden, 2021). Additionally, marginalization has become a key problem in accessing the underrepresentation of African-American women faculty at PWIs. Many African American women experience being marginalized by racism through microaggression, including erroneous statements by colleagues about their professional knowledge and the value and focus of their research (Comer et al., 2016).

Coping with Racial Microaggressions in Higher Education

Although this country has come a long way in promoting diversity, there are instances that prohibit its overall effectiveness where racism still exists. Coping with racial

microaggressions is independently communicated as disengagement or confrontational towards African-American female faculty (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019). When African American female faculty experience a subtle act of discrimination, they spend a great deal of time trying to navigate and explore the cause and effect of the cognitive energy being displayed (Payton et al., 2018). To cope with racial microaggressions in higher education, recommendations to overcome the impediments of institutional challenges have set the tone to foster inclusivity among African-American female faculty (Payton et al., 2018).

African-American faculty must deal with various factors in coping with racial microaggressions that are connected to prolonged tenure process, constant questioning, career progression, and other stressful social nuisances in academia (Payton et al., 2018). The African-American community serves as a haven for those minority women in higher education who have been taken advantage of through cultural dominance. Within the African-American community, African American female faculty have support to heal from systematic racism at PWI (Del Priore, 2021). Microaggressions can be detrimental to the person with a victims' mentality. However, for those who are determined to succeed regardless of the cost, it can be used as a tremendous opportunity for growth. To that end, coping as optimal resistance can be an impactful tool to fight microaggressions because, with supportive communities involved, it sparks dialogue, encouragement, and refueling of the person (Woodson et al., 2015). Also, this is effective in knowing that the African American woman is not responsible for the microaggressions but still must implement effective strategies to manage the narrative (Woodson, et al., 2015).

There are other optimal resistance techniques to help combat microaggressions, such as seeking therapy for traumatic experiences, exercising, and acting against some instances of

microaggression (Woodson et al., 2015). It is imperative that individuals are selective in how to address the various instances of microaggression. Above all, the key to success with optimal resistance is having relationships that are healthy and empowering (Woodson et al., 2015). With the appropriate relationships, it will aid in keeping the targeted person focused and will help reduce racial isolation because of microaggressions.

On the other hand, armored coping can be a beneficial response to microaggressions. This type of coping is appropriately named as it depicts the defensive psychological gear that African American women turn on to guard themselves at work and/or school from the doubts of others about their work, capabilities, and legitimacy (Woodson et al., 2015). With this type of battlefield mindset, the individual is ready to take the first shot. For example, at the start of a major project or assignment, the woman reminds everyone that she is capable and possesses a highly trained skill set (Woodson et. al, 2015). Also, the woman is cognoscent of any potential slights or digs implied by her colleagues, and she constantly prepares herself to be able to stand her ground to intercept friendly fire (Woodson et al, 2015). As a result, this form of coping seems to be over the top and can lead to an anxiety-related symptom of racial microaggression stress (Woodson et al., 2015). Although this is an unhealthy way of dealing with microaggression, some of the methods may be useful depending on the approach.

Although racism is still ubiquitous within the United States, it is those concealed racial incidents that cause the most damage to people of color (Jones, 2021). Unfortunately, according to research, it is argued that within education, women of color who have been marginalized in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) are more vulnerable to the experience of microaggressions (Nair & Good, 2021). With African American women, it is imperative that research is done not only to address their experiences but also highlight the effect

of their identities on their experiences (Jones, 2021). Notably, within the academic setting, such microaggressions are found to be harmful to one's self-esteem (Jones, 2021). In addition, extended and consistent exposure to racial microaggressions has damaging psychological and physiological consequences known as 'racial battle fatigue' (Jones, 2021). Racial battle fatigue is defined as a theoretical framework that addresses the physiological and psychological stress demanded on racially marginalized groups and the total energy lost committed to coping with racial microaggressions and racism (Jones, 2021).

Furthermore, researchers have pinpointed a specific type of microaggression that women of color experience at various institutional campuses. Hierarchical microaggressive intersectionalities (HMI) are those routine insults found in higher education that communicate systemic valuing or devaluing of a person due to the relationship between their institutional function and their other identity groups, such as race and class (Young & Anderson, 2021). Hierchical indicates how the position held at the institution is valued by those who work in the institution. The value of the individual's position (Young & Anderson, 2021). On the other hand, microaggression indicates the impact of discriminatory experiences (Young & Anderson, 2021). Intersectionality may be the most difficult to deal with because its origin is not just experiencing microaggressions in one aspect, but it often covers multiple characteristics of their identity simultaneously (Young & Anderson, 2021).

Diversity in Higher Education

As we progress in our roles within higher education, diversity will play an integral role in maintaining the fluidity of the educational system and promoting the long-term success of those fully invested. Diversity has been a topic of discussion, more so a debate in higher education since the 1960s, and the issue as a national priority as a result of the Civil Rights movement

(Chancellor, 2019). Traditionally, when thinking of academics, it was generally known for White male dominance matriculating through various universities around the world. However, efforts have continuously evolved to incorporate faculty from diverse backgrounds (Frazier, 2011). In national conversation, diversity is the presence of heterogeneity and difference equating to the number of colored women employed at an institution (Griffin, 2019).

There have been specific initiatives launched to help bring in faculty of color across traditional campuses. While the uptick in faculty diversity has steadily increased, it has not been consistent across institutions (Griffin, 2019). Despite concerted efforts, the actual current representation of faculty of color is extremely low. It is believed that this is due to much of the focus being emphasized on recruitment rather than retaining African American faculty members (Frazier, 2011). According to Patitu and Kandace (2003), during the search for administrative positions in the recruitment process, institutions are using a filter that eliminates African Americans and people of color from being hired (p.80). Trends have shown among colleges and universities that African Americans have been provided limited opportunities and thus displayed an overall low percentage of those employed in managerial and administrative positions (Wolfe and Dilworth, 2015).

Although faculty diversity is an important component, it will not function well in a faulty system. If diversity is reached and the college/university's system is unhealthy, then they will likely encounter limitations as to how they will develop their continuum (Gavino, 2021). In other words, the extent of diversity is contingent upon the health of the overall system. Nonetheless, various reasons have been determined for the sizable gaps in diversity at each institution. Such disadvantages can be attributed to a hostile campus climate, lack of committed leadership,

composition of search committees and failure to incorporate diversity goals into the hiring process and micropolitics (Gavino, 2021).

It is desired among us all to have diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to be made a priority among all platforms of higher education. Consequently, DEI, although desired, cannot seem to fully triumph over the central mold of White privilege, which remains erroneous and obscure (Sawyer & Waite, 2021). In 2002, Kendall reported that "White privilege is an institutional (rather than personal) set of beliefs, granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions" (Sawyer & Waite, 2021). Thus, White privilege is, in essence an invisible package of unearned assets, a luxury of opportunities and benefits that are enforced and subject to the notion of one being White (Sawyer & Waite, 2021). This amounts to entitlement, which is an unhealthy practice in our world's system, let alone higher education.

Unfortunately, another significant barrier that prohibits increasing faculty diversity is institutional bias. (Hakkola & Dyer, 2022). Therefore, to combat this, offices have relied on Human Resources (HR), Equal Opportunity (EO), and search committee training to help alleviate bias and ensure an impartial hiring process (Hakkola & Dyer, 2022). This may not be the best approach as the mechanisms in place have not affected the dynamics within the search committee as they have continuously shown implicit bias, which affects the hiring decisions (Hakkola & Dyer, 2022). These occurrences make one wonder what transpires in the hiring process and whether those in leadership have the proper training to handle such important decisions.

Due to the lack of faculty diversity at predominantly White institutions, African-American students continue to be at a disadvantage and are most likely to drop out of college

(Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Interestingly enough, the experience and need of African American women as professors feel like they must prioritize their identity due to the systematic programs and policies that only focus on the needs of White women and anti-racist discourses (Griffin, 2019). Studies suggest that students who interact with different races can counterbalance the perceived stereotypes that could present an unconscious bias (Partelow et al., 2017). The history of African-American women's success ensures that they can take full advantage of opportunities to make their aspirations a reality.

African American Women Faculty

African-American Women have overcome a complex history of exclusion but have exemplified resiliency in their pursuit of fulfilling their goals and aspirations. African American women faculty are not represented as the critical mass in PWI's (Wilder et al., 2013). "African American women are often viewed as anomalies "in the minds of teachers, researchers, and aspirant leaders" (Alston and McClellan, 2011, p. 1). With purchased freedom, Catherine Ferguson became the first African-American female teacher and administrator in New York City to teach 48 children (Mosley, 1980). Navigating through academia, women's full participation as teachers and administrators is still minuscule compared to their White counterparts (Louis et al., 2016). Having African American women faculty at predominantly White institutions can help influence students' lives through mentoring and to bring in minorities of color with qualified experiences to help maintain the persistence of degree completion and overall experience.

Having African-American women in professoriate roles in higher education helps navigate the negative depiction of African-American students and helps with low enrollment, retention, and persistence award degree completion of African-American students (Gregory, 2001; Patitu and Kandance, 2003). African American women who desire to be faculty members

in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) lack the support needed to be effective in their approaches and need for survival in academia (Patitu and Kandance, 2003). "According to *The Almanac of Higher Education* (2009), there were 20,148 African-American faculty in the United States. Moreover, African American females accounted for only 6.8% of all female faculty and 2.9% of all faculty" (Edward et al., 2011).

African American women have not been supported to progress in their tenures in leadership positions in higher education. Studies show that women of color who lack support in their positions are sexually harassed by management, denied career advancement funding for the increase in diversity of the student body and isolated and alienated (Patitu and Kandance, 2003). However, women who are afforded the opportunity to teach in higher education at PWIs are geared towards teaching ethnic and cultural diversity courses. Studies indicated that African-American faculty focus their teaching on cultural diversity, not making a significant contribution to academia (Edward et al., 2011).

The only reason that keeps African-American female faculty persistent in academia is their love for teaching (Turner et al., 2008). Despite the credentials of African-American faculty, White colleagues find their research insignificant, which has caused them to be criticized for their culture-related publications (Edward et al., 2011). Thus, this presents significant challenges that are often difficult to identify because, at a surface level, such disadvantages cannot be perceived. In addition, there has been a toll on African-American women mentally and emotionally, which has added new expectations and demands from their counterparts. African-American female faculty have been given additional responsibilities and expected to teach and engage with only their communities while balancing their families and personal needs (Gary & Brook, 2021).

Institutional Challenges

  The challenges of African-American women in academia have presented a state of emergency that embodies fairness and equity within higher education. African-American female faculty have to face challenges in the institution that is both structural and personal (Griffin et al., 2011). Women of color faculty members are often faced with challenges of isolation and often excluded from collaborative research projects and lack sponsorship for research with their peers, rarely having access to resources that lead to greater prestige and higher future economic gains with job mobility (Edward et al., 2011). PWIs must be mindful of the challenges that African-American female faculty face, not assuming that the climate is welcoming just because they are not leaving the institution (Griffin et al., 2011). In response, PWIs must improve their climate by creating programs and initiatives to adopt a culture change (Griffin et al., 2011). As a result, African American women are treated with discriminatory behavior and attitudes of others while trying to balance a professional rapport. These women are faced with challenges in hiring for academic promotion, torn between limited career opportunities and family having to reveal the insensitivity of who they are (Walkington, 2017).

  On the other hand, African-American female faculty have encountered challenges while navigating the efficiency of their classrooms. Specifically, in PWIs, women of color generally experience problematic conduct from White male students who display themselves in such a way as to challenge their authority and question their teaching effectiveness, among other things (Thomas, 2020). At PWIs, African-American female faculty are often put in precarious situations where they must demonstrate their intellectual competency (Thomas, 2020). In essence, the faculty status of African-American women may place them in a position of power within their institution, but their position in society remains feeble (Thomas, 2020).

Often, universities engage in ways to consider a diverse background of African-American female faculty that will help reach their goals in the applicant pool. Scholars are considering the importance of understanding hiring policies and practices that continue to perpetuate the representation of African-American female faculty at PWIs (Griffin, 2020). These challenges and roadblocks have caused PWIs to underrepresent African-American women faculty and limit their impact in academia (Schwarz & Hill, 2010; Griffin, 2020). There is also a body of research that addresses the limited leadership positions obtained by women of color despite being qualified and capable at PWIs (Jackson & Harris, 2007).

African-American women faculty have experienced what is called "institutional betrayal." Institutional betrayal is referred to as wrongdoing by individuals of an institution deriving from sexual assault, harassment, and interpersonal violence literature, causing betrayal trauma (Doris, 2017, p. 43). In the field of academia, institutional betrayal can come in many forms but is not limited to working extra hours without compensation, cover-up of administrative wrongdoing, failure to provide sick leave for workers, failure to respond to reported sexual assaults, and lack of civil rights for oppressed groups, to name a few (Doris, 2017, p.44). This type of institutional betrayal from predominantly White Institutions undervalues and shuts out African American women faculty, which causes a risk to their professional careers (Doris, 2017, p. 44). To alleviate institutional challenges, researchers suggest that institutional strategies and programs to assess the organizational culture will help promote African-American women faculty to succeed (Jones et al., 2015).

Recruitment and Retention

Institutions often value diversity and believe in the importance of recruiting racially diverse faculty; however, the increase in African-American female faculty is not reflected within

academia. The recruitment of African-American female faculty is important to the college experience (Kelly et al., 2017). African-American female faculty only represent four percent of the faculty of American college (Bartman, 2015). With federal laws and legislation, African-American women have been allowed to occupy employment in higher education as faculty members. African American women have had to contend with opportunities, sexism, and classism of oppression from White females and males (Wright and Salinas, 2016). However, Tuner et al. (1999) revealed that institutional leaders have a difficult time recruiting diverse faculty due to fewer outreach policies to encourage applicants to apply for open positions (Eakins & Eakins, 2017).

African-American female faculty are the portion of teachers and administrators that are constantly pushed out or involuntarily exit PWIs each year. Despite these developments, few educational policies and programs focus on the recruitment, planning, and retention of African-American female faculty (Young & Brooks, 2020). African American women have been contributing to higher education for years and substantially outnumber their African-American counterparts in being credentialed, but they are missing in critical leadership roles. (Townsend, 2020).

To combat the misrepresentation of African-American female faculty within higher education, the problematic area(s) must be fully understood and addressed. Giving a voice to this misrepresented group can be completed via a thorough review of hiring practices, equality in promotion, time considerations in support of non-mandated mentoring of students of color, and capital for professional development and mentorship experiences (Townsend, 2020). It is imperative to increase faculty diversity at any university; the team must devise innovative strategies to recruit diverse applicants while also decreasing bias in the search (Davey et al.,

2021). There is a specific initiative called the Recruitment Inclusive Champion (RIC) program, designed specifically to assist with the hiring process (Davey et al., 2021). From 1999 to 2018, the US Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics reports that there was a 40% increase in full-time faculty in higher education (Davey et al., 2021).

With the low percentages of African American men and women performing various roles in higher education, it is imperative for retention practices to be established to ensure that African American women are retained once they are hired and have proven to be an asset to their school (Townsend, 2020). In addition, there must be many efforts that contribute towards structural change on campuses. In other words, there must be a full commitment to adopt an environment that is advantageous to the advancement of African-American women administrators in higher education (Townsend, 2020). Without this environment, it will just lead to continuous cycles of inadequacy as it relates to fully diversifying higher education institutions. Consequently, the challenge of the Balancing Act added elements that can cause a depicted representation that makes African American women fall into an oppressed category of being treated differently. The balancing act is difficult for women in general, but it is even more challenging for African-American women in leadership to face difficult challenges as it relates to taking care of the home and making it stressful (Wright & Salinas, 2016). African-American women faculty have a feeling of stress being psychologically separated between their homes and careers and, even more so, between their community and career (Edward et al., 2011).

After a thorough review of the literature, African American women still must contend with challenges that prevent them from success comparable to their White counterparts as faculty members (Davis and Brown, 2017). There is a perceived disconnection between the impact of African-American female faculty from the progression and completion of their academic careers

at PWI (Griffin, 2020). With these challenges, at times, it can be difficult to accurately measure success. Due to strong patriarchal institutions, African-American women who desire to seek high-level leadership experience a significant number of obstacles to achieving success. "At least one explanation for the low representation of African American female faculty is that these women are being exposed to racially toxic environments that act as the catalyst for their numerical underrepresentation, as well as their invisibility" (Wright and Salinas, 2016, p.95). Essentially, the hiring of African-American women is often perceived as strategic due to their gender and race rather than their skills as scholars, which propagates an indirect message of inferiority and incompetence (Comer et al., 2016).

To combat this challenge, it is recommended to establish diverse hiring practices to promote gender diversity on campus. To retain women in higher education, teachers, and administrator positions, institutions must foster and promote a diverse agenda that supports the needs of women-related issues. Institutions should promote the inclusion of women that will address diversity and maintain an environment that is conducive to gender and race diversity (Kelly et al., 2017). Furthermore, job satisfaction leads to institutional retention that is measured by the nature and experience of African-American female faculty at PWI (Griffin, 2020). Research in this area does not place emphasis on how PWIs are increasing diversity that is governed by the affirmative action plan by universities. Faculty of color can be recruited through networking with individuals without having faculty of color already present (Gasman et al., 2011). Scholars suggest recruitment strategies such as "target of opportunity" are the best way for the provost of the institution to aggressively pursue African-American women faculty (Gasman et al., 2011). Traditional recruitment has presented blindness in the representation of a diverse community, including women of color. Recruiters are now turning to their educational

communities on social media to achieve their diversity goals (Hill-Jackson, 2020). The benefit of recruiting and retaining African American women in positions that serve the mission and vision of the university at PWI is to challenge the biases and prejudice issues on all playing fields and create an atmosphere that shifts the paradigm of influential powers (Gause, 2020).

Mentoring African American Female Faculty in Academia

Mentoring is an experience that allows a formal or informal relationship to be fostered out of growth and development. Mentoring is essential for career success and has been proven to promote the advancement of African-American women faculty (Davis et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2015). African-American women faculty are most likely to obtain a mentor of the same sex and race, developing relationships as comfort and support (Jones et al., 2015). Often, the success of African-American female faculty is contingent upon their relationships regarding participating in culturally receptive networks that permit them to connect with other African-American women (West, 2018). Consequently, mentoring in higher education has fallen short of meeting the needs of African-American female faculty at PWIs (Wright-Mair, 2020).

Mentoring is a great tool to be used to cause a person to realize and live out their true potential in whatever career they choose. However, an effective mentor must possess a leadership style that best facilitates their mentee's continuous growth. With that in mind, transformational leaders can be some of the best mentors due to their ability to encourage others, which raises the level of motivation and morality for both the mentor and mentee (Sims et al., 2020). Specifically, transformational leaders encourage their followers to set goals that transcend self-interest to generate results that meet or exceed expectations, all while improving the follower's self-worth (Sims et al., 2020). In essence, a transformational leader serves as a role model, providing inspirational support to meet everyone's needs (Sims et al., 2020). These types

of mentors would be beneficial for serving African-American female faculty in academia because, with all the negativity that is constantly associated with this group, the mentors will help them stay focused on the bigger picture.

In addition, African-American women faculty felt invisible due to the lack of relationship and connection support with mentoring (Griffin, 2020). The quality and professional benefits of having a mentoring relationship can be an important aspect in the lives of African-American women faculty, highlighting their marginalized experiences (Eakins & Eakins, 2017). Yet, to cope and survive with the ways of an African American woman's personal life, mentorship helps support, develop, and direct those women who aspire to work as professors and administrative positions within higher education (Byrd-Blake, 2003; Gregory, 2001). African American women faculty are paired with those who are non-African American, which the issues have risen from.

On the other hand, servant leaders are an impactful group that can be effective mentors due to their desire to sincerely serve the individuals that cross their paths. The servant leader is focused on the people first, and because of that, the right actions naturally occur (Sims et al., 2020). Servant leaders focus on altruistic calling, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship, which in tandem assist others in their personal growth while achieving their own professional development and organizational needs (Sims et al., 2020). What sets servant leaders up to be phenomenal mentors is their developmental focus on their mentees. Due to this factor alone, it would be beneficial for African-American women faculty in academia to gravitate towards this style of mentor. Notably, mentors with greater learning goal emphasis and servant leadership typically offer their mentees superior role modeling, career development, and psychosocial support (Sims et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, in academia, mentoring represents the "hierarchical power model" because it provides a platform for social networks and systems (Strawser et al., 2022). In addition, marginalization, social isolation, limited mentoring opportunities, and unwelcoming campus communities are all environmental dynamics that have affected the leadership proficiency and perspective of African-American women to be retained and ascend in their career paths (Townsend, 2020). Rather, with the evolution of technology, there are various mentoring styles that can be implemented. Each generation has their preference as to how they would like to communicate as their mentor/mentee relationship grows.

In doing so, African-American faculty still felt a lack of emotional, personal, and cultural support (Fraizer, 2011). Mentoring African American women into a tracked tenure at predominantly White institutions will maximize the effectiveness of professional development. Creating a mentoring system and providing African-American women with successful mentors will retain African-American faculty (Gregory, 2001). Having a mentor will help aid in the success rate of African-American women, provide support, prevent barriers between cultural values, and enhance opportunities for career advancement (Davis et al., 2021).

Barriers to Mentorship

In higher education, mentorship is imperative for succession planning, achievement, and organizational growth (Jernigan et al., 2020). However, there is an urgent need to discuss the lack of support and investment in mentorship provided to African-American female faculty (Penny & Gillard, 2008). For many African-American women faculty, insufficient institutional support contributes to the lack of mentoring. The need for support highlights the value of offering mentoring programs that will play a continuous role in ensuring that all African-American women faculty are successful (Davis et al., 2021). Rather, mentoring can help the

culture of academia, but it is only available to those who are not mainstream White males (Gibson, 2006). The greatest danger in growth development is the lack of focus on African American women faculty that yield to a reactive approach. (Davis et al., 2021).

Mentoring relationships are fundamentally faced with power dynamics, where there is a power disparity between the mentor and mentee (Davis et al., 2021). As a result, this has limited access to mentoring opportunities for faculty of color (Davis et al., 2021). Consequently, for faculty of color (FOC), a lack of mentoring has been linked as a contributing factor to their lack of success and retention rate (Davis et al., 2021). Conversely, even when mentoring does take place, racially/ethnically marginalized groups are more likely to be perceived negatively and as lower quality (Davis et al., 2021). This disparity is often displayed in PWIs. For women, mentors are likely to be a different gender as well, which may limit the quality of their mentoring (Davis et al., 2021). Typically, for FOC, having a mentor who is of the same racial/ethnic background will facilitate more positive experiences (Davis et al., 2021).

Notably, many American women in leadership agree that having other African-American women in leadership serve as great mentors (Chance, 2021). However, imperatively, powerful White male partners in leadership positions are the most influential sponsors (Chance, 2021). On the other hand, it is unclear to what extent mentoring affects African-American women in their trajectory in their careers (Priorre, 2021). Specifically, in terms of mentoring, policies, and practices should be evaluated from a Black Feminist Theory (BFT), considering the racist and sexist practice of exclusion (Priorre, 2021). Most PWIs develop mentoring programs that support cross-gender or cross-culture support and not mentoring relationships of the same race, which can potentially become a barrier (Tillman, 2001). Researchers have found that African-American

female faculty have had difficulty finding mentors of the same culture, gender, and race and would rather not compromise their trust (Tillman, 2001).

Researchers have associated mentor availability, mentor expertise, support relationships, and mutuality as the barriers to mentoring African-American female faculty (Cross et al., 2019). Due to the barriers African American female faculty face, there are identified consequences that are inadequate for mentoring. Without adequate development in mentoring, there is a decrease in job satisfaction, limited career development, and reduced academic productivity (Cross et al., 2019). However, according to research data, institutional support in mentoring African-American female faculty identifies the level of evidence available to address the barriers to mentorship.

African American Women Today in Higher Education

Today's African American women are the fast-paced growing population in higher education since the 1970's. There has been a growth from 565,100 (1976) to 1.6 million (2019) postsecondary degreed African American women (Butler, 2021). Consequently, the percentage of African-American women enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions and the representation of African-American women faculty remains low and often overlooked (Butler, 2021). African American women faculty today in higher education focus on the experience and encourage the growth in presence in academia. Collins suggested that "African American women have the willpower to embrace a creative ability that allows them to engage with their outsider within status (Wilder et al., 2008). Researchers have drawn a line of barriers that African American female faculty experience and are at the starting point in empowering them to not occupy the marginalized status quo (Wilder et al., 2008). Although African-American female faculty are prestigious in academics, women faculty of color are still few in number (Fox Tree & Vaid, 2022).

African American women makeup approximately 65% of all African American terminal degree holders but only account for 3% of all faculty and 8% of all associate/tenured faculty (Jernigan et al., 2020). However, increasing their degrees does nothing to combat the structural obstacles they encounter while pursuing tenured positions at PWIs (Ahidiana, 2021). Unfortunately, within the past year, there has been an alarming case that has brought to the forefront the deep-rooted issues in academia regarding discrimination against African-American women. Nikole Hannah-Jones is a well-established journalist who was poised to begin a career working for the School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (England, 2021). However, from the outset, you could see that this relationship was not going to materialize. Consequently, Hannah-Jones was going to be the first to hold the position without tenure (England, 2021). As a result, the public was perplexed by this and began to apply pressure on the university to act, but it was to no avail (England, 2021). By the time the university had offered a tenured position to Hannah-Jones, she decided to join the faculty at Howard University (England, 2021). The following instance brings to light the very issues that have been prevalent for years, affecting marginalized communities. There are many institutions that are complacent on the issue of racism (Brown, 2021). Specifically, at Chapel Hill, many prominent African-American faculty members have separated from the university over concerns of racism (Brown, 2021). Although there has been some progress with African American women attaining positions within higher education, more work needs to be done that starts from the top. Hiring decisions should not be politically driven but should be performed to reflect diversity across all departments. This will greatly benefit the overall image of the university.

There are various research disparities that are observed in the current assessment of African-American female faculty that have been identified as the future of higher education.

Researchers summarize challenges that describe the biases that affect the progression of African-American female faculty in higher education that are not limited to disparities in publication process, disparities in citation rates, disparities in professional recognition, disparities in funding, disparities in recommendation letters, and disparities in evaluation of training institutions (Fox Tree & Vaid, 2022). Among the listed disparities, they have become the biggest challenge in increasing the representation of African-American female faculty while evaluating the need to move towards an unbiased future in academia (Fox Tree & Vaid, 2022).

Specifically, with the occurrence of COVID-19 in the past two years, African-American women faculty still have been underrepresented in higher education among faculty members, even at the presidential level (Njoku & Evans, 2022). During this time of uncertainty, COVID-19 has contributed to African American women faculty who have been adversely impacted by social unrest and mental trauma, which has caused so many of them to become isolated and overextended (Njoku & Evans, 2022). Consequently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, African-American women faculty have had to deal with hiring freezes, layoffs, and being fired during the heightened civil unrest (Njoku & Evans, 2022). Although there has been a multiplicity of research performed regarding leadership through times of crisis and adversity, limited research has been offered in the areas of minorities in higher education, as well as the experiences of African-American women serving in college and university leadership (Chance, 2021). This implores the need for more research to be conducted, as it is uncertain how to go about tackling this issue. At the surface level, awareness needs to be raised regarding this specific area, and it must be acknowledged before any potential changes can even be considered.

With the pattern of education and success that African American women continue to follow, it is a mystery as to why they are not able to obtain key positions in higher education as

opposed to their counterparts. Across the board more research is needed to determine the many contributions that African-American women make across various college campuses across the globe. This minority group must be given a voice by conducting a thorough review of its hiring practices, equality in promotion, time considerations in support of non-mandated mentoring of students of color, and professional development and mentoring experiences (Townsend, 2020). Higher education must take a deep look into its identity and question the message that is being sent to African-American women administrators. This population remains in lower-level positions at the university level, stagnated in their career ascension, and ultimately smothered by barriers for simply showing up as themselves (Townsend, 2020). In essence, all that is needed is a fair chance for African-American women with updated retention practices to ensure they are retained once hired for a position. Much progress has been made. However, there is still much work that still needs to be done to ensure that the true essence of diversity in higher education is met across all facets.

Summary

Ultimately, the purpose of chapter Two was to examine current literature that focused on perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. Chapter Two encompassing the theory that is relevant to this study, known as intersectionality theory. This theory influences institutional leaders in higher education to explore various resources that shape and converge the social identity of those individuals who are grouped within the minority (Griffin, 2019). Current literature has examined the historical overview of African-American women in academia, the evolution of diversity in higher education, and the challenges at PWIs, which have allowed African-American women faculty to see what lies ahead.

Unfortunately, the literature has not clearly stated how effective the changes have impacted the increase in recruitment and retention in comparison to their White counterparts. Despite the years of change throughout the history of African American women in academia, the evolution of diversity in higher education, African American women faculty, challenges impeding on African American women as faculty, and the path of success of African American women faculty, the underrepresentation remains a phenomenon. Literature is still being developed to identify the challenges many African-American women faculty encounter at predominantly White institutions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of African-American female faculty and the strategies used to overcome barriers at predominately White institutions in the United States. The problem related to this qualitative study is that the voices of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions are needed to understand their experiences and strategies to overcome barriers. This section addresses the methodology, the empirical research, and the design through a phenomenological study. In this chapter, the methodology is introduced to navigate through the terrain by effectively giving information from research design to the setting of the study and involving the participants in the study. Also, the procedures will be discussed to conduct the study, my role as a researcher, interviews of the participants, observations, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations involved.

Research Design

The method used for this study was a qualitative research study of transcendental phenomenology. The historical philosopher Edmund Husserl, who developed transcendental phenomenology, explored how to understand human lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The process in which the researcher sees the phenomenon as fresh for the first time and is open to the wholeness of the experience is referred to as transcendental (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, Husserl explains the concepts associated with transcendental phenomenology that bring light to an authentic place by requiring epoche (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl introduces the concept of epoche as abstaining from biased thoughts, beliefs, and judgements of the researcher and to be transparent to ourselves (Moustakas, 1994, p.85). In the epoche, there is no validity to everything

being of equal value, but every thought is followed by an intentional act (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenological approach is designed to identify the core themes and primary sources of data that validate the lived experiences through study (Neubauer et al., 2019). A phenomenological approach investigated the accuracy of the lived experiences of people in conjunction with the theories that are being studied (Ploeg, 1999). The transcendental phenomenology approach addressed the research questions of the phenomenological study (Neubauer et al., 2019). The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study approach was to understand the human experience and how it relates to the challenges that impact African-American women faculty at PWIs. Using a phenomenologically based design gave the opportunity for African American women faculty to openly speak about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings serving at PWIs. Through epoche, communication is perceived and received without tainting the participants' beliefs, thoughts, or judgements, followed by having an intentional act of purity (Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative research design revealed the potential problem by answering questions about the experiences that most often are from the standpoint of the participants (Hammarberg & de Lacey, 2016). Therefore, a qualitative design was chosen in steps to sample, collect, analyze, and interpret data to effectively corroborate the findings within the study (Busetto et al., 2020). Moreover, choosing the effective method will draw attention to the overarching research questions that are relevant in identifying the dynamics of the research study. The purpose of utilizing this approach was to give a better understanding to African-American women faculty to be able to voice their experiences while providing a safe platform to do so. Phenomenology uses interviews with open-ended questions to allow the participants to express and speak on their experiences so the reader can understand the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

In phenomenological studies, utilizing the interviewing technique is beneficial to capture one-on-one questions that may elaborate on personal experiences that will be effective in collecting data for the research study (Bhatt et al., 2020).

It is imperative to lay the groundwork to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research methods. The basic premise of qualitative research is understanding human behavior based primarily on Hermeneutics (House, 2018). On the other hand, qualitative research aims to explain human behavior (House, 2018). Qualitative research is the most appropriate research method for this study due to the rich amount of personal information that will be gathered to form evolving hypotheses that pinpoint repeat patterns (House, 2018). This process will focus on two aspects: the product of human behavior and the processes that lead to the products of human behavior (House, 2018).

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. A framework consisted of the Intersectionality theory to discover the multilayers of discrimination that African American women face along with providing a template to encourage antidiscrimination at PWIs. To expound on the literature, it was important to create overarching questions that explore the lived experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs. The research questions are as follows:

Central Research Question

What are the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions?

Sub-Question One

What challenges are faced as an African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions?

Sub-Question Two

What form of support do African-American women have to navigate their professional roles as faculty members?

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Setting and Participants

</div>

Throughout many years, predominantly White institutions have had to solve problems to keep their retention of African-American female faculty in higher education. Higher education is forging ahead and continues to provide various opportunities for educators to share their passion for teaching with students and collaborate with other educators to help create a positive environment for growth. However, within higher education, the need for diversity cannot be diminished. For this study, the focus is on the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs in the United States. With this setting, it was imperative to capture specific experiences and perceptions of African-American female faculty at PWIs in order to facilitate an analysis of the findings.

Setting

The setting of many PWIs begins with the realities and complexities of the inclusive community of Black female faculty. As a result, there were several PWIs that denied many tenured-tracked positions from highly qualified African-American female faculty despite their claims of inclusivity (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021). The setting closely analyzed the perceptions and lived experiences of Black female faculty on PWI campuses. In addition, the setting was chosen to identify the direct impact of organizational and leadership structures at predominately

White institutions. The typical leadership structure at PWIs is generally dominated by Whites (Webster & Brown, 2019). Whites hold the majority of the leadership positions in the United States in higher education (Evatt-Young & Bryson, 2021). A 2019 report by the American Council on Education (ACE) stated Whites occupied 73% of full-time instructional faculty positions and 80% of leadership positions in postsecondary education (Espinosa et al., 2019). According to ACE's 2017 report, PWIs in the United States typically have White males older than 60 years old who have obtained a doctorate with a tenure of seven or more years of experience as presidents of the institutions (Reis & Grady, 2019). White males have dominated cultural norms that represent PWIs (Gusa, 2010). Dominance and subordination at PWIs did not come by force but through social practices and systems of oppression (Ash et al., 2020). Patton (2016) argued that higher education was born out of White supremacy in efforts to fuel the interactions of race, property, and oppression. White supremacy on campuses has focused on changing faculty, not dismantling the structure of inequality, and improving diversity (Ash et al., 2020). Formal leadership and organizational structure have impacted their patriarchal leadership roles from being diverse. In 2016, in higher education, 73 percent of colleges and universities were made up of all-White leadership teams, with not one minority woman accounted for (Sensoy & Diangelo, 2017). Due to these conditions that are often present on PWI campuses, African-American women have endured challenges with tackling unique perspectives as part of academics.

Participants

After the site was chosen, I began the process of selecting the participants for the study. The qualitative research focused on a population aiming to serve female faculty of African-American descent who have been employed at a PWI. The criteria are only extended to African-

American female faculty who have experienced the phenomenon of this study. The participants were faculty members solicited through three private Facebook groups. Additionally, the participants highlighted two or more years of experience in serving as faculty at PWIs. The sample size of the participant's academic rank consisted of current tenured faculty or prior experience of those who currently or have taught as an African American female faculty at PWIs. Verification of credentials were provided upon being given the consent from the participants. Acknowledgment of their current employment, age, and degree attainment status was confirmed by providing their current credentials of employment through email once the participants have completed the two-minute survey in Appendix E. In this qualitative study, pseudonyms were used to de-identify and protect the participant's places of employment. In order to make sure the faculty was authenticated; the participants were required to self-verify their employment status to a PWI by providing the name of the university and status.

After determining the criteria for this study, the researcher identified the participants and chose homogeneous purposeful sampling. The purposeful sampling identifies a selected group that was knowledgeable of their experiences about the phenomena of study (Palinkas et al., 2016). The rationale for choosing purposeful sampling in this instance is this specific category being studied offers several individuals whose perspectives on the phenomenon should be ensured based on the understanding of the topic studied (Robinson, 2013).

Researcher Positionality

In this qualitative research study, the position of a researcher can be problematic when interviewing participants on a sensitive subject. It is imperative that when interviewing participants who have experiences relating to the phenomena of study, I did not impose my political and social views, clouding my perspective to receive such views of the participants.

Being that I am an African American female, I have observed first-hand the struggle that African American women faculty face by White dominant institutions. African American women faculty who has served at PWIs have noted several encounters of the treatment as well as them being outnumbered. Conversely, attending different universities has allowed me to identify the disparity of the African-American female faculty population through my experiences with various professors. I was encouraged and decided to pursue a research study on the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers. I have been empowered and supported in conducting this study to better understand their perceptions, challenges, and strategies that have influenced their success. The positionality of this study was included to analyze the social constructivism of how the interlocking system at PWIs has affected the representation of African-American women faculty and their success.

Interpretive Framework

There are various philosophical paradigms that seek to explain the central approach to this research study. The constructivism paradigm reflected the participant's understanding and knowledge of the world by reflecting on their experiences (Adom et al., 2016). The use of constructivism in this study was to seek the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants to ascertain the true facts by using various data-collecting agents (Adom et al., 2016). By using this paradigm, I was grounded in the philosophy and started with research questions that would end with a valid conclusion in constructing the findings for this qualitative study. I used interviews and documents that yielded and explained the data based on the phenomenon under study (Adom et al., 2016). The importance of this paradigm was to underpin the research that helps to understand how situations can influence the participants' everyday lives and the

complexities of the phenomena of African-American female faculty at PWIs.

Philosophical Assumptions

A philosophical assumption paradigm is a belief that gives us ideas for developing the research study. The beliefs that are a part of the four philosophical assumptions are the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions that characterize this study (Creswell, 2009). These philosophical assumptions helped the researcher analyze and interpret data collection.

Ontological Assumption

When determining the ontological assumption of this phenomenon, as the researcher, it was easy to create the assumption based on the nature of reality. In my view, it was assumed that all African-American female faculty faced opposition at some point concerning their tenure at PWIs. On the other hand, when building the content surrounding the ontological assumptions during this qualitative research study, it was interesting how diverse the participants in the study viewed their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to the research study, there were multiple realities that were experienced by several African-American female faculty at PWIs. These realities made their experiences much more complex than initially considered. Because of the diversity of these experiences, it was difficult to pinpoint why these experiences occur. Many of the same experiences can be common among the subjects regarding this research. However, there were some experiences that are unique to the individual, which makes the research study even more compelling.

Epistemological Assumption

The areas of this research study are still evolving, as not much attention has been drawn to the area. Whatever research that has been compiled directly addresses this phenomenon. In

addition, the content that carries the most emphasis in addressing the epistemological assumption was based on the interviews with the participants. The interviews helped dissect what the real issues were. The key figure in building these assumptions was the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee. The longer the interviewer stayed in the field with the participants, the more they knew about the experience from firsthand information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although the researcher relates to the participants of the study, the sole purpose of conducting the study was to gather the facts from their perspectives. Actual quotes from the participants, coupled with the research that has been compiled, were used to formulate the basis of the epistemological assumptions. The participants in this study will serve as the experts based on their experiences.

Axiological Assumption

According to the research study, there were specific axiological assumptions that can be applied. As an African-American female, the researcher has noticed a paradigm that leads to an unfortunate underrepresentation of African-American female faculty in higher education at PWIs. This is an alarming paradigm that needs further research due to the uncertainty surrounding the actual figures. The research study was closely related to the personal values of the researcher due to the struggles that many African Americans in general have dealt with due to their skin color. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has done an adequate job of providing a fair playing field for employment. Unfortunately, there are still inconsistencies in the hiring process that must be discovered and eliminated. Nevertheless, we are all capable of achieving success in various career fields. However, a research study suggested that African-American females must work harder to obtain positions at PWIs than that of their White male counterparts. Thus, many African-American female faculty prospects often find

themselves on paths to becoming faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). In such cases, it appeared that the African American females have settled for the familiarity of being with their own kind rather than continuing to pursue employment with PWIs. As an African-American female, the researcher stressed, that regardless of the career path chosen by other African-American females in higher education, failure is never an option. Everyone deserves a chance to prove their worth in whatever career field.

Researcher's Role

My role in this study was to be the human instrument to observe the participants, collect data, analyze, code, interpret the responses from the interviews, and draft questions to help investigate the phenomena. It was important in the researcher's role to describe aspects of any expectations, experiences, biases, and assumptions that qualify their ability to conduct research (Greenbank, 2003).

My role was to focus my attention on the individual participants and their unique experiences and interactions to support the qualitative perspective without any influence or biases (Greenbank, 2003). My role in this research was guided by the perspective of assumptions and the range of data collected by the participants (Austin & Sutton, 2014). The relationship between the participants and me was considered essential, and the involvement was only for the fulfillment of data collection for this study.

Being an African-American female working in America, I have experienced discrimination, racism, and sexism in the workplace. I have worked in the legal field for a long time, and I have personally experienced discrimination based on gender and race. My feelings based on systematic oppression and other challenges have been associated with this study. I know how difficult it can be to resurface experiences coupled with emotions and feelings to be

interviewed. However, journaling my emotions and thoughts kept me during the process of this study. This allowed the participant's interviews to be processed with clarity to avoid any interruptions during the data analysis process.

Procedures

Procedures in a research study gather the justification for the sampling of the participants through the perception and lived experiences of the research method (Austin & Sutton, 2014). An interest letter was sent in an e-mail to 10-12 postdoctoral participants who reside around the world who are or have been faculty members at PWIs. An email was sent to the participants to discuss the outlining parameters of the study. The contact information cited is with the assurance that the participants would remain confidential.

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the participants were contacted via email in an effort to recruit for the research study. Once the IRB was received and approved, participants who were interested in the study were invited via an email attachment with a link using a questionnaire form to gather demographic data to determine if the participants would be a good fit. In the questionnaire, proper procedures are followed to ensure participants understand the limitations of the study and the risks associated with their involvement. Most importantly, necessary protocols were followed to ensure consistency and confidentiality with all participants.

It was important that the participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study they were participating in. To protect the participants in the study, it was important to have a consent form (Creswell, 2015). The consent form ensured that the participants knew their identities, and the confidentiality of the participants was taken into consideration. The consent form outlined the understanding of the participants with the conditions of the study and the time

required in this study. All participants involved in this research study signed a consent form to participate (see Appendix B).

The 10-12 participants involved in the study were asked to confirm their participation through a follow-up email. Once the participants confirmed their participation via email, an interview time and date were selected. The consent form reassured that their responses avoided biases and any influence on the participants. According to Creswell (1998), the recommendation for sampling participants in a phenomenological study is between five and twenty-five participants. However, studies have stated there are no set rules on the sample size, and there are various considerations (Padgette, 2008).

The sample size of the study depended on the depth of data in which data saturation could be attained. To reach data saturation and to reach content validity, creating a state of epoch in a phenomenological study helped the research reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Additionally, data saturation was reached when there is no analytical information that arises, and the study provides maximum in-depth information on the phenomena (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). To facilitate the process in which data is collected, the researcher made sure no new data emerged from the interviews.

Once the information was gathered, the primary data method using interviews was collected into one large file with password protection. The audioconferencing/Zoom data was transcribed and reviewed to see if any additional information was required. Once the data was interpreted, coding was completed for data analysis. Coding in this study was used to reflect the credibility and confidence in the findings. Each had differing supporting themes that highlighted the story of the perception and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs (Yi, 2018).

Permissions

To conduct interviews, the site recruited African-American faculty from universities through means of Facebook social media platforms. Informed consent was a part of the recruitment plan, and it was imperative that there was a contractual agreement that focused on the permission of the participants (Klykken, 2021). The consent letters were sent to the participants for approval after the participants had completed the survey provided by surveymonkey.com. The recruitment form used to conduct the research study can be found in (Appendix A).

Recruitment Plan

Once the researcher had identified the targeted audience, it was important to find a recruitment method to help target the potential participants. To successfully increase the recruitment of participants, I chose several strategies that would capture the purpose of the research study. The recruitment plan in this study included the use of a recruitment form published on Facebook and a link to surveymonkey.com in the recruitment process (see Appendix A). To ensure that the right participants were captured for this study, a recruitment form with the criteria was used to determine the eligibility of 10-12 potential participants. The responses to the form were private and not shared with the public. Once the potential participants were identified, a consent form was emailed to all participants outlining the guidelines of the research study. Participants were encouraged to sign the consent form upon review. The consent form outlined the provisions of the study before retrieving any data from the participants (Cresswell, 2014, p.134). The consent form outlined and protected the human rights of the participants, not limited to the participant's identification, the risk of the participants, guaranteed confidentiality, and the level at which the participants are involved (Cresswell, 2014, p.134).

Additionally, the consent form assured that the participants could withdraw at any time if they were not interested and a contact person if the participants had any questions or concerns that may arise (Cresswell, 2014, p.134). Obtaining a consent form gave the researcher the authority to gain access to the site and the participants in the study (Cresswell, 2014, p.134). Once the signed consent forms have been received, this allowed the participants to take part in the research study (Appendix B).

The purpose of selecting a purposeful sampling strategy was to identify and explore an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions. The importance of using purposive sampling was to place emphasis on the ability to communicate the reflection of the participant's experience and to minimize the biases known or unknown as a potential influence (Palinkas et al., 2016). Choosing purposive sampling allowed me, as the researcher, to deliberately select the characteristics of the participants as well as the university settings to warrant inclusion (Taherdoost, 2016). As a criteria for selecting participants for this study, all participants had to have at least a bachelor's degree, with a minimum of 2 years plus of teaching experience at PWIs or have taught at a university or college in prior years. Also, participants who worked at public or private college campuses would be specifically targeted. However, I did consider participants who changed their careers in education and have obtained their teaching degrees down the road, which broadened the age for participation. Participants age for this study ranged anywhere from 22 years old to 65 plus years old. Participants who currently or in prior years worked in-person or hybrid (in-person or online) were considered. This research targeted African-American female faculty with a mixture of full-time and part-time professors across the region regardless of their tenure status.

To this, having a specific criteria for participants offered a diversified yet specific data collection that will yield results conducive to my research findings.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection in this study was gathered using semi-structured interviews, document analysis via letter writing, and a questionnaire. The interview questions were designed to address the phenomena in this qualitative study. The participants were contacted to obtain consent to participate in the study to address the research questions. The process of data collection was followed by an interest letter to the participants with a confirmation date and time slot in the study. To ensure that participants remained anonymous, a follow-up email was sent to acknowledge the agreement and assurance of confidentiality protecting them while the study was being conducted. Appropriate measures were taken after the IRB consent form was sent and approved, making sure all IRB requirements were met.

Once I received the full commitment from all 10-12 participants, a ZOOM recording was arranged based on time slot availability for each participant. Due to the nature and inclusiveness of interview questions, the participants experienced minimal risk. Thus, interview recordings will be kept password-protected and securely filed in a folder on a personal computer. Thereafter, the interviews were transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed to make sure no further information was needed. Once the data is interpreted, the data will remain on file and will be destroyed once the study has concluded. A follow-up email was sent to the participants, addressing their interviews to ensure that the given responses were accurate. If the participants acknowledged any corrections that needed to be made or if a response needed to be modified, those changes were made through a second interview time. This is known as "member checking," returning the interview data to the participant to enhance the accuracy and credibility of the phenomena (Birt

et al., 2016). Thereafter, to develop the findings of this study, the themes of the interview were analyzed to ensure and increase credibility and accuracy.

Demographic Survey

Providing demographic information represents a more targeted population for sampling purposes (Salkind, 2010). Additionally, demographics were selected to be gathered, not limited to the participant's socioeconomic status, race, marital, education, and employment status (de Brey et al., 2019). Standard demographic survey questions consist of gender identity, age, ethnicity and race, education, and location (Hughes et al., 2016). A demographic survey was important in providing information to better understand the audience who will be participating in the research study. The demographic survey determined the qualifications that needed to be met by the participants in this research study (Appendix F).

Demographic Data Analysis

As it relates to demographic data analysis, descriptive statistics was the most beneficial method to shed light on the phenomenon. Descriptive statistics are mathematical techniques that will help in organizing and summarizing the research data and provide an understanding of numerical data. There were three levels of measurements used in descriptive statistics in which a variable was scored by nominal, ordinal, and continuous (interval/ratio) (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Within those measurements, three data collection tools used to commonly measure the central tendency and dispersion in ranking the scores from the data were mode, median, and mean (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Nominal measures the participants by placing them into broad categories, which measures the central tendencies of the mode. Ordinal measures the scoring of the participants by placing them into hierarchical order (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). This level is only used when a variable cannot be directly measured, which measures central tendencies of

median and mode (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Lastly, continuous (interval/ratio) was directly

measured with equal intervals. This level measures the central tendencies of mean, median, and

mode (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Descriptive statistics are primarily used to ensure that the

problem being focused on is legitimate and meaningful (Acosta & Brooks, 2021). The steps

include defining the problem, understanding the data, analyzing the data, and communicating the

results (Acosta & Brooks, 2021).

Semi-Structured Interview

The interview data captured for the study drew attention to the perceptions and lived

experiences of African-American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the

strategies used to overcome barriers. Interview questions should be inviting, accessible, and

analyzable, with the goal of answering the research questions in the time available for each

participant (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the

participants to diverge and peruse their responses in more detail.

The interview format had guidance to explore the various views and experiences of the

participants for the phenomena of this study (Gill et al., 2008). I gathered interview questions

that lasted between 30 minutes to an hour to complete (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The

in-depth interviews allowed the participants to delve into social and personal matters depending

on their experiences (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The participants will be prompted

before the recording to ensure that a transcript will be produced capturing the details (Edwards &

Holland, 2013). Recording the participant's session of interview questions helped the interviewer

focus on listening to the interviewee's responses (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The recording also

enabled the voices of the participants' sessions to be accurately transcribed with precise details

(Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience as an African-American female faculty on your campus. CRQ

2. Describe your challenges when working at a predominantly White institution. SQ1

3. How were those challenges addressed to continue your journey as a faculty member? SQ1

4. What advice helped other African-American female faculty overcome those challenges and remain employed at PWIs? SQ1

5. Tell me about any struggles that you still experience at PWIs. SQ1

6. What else would you like to discuss about your experience and challenges at PWIs? CRQ

7. What type of support and resources are offered for culture inclusion to guide faculty of color at PWIs? SQ2

8. What type of mentoring programs are offered to those faculty members of color who desire to be track-tenure adjunct faculty? SQ2

9. Describe your relationship as it pertains to your White counterparts. CRQ

10. How do you obtain a posture to serve at a PWI, as it relates to culture climate? CRQ

11. Reflecting on the support or lack of support for your counterparts, what advice would you give to another inspiring African-American female faculty who would have a desire to have a teaching career? SQ2

12. What do you think is important that we have not covered in this interview that you would like to share about your experience at predominantly White institutions as an African-American female? CRQ

Open-ended questions can produce short answers and long narratives that explore the topic in depth (Weller et al., 2018). Highlighting the interview questions for the participants is important in observing their responses (Weller et al., 2018). Considering the elements of the interview, questions 1-2 were basic population questions that shape the discipline of culture within the study (Weller et al., 2018). It is always a good idea to open the interview with easy questions to allow the interviewee to become comfortable and familiar with the subject of the study (McGrath, 2019). These broader questions were not necessarily stated questions but goals in developing the study (Agee, 2009).

Qualitative research interviewing attempts to understand the world from a subjective viewpoint while unfolding the experiences of the interview (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The interview questions 3-6 focused on more in-depth core questioning. However, questions were programmed with follow-up questions to elicit details that identify the perception and lived experiences of the African-American female faculty interviewees (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Having a sense of guidance during the interview helped pace the interview with follow-up questions on subjective information (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The sequence of questions 6-10 was suitable for how African-American female faculty perceive the world from their perspectives based on anecdotal experience. It was important to address the feeling of invisibility, inferiority, and assumptions of the cultural background of minorities that impact your ability to gain support from your counterparts (Booker, 2016).

The intention of question 11 was to provide an opportunity for the interviewee to reflect on their perception and lived experiences and how they can help others become effective and consistent as an African American female who aspires to be a faculty member

at a PWI. Having the interviewees reflect on their perceptions and lived experiences gave them an opportunity to share the reality around the events of their own lives without having to be interpreted subjectively by the interviewer (Pessoa, 2019).

Question 12 seeks to provide any further closure that the interviewee would have liked to address to contribute to the interview before closing remarks (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In the context of this interview, the interviewees shaped the awareness of African-American female faculty members at PWIs through their perceptions and lived experiences. In conclusion, the interviewees were responsible for expressively connecting their responses to the subject of the study, and the interview research questions would measure the implication of the study (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

An ideal analysis included a focus on ultimately producing and processing the findings in the research (Nowell et al., 2017). Data analysis focused on the concept that needed to be investigated. Creswell (2013) identifies the beginning of data analysis as consisting of "significant statements" that will offer a lived perception and experience of African-American female faculty at PWIs (Gorski, 2019). Data analysis consisted of transcribing interviews, sorting through data, and coding. (Busetto et al, 2020). Good qualitative research begins while the data is being collected rather than after the data collection has ended (Schutt, 2019). Data analysis is an art that begins to record, examine, and interpret the field observed while exploring the relationship between the context of the event and the experiences of the participants (Schutt, 2019).

Dawadi (2020) noted several phases of thematic analysis for qualitative studies to provide a systematic process for approaching the data. To organize and analyze the interview data, the

steps of thematic analysis will be used in this study. Familiarization with the data is the first

phase, where the researcher acquaints themselves with the data (Dawadi, 2020). This phase

helped to identify the type of theme and how many were represented throughout the data

(Dawadi, 2020). This step was crucial due to its purpose of guiding the researcher in possible

steps that were needed to produce the most appropriate results (Dawadi, 2020). Next, generating

initial codes was essential to examine the richness of the data presented from phase one (Dawadi,

2020). During this process, rereading the data was essential to properly code (Dawadi, 2020).

The NVivo coding feature was a significant coding asset to use in phase two due to its efficiency

and ability to apply multiple codes by selecting phrases or sentences/paragraphs of interest

(Dawadi, 2020).

Conversely, searching for themes was a part of phase three as it pinpointed the

relationships among and across the large data set (Dawadi, 2020). It was imperative to analyze

the various combinations of codes to determine possible overarching themes (Dawadi, 2020).

Simply, the major purpose of phase three was to focus on the analysis and the widespread level

of themes, as opposed to codes (Dawadi, 2020). As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006). "a theme

captures something important about the data in relation to a research question and represents

some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Dawadi, 2020). Therefore, it

was more beneficial to conceptualize those codes as the foundation and syndicate similar or

multiple codes to produce potential themes as they relate to the research questions (Dawadi,

2020).

After that, reviewing themes was part of phase four, where all themes are intentionally

brought together to refine initially grouped themes and prepare to present in a methodical way

(Dawadi, 2020). Themes must be tested for consistency and coherency, and there must be

distinctions between them (Dawadi, 2020). In addition, this stage consists of two levels. In level one, all codes were extracted from NVivo files and added to a Microsoft Word document to identify themes along with the coded extracts to organize them in an efficient manner (Dawadi, 2020). Then, all the themes and sub-themes were tested to see if they formed a coherent pattern (Dawadi, 2020).

In level two, a similar process was followed using the entire data set (Dawadi, 2020). Specifically, the validity of individual themes in relation to the data is considered (Dawadi, 2020). Data was reread to ensure that the thematic map accurately reflects what the data means as a consensus (Dawadi, 2020). As a result, new codes emerged but did not bring any considerable changes to the data (Dawadi, 2020). Then, all the themes were put back together, and the thematic map was refined (Dawadi, 2020). This reflected on the type of themes developed for the study, how the themes in the study fit together, and the overall story the themes tell us about the data (Dawadi, 2020).

Defining and Naming themes was the basis for phase five. This phase was responsible for refining and defining themes, specifically identifying the essence of each theme, and using the appropriate data to determine what aspect of the theme it captures (Dawadi, 2020). Themes are, therefore, focused on consistent and coherent accounts to ensure that each theme fits into the broader story while also not creating too much of an overlap between themes (Dawadi, 2020). Furthermore, more refining of the themes is necessary by examining the sub-themes, codes, and extracts (Dawadi, 2020). As a result of this thorough process, a final name and definitions were added to each theme to describe a narrative regarding the data (Dawadi, 2020).

Now that the foundation was set, the final phase was writing the report (Dawadi, 2020). The purpose of the thematic analysis was to convince the readers of the quality and legitimacy of

the analysis (Dawadi, 2020). Therefore, during this phase, great efforts were made to provide a succinct, coherent, and logical account of the data presented (Dawadi, 2020). The themes discovered were represented with adequate evidence and specific examples and/or extracts that captured the crux of the point the researcher was attempting to convey (Dawadi, 2020). The examples and extracts were beneficial within the analytical narrative. An argument was made with respect to the objectives rather than illustrating the story communicated (Dawadi, 2020).

Document Analysis via Letter Writing

Document analysis was a review of documents that were interpreted and elicited meaning to develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2017). The documents used in this research study included letter-writing and questionnaires. These forms that were used for document analysis were documented without the researcher's intervention (Bowen, 2017).

Letter-writing was a good way to undertake research through correspondence. Letter-writing used as data collection would allow the 10-12 participants to give an account of their feelings, thoughts, and experiences that they may not have been comfortable doing through means of interviewing. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) stated that "Letters are unlike journals; they are written to another person with the expectation of a response. Letters try to give an account and make the meaning of the experiences an attempt to establish and maintain the relationships among us, and our experiences one to another" (p. 167). Letters being prepared on the perceptions and lived experiences of African American women faculty will be considered to have extreme details of personal accounts without limitations and biases (Appendix E). An email prompt served as letter writing that will relate to a specific topic on the participant's lived experience and used as a method of data collection that will serve to employ the participants to share their experiences as raw material (Burtt, 2020).

Letter Writing Prompt

Letter writing produced insight to give the participants free writing to recount their experiences (Burtt, 2020). Conducting an interview through semi-structured letter writing was a useful tool when identified as being identical for every participant, and it was consistent with a prompt question from the research questions of this research study (Burtt, 2020). Participants were free to discuss the importance of the question that covers the research's central question to tell their story (Burtt, 2020). The letter writing was an advantage to ensure flexibility and elaborate beyond the semi-structured interviews (Burtt, 2020). Due to the nature of the research topic, participants may feel comfortable writing their experiences rather than having face-to-face interviews (Burtt, 2020). The purpose of the questions was to help follow up on the responses to their interview questions to capture the perception and experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs (Burtt, 2020).

Letter-Writing Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis consists of transcribing interviews, sorting through data, and coding (Busetto et al., 2020). The data analysis of the letter-writing prompt followed the same steps as described in the interview data analysis. The steps included the familiarization with the data in the first phase, where the researcher acquaints themselves with the data (Dawadi, 2020). Next, generating initial codes was essential to examine the richness of the data presented from phase one (Dawadi, 2020). The NVivo coding feature was a significant coding asset to use in phase two due to its efficiency and ability to apply multiple codes by selecting phrases or sentences/paragraphs of interest (Dawadi, 2020). Searching for themes was a part of phase three as it pinpoints the relationships among and across the large data set (Dawadi, 2020). Reviewing themes was part of phase four, where all themes are intentionally brought together to refine

initially grouped themes and prepare to present in a methodical way (Dawadi, 2020). Defining

and Naming themes was the basis for phase five. This phase was responsible for refining and

defining themes, specifically identifying the essence of each theme, and using the appropriate

data to determine what aspect of the theme it captures (Dawadi, 2020). Once these phases are

completed, the final phase is to write the report (Dawadi, 2020).

Questionnaire

Questionnaires are an efficient way of providing a collection of information for

participants by their responses to questions (Ponto, 2015). The selection of methods used in this

study was a questionnaire to satisfy the data in this research as an instrumentation. Content

validity was a critical area in determining the questionnaire's rationality (Ricci et al., 2018).

Therefore, the most important way to collect data to ensure content validity was through

qualitative research with direct contact with the population of interest (Ricci et al., 2018). This

qualitative study was administered via email, and it will take approximately 45 minutes to

complete. With the extensive nature of the interview process, it was too ambitious to complete

during that time. On the other hand, the questionnaire being administered via email gave the

participants an opportunity to accurately document the reflection of their experiences.

Questionnaire Questions

1. What can we learn from the experiences of African-American female faculty
   at predominantly White institutions concerning how they overcome barriers?

2. From an African-American female perspective, what types of support have
   you received to facilitate cultural success as a faculty member at a
   predominantly White institution?

3. What have been the difficult challenges you have faced while being employed

as a faculty member at a predominantly White institution?

4. How does your work experience differ from another race as a faculty member at a predominantly White institution in higher education?

Questions 1-4 aimed to answer the central question to obtain deep knowledge of this qualitative study (Rivano & Hagstrom, 2017). The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions that self-reported information of the participants that evaluated their status as African American women faculty at PWIs and their experiences that were consistent with addressing the research questions in the qualitative research study (see Appendix D).

Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

To maintain consistency in the responses that were received, a focused topic or prompt was beneficial to disseminate the information for analysis purposes. Due to the letter-writing prompt, the researcher needed to follow up and encourage the participants when the deadline was approaching. It was important to ensure clarity of expectations to manage the content that was relevant to this study. Data analysis consisted of transcribing interviews, sorting through data, and coding (Busetto et al., 2020).

The data analysis of the letter-writing prompt followed the same steps as described in the interview data analysis. The steps included the familiarization with the data in the first phase, where the researcher acquaints themselves with the data (Dawadi, 2020). Next, generating initial codes was essential to examine the richness of the data presented from phase one (Dawadi, 2020). The NVivo coding feature was a significant coding asset to use in phase two due to its efficiency and ability to apply multiple codes by selecting phrases or sentences/paragraphs of interest (Dawadi, 2020). Searching for themes was a part of phase three as it pinpoints the relationships among and across the large data set (Dawadi, 2020). Reviewing themes was part of

phase four, where all themes are intentionally brought together to refine initially grouped themes and prepare to present in a methodical way (Dawadi, 2020). Defining and Naming themes is the basis for phase five. This phase was responsible for refining and defining themes, specifically identifying the essence of each theme, and using the appropriate data to determine what aspect of the theme it captures (Dawadi, 2020). Now that the foundation has been set, the final phase is writing the report (Dawadi, 2020).

Data Synthesis

After reviewing the transcripts from the participants in the research, the researcher identified words, phrases, and other information captured from the participants' interviews. A series of codes was attained and used in this research study to ensure that the information obtained from the interviews, letter writing prompt, and the questionnaire were accurate and if there was more information that needed to be added. Coding was used to see if any raw data could be condensed and or combined from the participants' words or phrases that are related. It was important to identify the same recurrent themes and allow the tabulated to identify the prominent themes (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009). Once the themes had been identified, they were then organized into subheadings as descriptive themes, followed by developing them into analytical themes (Thomas, 2008).

The data synthesis that was used to analyze the data was MaxQDA. MaxQDA is a software used in a qualitative research study that helps the researcher construct an empirical search of data and coding that measures the methods used in the data collection (Udo Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019). The data was gathered from the interviews, letters, and surveys that verified the degree of accuracy by measuring through thematic data analysis. MaxQDA will analyze the

common data that was collected from all sources of the data collection (Udo Kuckartz &

Radiker, 2019)

In addition to analyzing the data gathered, once the data had been gathered, the study was

listed by key concepts and themes, comparing them. The review of data helped compare the

literature review and the participants on the contextual narrative of the synthesis. This helped

expand the understanding of the phenomena of the experiences of African-American women

faculty at predominantly White institutions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is one of many ways researchers can influence their audiences that the

research is worth the attention (Nowell et al., 2017). During this research, raw data was collected

to address the phenomenon in this study. In this study, data will be gathered in an in-depth one-

on-one interview with 10-12 African-American female faculty participants at PWIs. With the

encouragement and guidance of the researcher, the participants gained confidence in the research

process. The trustworthiness of a qualitative research study was refined by the criteria of

credibility, dependability/confirmability, and transferability, which are parallel to the validity

and reliability of this study (Nowell et al., 2017) (see Appendix E).

Credibility

Credibility is determined when the researcher or readers are confirmed (Nowell et al.,

2017). There are various techniques that address credibility in a qualitative research study that

can prolong the engagement of the study, including persistent observation of the participants,

data collection triangulation, and research triangulation (Nowel et al., 2017). Furthermore, for

validity and reliability, through the process of credibility, member checking was another

technique that interpreted the findings with the participants (Nowell et al., 2017). One of the

techniques that is used in this research is triangulation. Triangulation links to using various methods of data to understand the phenomenon in the findings of research (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In the validity procedures, the researcher searches for a convergence among various sources to form the theme of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). During the validity procedure of triangulation, the researcher sorts through multiple data points not limited to interview observations to locate major and minor themes within the study (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). In this research study, triangulation was accomplished by using the participants' interviews, letter-writing prompts, and questionnaires to compare findings of the perception and lived experiences. To compare the findings of the research, converging results were used to increase the validity and dependability that highlights the results differently and explains the phenomenon under investigation (Heale & Forbes, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability was important in this research study to make judgments of what needs to be transferred in the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to the development criteria of transferability, the findings in this research clearly stated the relationship relevant to the purpose of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability is the degree to which the phenomenon described in one study will be useful to theory and future research (Moon et al., 2016). I used transferability in this research to ensure that I was precise in data collection to certify the criteria of research were subjective to validity and reliability and would only be transferable to a particular population.

Dependability

To achieve dependability in this study, researchers must ensure that the process of establishing the findings is clear, traceable, and demonstrates effectiveness (Nowell et al., 2017). Dependability will be reached when the researcher has demonstrated that credibility and transferability have been achieved (Nowell et al., 2017). Having the data collected and audited was an effective way to reach dependability, which demonstrates the data in further detail. When readers can examine the process of the study, it presents a better judgment of the dependability of the research. Being able to interpret the data should be grounded in the need to secure the inter-subjectivity of data (Korstejens & Moser, 2018). I used dependability in this research study to achieve the authenticity of data received from the participants (Whittemore et al., 2001).

Confirmability

Confirmability was established by taking the interpretation of the raw data that was going to be collected during the research study (Lewis, 2009). I achieved confirmability by using the following techniques: (a) audit trails, (b) triangulation, and (c) member checking.

Audit Trail

An audit trail was used to establish the trustworthiness of this research study. In having to interview participants with similar patterns and experiences, it was important that through the experience, the researcher can reflect on how the process is evolving. I used the audit trail for clear documentation interpretation. The use of field notes, computer files, and other documentation relevant to the study was used as the audit trail (Lewis, 2009). The audit trail helped me to self-reflect and make clarifications to the data being collected. As the study unfolds, this allowed me to determine the trustworthiness of the research process (Carcary, 2009).

Triangulation

Triangulation was used in this research study to increase the credibility and validity. Triangulation will be applied to eliminate or counteract any limitations or biases arising. Using triangulation helped offer a variety of data that explained the different aspects of the experiences of African-American faculty at PWIs. I used interviews, email prompt letters, and surveys to explore the triangulation method. Triangulation was used to explore human behavior using a variety of methods (Noble & Heale, 2019).

Member Checking

Member checking was used to improve the accuracy of what was being recorded during the interviews with the participants. With women having similar experiences that reflect the same views and feelings, the researcher gathered the information and determined accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012). Member checking allowed me to take the information that was collected and share the findings with the participants to analyze the data and give feedback. Member checking can be done during the interview process or at the end to make sure the data is correct, and the interpretation of the data is without error (Harper & Cole, 2012). Additionally, member checking ensured the participants and researcher of the originality of the information was produced from the findings.

Ethical Considerations

During this process, efforts to make sure that all participants are kept abreast of the purpose was part of the steps to maintain a level of trust. Every effort was made to convey and institute honesty. I made sure to be sensitive to the needs of each participant and that every level of confidentiality is made private and safe, practicing intentionality with the information given.

The role of the researcher should acknowledge the impact they have on the participant (Nigar, 2020).

In addition, each participant was informed of their data being stored safely with password protection. In the process, I used a password-protected device to collect and store data so that once the requirement is published within the Liberty University Department of Education Institutional Review Board, the data will be destroyed after three years. Furthermore, participants were aware and acknowledged their privacy and that they have a right to withdraw from the research at any time at their discretion.

During this process, there could potentially be minimal risks and benefits to the participants as the research is being conducted. Respecting the dignity of each participant should be prioritized to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the research. Researchers can face various ethical challenges not limited to anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, the researcher's potential impact on participants, and extraction of reliable information (Zanjari et al., 2014). Assessing the risk of the participants should be considered due to participation. Participants will be at minimal risk due to emotional or practical issues that may have arisen out of experiences. Despite the risks of this study, the benefits outweigh the risks. The benefits result in being listened to, having the opportunity to express their emotions and feelings during their experiences, and being able to have someone see their view.

However, it is important that I specify in advance the researcher's responsibility and clarify how the data from the participants will be collected and used. To address the potential risk of ethical consideration, I must have a critical consciousness and knowledge of the study as a gatekeeper. Defining the guidelines and follow-up will ensure that the participants are aware of what they are giving informed consent to (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). Due to the sensitive

nature of this research study, as a researcher, it is vital that we prepare for the unexpected and identify the nature of the interviewee's narratives during the interview process. Interviewing participants on a sensitive topic can become emotionally intense and cause distress not only to the participant but also to me (Allmark et al., 2009). Interviewing requires a level of expertise and competence in sensitive subjects (Fahie, 2014). It is important that the researcher has a balance of power and clearly demonstrates the ethical procedures, especially given the sensitivity of the study.

Summary

This phenomenological study will capture the experiences of 10-12 African-American female faculty members at PWIs through Facebook social media sites. The data collection method was captured with semi-structured interviews using the intersectionality theory, womanism, and Black feminist theory. Before interviews are conducted, interviewees will give formal consent for their participation, and all information will be maintained anonymously. Interview questions will be addressed during virtual Zoom calls. As a part of the data analysis, interviews, questionnaire, and letter-writing prompt data was used to examine the specific experiences that are unique to the participants. Document analysis focused specifically on questionnaires to help bring a deeper understanding of the specific phenomena in this study. The final point of document analysis was the letter-writing prompt for the participants. After collecting data, the researcher prepared and organized the data, preparing codes to categorize the data and determine themes to examine. In this study, valuable information and details were given to provide clear evidence of the message that needs to be conveyed in supporting African-American female faculty at PWIs in higher education.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological approach was to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs. Although the experiences will vary, the purpose of Chapter Four is to capture the lenses of various female faculty participants and their collective voices as they pertain to the diversity at PWIs. Second, this study offers awareness that supports African-American female faculty and explores the guided research questions to the overall success of PWIs. The chapter will highlight the data presenting two themes: intersectionality of race and gender and inequality, with three sub-themes: discrimination, oppression, and microaggression. Each theme and sub-theme will address the research questions as they relate to the phenomenological study and lead to an improved understanding of the experiences encountered by African-American female faculty at PWIs. This chapter will provide a table describing each participant with pseudonyms assigned along with the corresponding data gathered. At the conclusion of the chapter is a summary to incorporate all findings in this study.

Participants

The research study that was conducted included a wide range of participants. From online faculty to in-person faculty members, all served in a teaching capacity at PWIs. There was a total of 10 participants in this research study who ranged from the age of 30 and older. The range of experience was from 5-20+ years (see Table 1). These participants were gathered through Facebook private groups. The participants were located across the United States of America, specifically highlighting African-American female faculty at PWIs. The initial process of gathering participants' information was done via a survey website. Furthermore, participants

were contacted via email and sent a consent form to volunteer for the data collection process.

The participants held a variety of experiences and perceptions, which made the research rich

with knowledge. Below is the Female Faculty Participants table:

Table 1

Female Faculty Participants

Faculty Participant	Years Taught	Position at Institution	Area of Instruction	Highest level of degree obtained	Institution
Denise	5-10	Full-time Professor	Social Work	Masters	Hunter Valley College
Andrea	5-10	Full-time Professor	English Comp.	Some Post Graduate Work	Games University
Carrol	5-10	Full-time Professor	Economics, Finance, Marketing	Doctorate	Yang Jing College
Debra	20+	Full-Time Professor	Teaching in a Multicultural Society	Doctorate	Western Surrey University
Tiffanie	10-20	Full-Time Professor	Freshman Seminar	Doctorate	Samuels Baptist College
Alexis	10-20	Full-Time Professor	Business, Human Ecology, American Ethnic Studies	Doctorate	Greene State University
Tamara	5-10	Full-Time Professor	Human Development, Family Science Courses	Some Post Graduate Work	Old Valley University
Melissa	2-5	Full-time Professor	Education	Doctorate	Elizabeth Christian College
Kimberlie	10-20	Full-time Professor	Public Relation, Speech, Advertising	Doctorate	Staples University

Christina	2-5	Part-time teacher	Education	Bachelors	Standards Community College

The participants took part in a pre-selected survey to identify qualified participants. There were ten solicited participants who were interviewed in this study. The table shows the demographics of all participants identifying as African-American female faculty. Table 1 represents the pseudonyms used by each participant, along with other determining data gathered from the survey. The years of experience varied from 2-20+ among the ten participants that were interviewed. The demographic in Table 1 supports the essential data collection to the participants experiences.

Results

In each interview, the participants shared their lived experiences, perceptions, and how they were able to navigate their careers. Due to the welcoming atmosphere, the participants were able to recollect their experiences to convey their specific viewpoints to help strengthen the legitimacy of the phenomenon. During the data collection of each participant, their response was to no surprise with proven peered reviewed literature.

The research findings allowed research development from using the inductive coding approach to develop raw data to the emerging themes. The data sources from the collection responses were previewed several times to identify the themes. The transcripts, writing prompts, and questionnaires, were read to ensure there were no new emerging codes in order to conceptualize the results into themes. The broad themes provided ways to contrast, examine, and interpret the pattern of themes. There were emerging themes that were developed by reviewing the data collection of the participants and seeing how they correspond with the data sources, interview, letter writing, and questionnaire results. After every third participant, data was

gathered, responses were coded, and emerging themes were gathered. After the review of the final responses of all the data sources, there were no new themes that emerged, which was an indication that all major themes were identified.

There were 3 data source categories identified with 5 sub-themes that emerged as a connecting factor. When reviewing the themes, the documentation between the data source and the sub-themes suggested similar categories. An overview of the coding process is shown in Table 2. The intended outcome of the process captured raw data of sub-themes that emerged from the data source assessed in this research study.

Table 2

Data Source and Sub-Themes of Perceptions and Lived Experiences of African American Faculty at PWIs

Data Source	Sub-Theme
Interview Results	• Discrimination
	• Oppression
Letter Writing Results	• Microaggression
Questionnaire Results	• Intersectionality of Gender and Race
	• Inequality

Interview Results

Analyzing the results to explore a widely deep phenomenon depended on the content of the interviews. The data that was collected during the semi-structured interviews showed a significant outcome of the perception and experiences of African-American female at PWIs. While there are many studies examining this phenomenon, this study has recognized a gap in

literature and have called for more research. The interview results have built upon previous research and offered unique contributions increasing the validity of the interviews. There were challenges that emerged out of the interview resulting from the participants in this study. Among the challenges in the interview process, such thematic challenges included discrimination and oppression. When discussing the perceptions and experiences of African-American female faculty at PWIs, a consistent response from the participants addressed the struggle with discrimination and oppression they experienced at PWIs. African American female faculty cannot control how they are viewed nor treated due to internal and external factors that allude to dominant and stereotypical narratives within academia (Priddle et al., 2022).

Letter Writing Results

The letter writing results focused on a writing topic that encouraged the participants to capture all the relevant perspectives of the central research question in more depth. Furthermore, the letter writing prompt provided rich data representing that perceptions and experiences of the participants. The materiality of the letter writing results added to the importance of this research study. Microaggression emerged as a narrative experience that has directly impacted the participants encounter at PWIs. The participants described how they experienced microaggression on their job at PWIs (Truehill, 2021).

Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire results segmented into exploring the phenomenon in this study. Being able to involve a naturalistic approach to have participants answer a questionnaire gathered rich feedback. The questionnaire captured the perceptions and experiences through expression of words that allowed the participants to provide more details to the open-ended questions. The intention of the questionnaire was generated through the participants responses from purposively

defined subthemes of intersectionality of gender, race, and inequality. Intersectionality of gender and race reveals the systems of power and how it can be used explicitly in the lived experiences of African-American female faculty at the margin of knowledge and social justice (Jackson et al., 2022).

Themes

In-depth data findings with African-American faculty females at PWIs highlighted various experiences that resulted in several themes that reflected the perception and lived experiences of these women. The participants identified a clear understanding of their journey and their interpretation by sharing their stories. The goal of this study was to see if there were any similar themes that would hold true to African-American female faculty at PWIs. The themes in this study emerged through the data collected, to determine through coding if any themes were tied together. The data presented themes of the perception and lived experiences, as it relates to discrimination, oppression, intersectionality of gender and race, inequality, and microaggression.

Discrimination

The participants in this study often reflected on how they were affected by discrimination at various levels of their careers. Although being well-qualified candidates, these participants were often denied career opportunities due to discriminatory factors. Although this could have been a major disappointment, each participant described their determination to keep striving despite the realization of being overlooked beyond their qualifications. One of the ways a participant handled a form of discrimination was unique. Participant Kimberlie stated:

"So, basically the new Chair, I thought he was in my corner, he promoted a person who was an adjunct over me. The rumor was that he had a romantic interest in her that she

wasn't aware of. The Pandemic hit and I saw her email signature, and I said what's happening? So, the argument that I presented because I was going to potentially sue, I wasn't going to call it racism even though the person that was hired over me is White, the chair is White, everyone is White, except me. They're still now as of this conversation, no full-time professors, or instructors of color are in the Communication Arts Department."

The outcome of this finding supports previous studies that have been negatively impacted by the disadvantage due to discrimination in juncture with major interaction in higher education (Njoku & Evans, 2022). Many African American female faculty face discrimination while occupying influential positions at PWIs who exhibit a high degree of fear and caution with their adjustment to hair expressions (Njoku & Evans, 2022). Even, having to adjust their hair and appearance to fit positions they already substantiated themselves qualified for. Andrea detailed her experience of discrimination:

> "I do purposely have stereotypical African American demeanor! I have locks in my hair, don't care to change it, and I do wear big earrings. I might even wear African prints. I wear shirts like Whitney Houston on them. There are people who are not sure how to take it."

Moreover, navigating through the multi-levels of discrimination at PWIs have been challenging for African American female faculty while working in academia. Through the lens of academia discrimination has led to fewer opportunities at various levels held at PWIs. The perception of African American female faculty is high without being considered a token, but valuable.

Oppression

Unfortunately, if one does not have tough skin, it may convince them to forfeit the careers that have been built through perseverance. Through this study, the participants have expressed their perceptions and lived experiences of being treated unjustly by people in their department which has prevented them from contention for desired opportunities. Such treatment has the potential to cause major damage on one's mental state. One participant expressed how some of her colleagues tried to keep her down with negative connotations. Tamara stated:

> "The other two females that are White American in the same position I'm in, sometimes they'll make comments like, you don't need a doctorate, like, don't you like being fixed term, I'm not going to go back and get my doctorate. So little pressures of like, well, you know, there's not any tenure or tenure track positions, you would stay fixed term."

Intersectionality of Gender and Race

The theory of intersectionality depicts the ways that systems of inequality bases of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination overlap to construct inimitable dynamics and results. Through this study, African American female faculty experienced dual oppression in their roles at PWIs due to their race, and sexuality. This dilemma places African American women as a focal point for racism and sexism. The use of this type of discrimination was displayed as a form of disrespect. Participant Carrol stated:

> "When I was Lipscomb University, I had to deal with White male, so I had to deal with being less than I was. It was men, and there were two Black women. And women were the minority being more male than female ratio. I was dealing with gender and race biases. When advocating for myself and other Black students, the challenge is I will speak up and

advocate and I will have white women say, well, I understand and then they tried to co-opt

gender, you know, they would throw the gender card out there. And so, I have to say, no,

no, no, no, this is not about gender inequality. This is strictly racial."

Inequality

The way the institutional climate was built already puts African American female faculty

at a disadvantage. Resources and opportunities are often distributed unequally amongst

colleagues of organizations. Therefore, inequality and severe marginalization continue to be an

issue due to PWIs not having clear roles for African American female faculty. Consequently,

African American women continue to advocate for inequality and are consistently fighting for

cultural diversity at PWIs.

> "When I was hired I was the only African American female on tenure track out of maybe
>
> 400 faculty. The chair that hired me would second guess only my work and not wanting to
>
> give me credit for the work that I did."

Microaggression

Microaggression is a new form of racism that African American female faculty

experience verbally, behavioral, and environmental insults that may not always be traceable.

This form of racism can be intentional or unintentional. Therefore, African American female

faculty, in addition to the other disadvantages that are present must develop successful coping

mechanisms to help navigate through their tenures at PWIs. One of the participants discussed the

on-going microaggression affecting African American female faculty. Carrol stated:

> "I was struggling with a research piece, and I am working with my mentor, and I had an
>
> idea. I was looking at Black women and how we are the most educated, but we are the
>
> largest blog that are leaving higher education and becoming business owners. My

hypothesis is that the reason why we are that is because of the microaggression we are experiencing in higher education. So, I brought it to my mentor, and she said sounds interesting. She herself saying perception of microaggression. And I was like no, this is not a perception, just because you have not experienced it does not make it an experience. These are intentional elements that I need to quantify. Too many women with the same experiences and too many leaving."

Outlier Data and Findings

The feeling of self-doubt and rejection can contribute to professional development. Imposter syndrome creates barriers within African American female faculty that presents bigger issues with being able to have a seat at the table with everyone else (Bernard et al., 2020). Imposter syndrome emerged through the interview process as the participants described their perception and experiences at PWIs.

The interview results indicated that the participants identified their experiences as feelings of denial, overwhelmed, and overgeneralized themselves as unworthy. The results served as finding that attributed to the research study, however not a guiding subtheme fostering the phenomenon of this research study. While imposter syndrome did not emerge from the subthemes of this research study, findings within this study indicates that this syndrome to attribute to the professional success of African American female faculty at PWIs. Due to higher education failing to respond on behalf of African American female faculty, these women have created spaces and opportunities to disrupt systems that have silenced them (Porter, 2022).

One of the participants, Melissa, experienced imposter syndrome at the beginning of her education career, but it did not last very long, knowing the work that needed to be done in front of her.

"One of the things that we struggle with in higher ed, and you have probably experienced this as well, is imposter syndrome. Because imposter syndrome is real, and the imposter syndrome voices can make you feel that I can't do this because they are going to be upset. We are there to do research, scholarship, and service. Those are the three things that we are hired to do and move forward."

Research Question Responses

The research questions were designed to serve as a guide in creating protocols the participants would be able to share responses of their perceptions and lived experiences as African American female faculty at PWI's. The responses to the research questions are an essential element to supporting the research study. I have selected quotes from participants to narrow and steer clear of the responses in supporting the research question.

Central Research Question

What are the perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at predominantly White institutions?

With the data supporting the difficulties experienced by African American female faculty at predominantly White institutions, it is imperative to take a closer look to decipher what is causing this discrepancy. As of 2016, people of color only held 21.1% of professorships (Orelus, 2020). In addition, faculty of color were less likely to hold full professorships compared to their white counterparts (Orelus, 2020). However, this trend is also evident among leadership. In fact, according to the American College President study performed in 2017, of the 1,546 college leaders that participated, 1,283 were white, while 1,083 were men (Johnson & Delmas, 2022). In essence, this study captures that over 80% of the college presidency seats are occupied by white men and women, while only 5% are occupied by African American female faculty (Johnson &

Delmas, 2022). These results indicate that despite the common rhetoric echoed regarding diversity and inclusion, there is still a significant racial gap that adversely impacts faculty, students, and administrators of color (Orelus, 2020). Once common themes are explored, it is only ethical that we use every resource to provide opportunities for those qualified individuals who have been unfairly marginalized and denied opportunities to serve in their desired fields.

The participants' perceptions and lived experiences are that working in higher education is rewarding; however, being the only African American female faculty at the institution can be frustrating. "Carrol said, "I'm the only Black professor in my department. I was hired because the Black students and Black Student Organization went to the President (this was before George Floyd, pre-pandemic) they wanted to see black professors in the classroom. The President made room in the budget and hired one minority professor."

Sub-Question One

What challenges are faced as an African American female faculty at predominantly White institutions?

Part of the challenge for African American female faculty is their voices are not actually being heard. For African American female faculty, many of their struggles are attributed to an additional impact centered around race and ethnicity which in turn affects their efforts to enter, negotiate and be retained within higher education (Chancellor, 2019). Often, African American female faculty feel obligated to subjugate themselves in their success efforts and have a feeling of acceptance within academia (Chancellor, 2019). On the contrary, the classroom environments have become a major cause for concern due to hostility as a result of overt and/or covert racism (Chancellor, 2019). Unfortunately, there is no model of success for African American female faculty. Unfortunately, with no example to follow, that leaves African American female faculty

prone to increased exposure to discrimination directly related to stereotyping methods such as racism, sexism, and their intersectionality (Chance, 2021). With these challenges, it contributes to the difficulties experienced by African American female faculty in their efforts to achieve vertical mobility within higher education (Chance, 2021).

The participants described common challenges as they continued to grow as faculty members. Tiffanie said, "I feel a bit isolated. I feel like there wasn't much of a sense of community, not really knowing where to go to have questions answered. Any kind of standing out even with the student body and the comments they would make towards me."

Sub-Question Two

What form of support do African American women have to navigate their professional roles as faculty members?

Among the research and interviews conducted, support for African American female faculty within their roles at PWIs are varied and inconsistent. Mentorship programs seem to be the most effective way for African American female faculty to garner support at PWIs. Mentoring relationships provides various benefits that will aide in career growth and other notable opportunities (Jernigan et al, 2020). Effective relationships with other African American female faculty are imperative to counter discrimination and unfair treatment that could potentially prohibit African American female faculty from obtaining high positions within PWIs (Jernigan et al, 2020). In addition, mentoring relationships can also be effective between professors and students. In fact, there is evidence that supports placing a marginalized college student with a historically marginalized faculty member pays great dividends towards the student's success (Tree & Vaid, 2022). On the contrary, Texas A&M made efforts to retain African American female faculty by instituting a mentorship program that paired African

American female faculty with senior faculty members to help navigate their careers (Tree & Vaid, 2022). In addition, they were paired with external scholars in their field to help them gain professional visibility (Tree & Vaid, 2022). In this case, great efforts have been made to show the great value of African American female faculty. Unfortunately, this trend is not consistent among all PWIs.

Participants expressed little to no supportive groups that are inclusive to African American female faculty. However, if the institution did not provide the minority with inclusive support for their professional roles, they found support on the outside. Alexis said, "I've sought out conferences where I can meet and connect with other women of color. Many of them being radical and I can appreciate that. However, the university only offers a multicultural center for students and staff. They also offer affinity groups."

Summary

When collecting data and exploring the participant's perceptions and lived experiences, there was an overwhelming sense that African American female faculty have been added to PWIs "check a box" as it relates to diversity and inclusion.. In addition, the hurdles that they often must overcome do not show a true appreciation of their unique skill sets that help drive their respective institutions. Consequently, many participants alluded to the limited and lack of support from their counterparts, citing mentorship deficiencies for minorities. Despite the challenges, the participants expressed their sincere dedication and passion to remain consistent within PWIs notwithstanding the temptation to leave to pursue other opportunities that may be more convenient.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at PWIs. Within this chapter I will provide a conclusion to this research study that will identify improvements of methods that will be guided by a discussion of research questions in this study. This chapter will consist of the summary and discussion of the implications of theory and literature, limitations and delimitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This research study was developed to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at PWIs. The challenges among African American female faculty have developed strong themes that have become problematic. The commonality of the themes discussed in the previous chapter has demonstrated the lack of leadership responsibility of diversifying faculty among PWIs. Common themes that were developed in this research; intersectionality of race and gender, sexism, discrimination, microaggression, inequality, and oppression.

The participants were helpful in sharing their experiences in addressing the central question along with the other two sub-questions relating to the perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at PWIs. The central research question was what are the perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at PWIs? Findings in this research demonstrate that African American female faculty dealt with racial microaggression, having as sense of community, and belonging, upward mobility within their department, and being the only African American female in their department.

The first sub-question solicits, what challenges are faced as an African American female faculty at PWIs? The participants were passionate articulating their ability to progress forward, regardless of the challenges they endured. In reviewing the research, African American female faculty had to develop coping mechanisms to embody professional success.

The second sub-question focused on what form of support do African American women have to navigate their professional roles as faculty members? The participants reported the institutions did not provide support groups that help with African American female faculty. Therefore, participants found support groups outside of their institution through social media support groups or joining conferences that tailor to the minority group for professional development. Participants agreed that addressing the overall lack of support would help overcome the retention in higher education at PWI's.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings in this research study illustrate the challenges that African American female faculty endure while being employed at PWIs. The results of the findings correlate to the findings in literature reviews that triggered barriers between cultural values, and enhanced opportunities for career advancements. Multiple participants mentioned there were several factors that influenced their ability to achieve both academic success and personal growth in higher education through persistence remaining hopeful for change.

Summary of Thematic Findings

All participants in the research study experienced similar issues pertaining to intersectionality of gender and race, discrimination, oppression, inequality, and microaggression. These issues the African American female faculty experienced may have also been intentional

and unintentional, yet consistent with culture. These women did not see any improvements to address the racial tension on a larger-scale, or intersecting identity through culture development.

Intersectionality of Gender and Race. Crenshaw (1989) understood the theoretical framework of intersectionality of gender and race as a social experience. Thus, intersectionality has been characterized as a focus point of personal experiences. The participants' in this study wanted the narrative of their identity to appear in a positive light that reflected a sense of belonging. Intersectionality shapes an entire social system in which provides instructional structure (Nichols & Stahl, 2019). The participants found that sexuality and preconceived notions on African American women was a neglected factor experienced in higher education.

Additionally, in efforts to build more representation on campus, participants suggested that institutions need to hire more women faculty of color. Participants also noted backlash due to race and ethnicity from students. Students would put on their evaluation that the women made faces and they hated White people. In review, intersectionality of gender and race must be explored to inflect social cultural context in efforts to address the system of inequality.

Inequality. Inequality has set African American females at the bottom of the economic hierarchy which holds a foregrounding effect on their influence in higher education. African American women from the beginning have had to strive to secure any type of higher education presence in America. It wasn't until 1865 when an African American female obtained a bachelor's degree from Oberlin college (Williams, 2023). In history we see African American females obtaining their college degrees and involving themselves in civil rights and politics. Participants in the research study alluded to involving themselves in outside support groups and conferences that detail their request in upper mobility and how to cope with interlocking systems in higher education.

There is overwhelming research that address the framework of inequality. To combat inequality in higher education, institutions must first expand and grow advancing equity in society (Deem et al., 2022). Participants agreed along with the literature review, there needs to be further widespread evolution and an ongoing scope of inclusion in culture and minority groups to focus on the inclusivity in higher education (Deem et al., 2022).

Microaggression. Many studies in academia have addressed systemic and racial microaggression. Further research has addressed 127 scholarly works of microaggression in higher education (Lee, 2019). African American female faculty in higher education are not treated fairly when holding a professional role at PWIs. Most of the participants in this study felt devalued even when having the same credentials as their counterparts. In addition, they felt overlooked and even felt unworthy to convene at the table with their collogues.

After being a repeated target and developing emotional, and psychological distress, these African American female faculty still found ways to guard their hearts and equip themselves on how to respond to negative situations with positive affirmation of their self-worth. One participant Kimberlie stated that even students refused to call her Dr. Kimberlie. Instead, the students would call her by her first name, or even refer to her as "hey girl" even after correcting the students several times. Being disrespected and not valued is critical in understanding how to support inclusion and equity in higher education concerning African American female faculty.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Implications for policy and practice has an impact on faculty attrition. Research shows African American female faculty recruitment and retention is negativity affected in higher education. Due to the current policy and practices, including affirmative actions rendered by the

Supreme Court has impacted the path in which minorities were afforded comprehensive investments has now become a multi-leveled issue.

Implications for Policy

The implications for policy should be a supportive and developmental plan that outlines recruitment and retention that is strategic for inclusion for African American female faculty. There should be some type of incentives for institutions that follow the policy and implement diversity inclusion. Making sure that all stakeholders are held accountable in communicating the needs of the institution to hire more African American female faculty based on their qualifications is imperative. To address these issues, institutions may also increase funding to address the shortage of African American female faculty in higher education. Should the implications for policy be addressed, then there is the possibility to build a strong sense of community and develop relationships with all stakeholders.

Implications for Practice

There were implications for practice with African American female faculty working at PWIs in higher education. Institutions should consider the importance of recruitment and retention that allows a diverse working environment for the faculty and student body alike. In addition, institutions should include diversity inclusion when building a sense of community that encourages minority teachers and provides a sense of belonging. Unfortunately, due to the recent response to the DEI indoctrination, there has been a concern about the recent push in policy for both the state and across the country to cultivate the issues that dictate culture climate.

This research study may be beneficial to stakeholders in higher education to examine current practices in hiring African American female faculty at PWIs. Leadership in higher education must be cognizant of multiple factors overgeneralizing these groups of people and

understand the misconceptions present concerning African American females. This study may also bring change to uncover intuitional corruption and the lack of integrity.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

As it relates to the theoretical and empirical implications of this research study, the methods complied have been beneficial to elucidate the repetitive cycle of problems faced by African American female faculty at PWI's. Given the many theories discussed, intersectionality theory is applicable to each participant's common theme identifying with how race and gender often negatively impact their opportunity for career growth and recognition from colleagues. Unfortunately, there has been little to no movement regarding addressing the concerns of African American female faculty, and the hierarchy remains the same (Turner et al., 2020). Also, this study extends previous research as each participant described feelings of inadequacy due to rejection from their white counterparts. The participants interviews, questionnaires, and the letter writing prompt were beneficial in elucidating several key components of the research study. With the interview transcripts in conjunction the questionnaire and letter writing prompt, it gives a clear indication that more attention is needed to address and apply palpable solutions that will provide more opportunities for qualified African American female faculty across a diverse subject field.

Empirically, it is evident that African American female faculty need a platform to express the inequalities commonly faced to at least raise awareness to start configuring how to improve the educational system. Black feminism can serve as the gateway for African American women to carve out specific roles for themselves in higher education. The experiences captured by the participants enhances the research due to the ability to pinpoint the struggles experienced by the African American female faculty and is an indication of how women are affected globally.

With the experiences articulated by the participants, it legitimized the research performed. Also, it extends to pinpoint the role that students play in making life difficult for their African American female faculty. PWI's are working to have a diversified study body.

Limitations and Delimitations

This research study gathered 10 participants who were currently employed at PWIs in higher education. With the underrepresentation of African American female faculty, the study included limitations and delimitations that presented challenges from the participants and the researcher. This data collection showed the short comings and the implications that were put in place to focus on the scope of the research study. Limitations in this study revealed the weaknesses in this study that were out of the researchers control. Furthermore, the outcome of the data was only for the selected population and not applied to a large population. On the other hand, delimitation are factors that the researcher chooses to adopt in the research as margins in the study.

Limitations

This research was subject to biases confounding the influence of this study involving the use of a phenomenological study to capture diverse perceptions and lived experiences within the African American female culture. The transcendental phenomenology was explored in this research study. The transcendental phenomenology approach helped to address the research questions of the phenomenological study (Neubauer et al, 2019).

Limitation are weaknesses discovered within the research study that are out of the researchers control but could affect the results of the findings that must be acknowledged (Theofnidis et al., 2019). The results in limitation with my study had some generalizability that revealing the perception and experiences of African American female faculty at PWIs that may

be similar to other research (Infante-Rivard, 2018). The population was defined in detail using random sampling to avoid sampling biases (Infante-Rivard, 2018). In addition, having the right sample size ensured there was support in the generalizability in research (Nikolopoulou, 2023).

This research study had potential limitations based on this phenomenon. One limitation in this research study was that the participants were not from one institution. On the other hand, another limitation is that all the participants are African American female faculty at a predominantly White institution. Due to the nature of this phenomenon, the targeted audience was African American women. However, it would be interesting to explore how this phenomenon is prevalent among all minority groups.

During the selection process of participants, the researcher had difficulties getting the participants to commit to the data collection process. In total, there were potential participants who filled out the survey but when contacted, there was no response thereafter. This made the data collection difficult with having to start the process over. However, there were potentially 40 participants who filled out the survey to be contacted to participate, but there were 10 participants in this research study.

Other limitations included personal biases of the participants and researcher. Lastly, to prevent personal biases from tainting the research study during the data collection process, a personal journal was kept. The journal was used to manage emotions that would develop between with the participants during the data collection process. Another debriefing mechanism used during the data collection process with the researcher was addressing any concerns with her mentor.

Delimitations

On the contrary, delimitation are boundaries that are set by the research themselves to make the objectives or results achievable (Theofnidis et al., 2019). The delimitation from this study is that all the participants are not from the same institution. Being that all the participants are from various institutions makes this phenomenon more compelling due to the fact, it shows that this problem is not confounded to one location, but it is a world-wide issue that needs attention. Participants in this study had to have a bachelor's degree and above with more than 2 years of teaching experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Having a diverse faculty within higher education is critical. Furthermore, interventions aimed to increase the African American female population at PWIs should include more inclusive hiring strategies and develop programs that are not the prominent culture. Through the need of African American female faculty at PWIs can acquire a sense of belonging and success by changing the demographic environment (Patitu & Hinson, 2003).

In consideration, one suggestion for future studies I explored the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants through implications and insight. Further research should include exploring the various levels of adjunct faculty life, being assertive which involves recruitment and retention, and their overall forward and upward mobility at PWIs. Future research should explore challenges interfering with social and mental issues affecting African American female faculty at PWIs. Understanding that social and mental issues involving African American female faculty at PWIs can be a societal burden which impacts the lives at the inclusive workplace.

Conclusion

African American females have been the most educated across the education discipline at PWIs. Their representation and presence in higher education has affected the institutional stakeholders. This research study was intended to explore the voices of African American female faculty at PWIs; to express their perceptions and lived experiences through real life issues. There is future literature that still needs to continue to evolve. Where real issues are not addressed, change cannot begin to emerge. Once the issues of African American female faculty at PWIs are fully explored and recognized, then we can start to address the needs to diversify higher education faculty members at PWIs. As higher education institutions continue to evolve, PWIs must consider African American female faculty's experiences. This will allow PWIs to support the mission of the institution and prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging for African American female faculty that deserves a seat at the table.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Form

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at predominately White institutions. To participate, you must be an African American female with 2 or more years of experience as a professor at a predominately White institution and have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Participants, if eligible, will be asked to complete a short questionnaire via email which participants will be allowed up to 2 days to complete, participate in an audio- and video-recorded interview (45-60 minutes) and complete a writing prompt (1-week deadline). If you would like to participate, please click the link provided at the end of this post to fill out a screening survey to see if you are eligible. A consent document will be emailed to you one week before the start of the interview if you meet the study criteria.

To take the survey, click here: **https://www.surveymonkey.com.**

Appendix B

Consent

Title of the Project: The Perceptions and Lived Experiences of African American Female
Faculty at Predominantly White Institutions: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Jasmine L. Jackson, Student/Doctoral Candidate, School of Education
Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be African American
female, 2 or more years of experience as a professor at a predominately White institution and
have a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experiences of African American female
faculty and the strategies used to overcome barriers at predominately White institutions in the
United States. At this stage in the research, barriers will be generally defined as the intersection
of race and gender inequality that African American female faculty face at PWIs through
empirical, theoretical, and practical significance.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participants will answer a questionnaire to further the research study prior to the
   interview. This will allow the participates up to 2 days to answer 4 questions.
2. Participate in an audio- and video-recorded virtual interview that will take 45-60 minutes.

3. Complete a writing prompt via email to respond and send back no later than a week.
4. Participants will have the opportunity to review transcript after the interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include increased knowledge on the subject matter for improvement in higher
education.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer in a locked drawer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The research and the faculty chair/sponsor will have access to the data.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Jasmine Jackson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ████████████ ██████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Denise Nixon, at ██████████████.

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations.

The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

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

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

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix C

Interview Questions

To make sure every detail of the interview is captured, I will be recording each session. Do I have your permission to record this session? Thank you, let's begin!

I am now interviewing: _____.

1. Describe your perception and experiences as an African American female faculty on your campus.

2. Describe your challenges when working at a predominantly White institution.

3. How were those challenges addressed to continue your journey as a faculty member?

4. What advice helped other African American female faculty overcome those challenges and remain employed at PWIs?

5. Tell me about any struggles that you still experience at PWIs?

6. Would else would you like to discussion of your experience and challenges at PWIs?

7. What type of support and resources are offered for culture inclusion to guide faculty of color at PWIs?

8. What type of mentoring programs are offered to those faculty members of color who desire to be a track tenure adjunct faculty?

9. Describe your relationship as it pertains to your White counterparts.

10. How do you obtain a posture to serve at a PWI, as it relates to culture climate?

11. Reflecting on the support or lack of support for your counterparts, what advice would you give to another inspiring African American female faculty who would has a desire to have a teaching career?

12. What do you think is important that we have not covered in this interview that you would like to share?

I thank you for participating in this interview and taking the time to share your experiences and regarding this phenomenon. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at ███████████████

Appendix D

Questionnaires

1. What can we learn from perceptions and lived experiences of African American female faculty at predominantly White institutions and the strategies used to overcome barriers, to create an environment that is conducive to empowering those alike working at predominantly White institutions?

2. From an African American female perspective, what types of support have you received to facilitate cultural success as a faculty member at a predominantly White institutions?

3. What has been your difficult challenges you have faced while being employed as a faculty member at a predominantly White institution and what coping mechanisms were used (if any)?

4. How does your work experience differ from another race as faculty member at a predominantly White institution in higher education?

Appendix E

Email/Letter Writing Prompt

African American female faculty are critical in promoting and enhancing a diverse community at PWIs? Could you please provide further insight of your experiences and perceptions in detail at your PWI, that affected your sense of belonging and an impact to your career?

Appendix F

Demographic Survey

Surveymonkey.com

1. Do you identify as Black or African American?
Yes
No

2. Do you identify as female?
Yes
No

3. Which category describes you?
Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BBA, BFA, BS)
Master's degree (e.g., MA, MBA, MFA, MS, MSW)
Some post graduate work
Applied or professional doctorate degree (e.g., MD, Ddc, DDS, JD, PharmD)
Doctorate degree (e.g., EdD, PhD)

4. Number of years teaching at a predominately White institution?
Less than 2
2-5
5-10
10-20
20+
Other (please specify)

5. What is your age in years?
22-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65+

6. What Predominately White College/ University do you currently or have worked at previously as a teacher?

7. What course(s) have you taught?

8. Do you teach online or in-person?
Online
In-Person
Hybrid (online and In-Person)

9. Are you a full-time or part-time professor?
Full-Time Professor
Part-Time Professor

10. Contact Information
Name
State/Province
Country
Email Address