The Road to the Presidency: A Case Study of HBCU Organizational Culture and Its Impact on the Career Progression of Women of Color

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THE ROAD TO THE PRESIDENCY: A CASE STUDY OF HBCU ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CAREER PROGRESSION OF WOMEN OF COLOR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by
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B.S., Southern University and A&M College, 2008
M.A., Southern University and A&M College, 2013
August 2020
Dedicated to
My mother, Brenda Smith
My father, Malcolm Simmons
and
My family
“In every conceivable manner, the family is a link to our past, bridge to our future.”
~Alex Haley
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation represents not only my work in academia, but it is a milestone for the families of first-generation college graduates. This is for us.

Even the strongest of bricks need mortar. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my Lord and Savior. His protections and grace both challenged and grew my faith. He is my mortar.

My thanks goes out to all those who have helped me to complete this dissertation without whom this project may not have been possible. In particular, I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Roland Mitchell for some excellent conversations, support and his persistent coaching that kept me on track juggling this dissertation as well as other life commitments. The wonderful women who took time from their schedules to participate in this study and add to its success. The other people I list in this section are those who have supported me with positive energy while I was on the pathway to achieving my goals. My committee members Dr. Eugene Kennedy, Dr. Susan MacGregor, and Dr. Gregory Stone, whom each gave their expertise, time, and effort for the benefit of this dissertation. Together, their dynamism, vision, sincerity and motivation have deeply inspired me. They taught me the methodology to carry out the research and to present the research works as clearly as possible. It was a great privilege and honor to work and study under their guidance.

I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love, prayers, caring and sacrifices for educating and preparing me for my future. I’m grateful for my sister, Neizia Holland, and my dear friends Dr. Samantha Thompson and Dr. Mary Johnson whose mental, emotional, moral support saw me through this until the very end. These ladies in addition to Mr. Michael Key were my biggest cheerleaders, and I am forever indebted to them.

I chose Higher Education because of the work that I do each and every day. And though
this was not an easy road to travel, it was made possible with these two people. Dr. Brandon K. Dumas and Dr. Luria Young made the choice of higher education administration, just a little bit easier to swallow.

I owe a special mention to my late mentors, Dr. Ivory Toldson, Dr. Beverly Wade, and Mr. Tevester Scott. Although I struggle with the loss of them daily, I am forever indebted to their memory. To my colleagues that didn’t let me give up or say no, I am extremely honored to call you friends.

Finally, my thanks go to all the people who have supported me to complete the research work directly or indirectly.
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ABSTRACT

The American workforce is currently experiencing an increased level of diversity in comparison to previous decades due to augmented representation of people of different races, socio-economic backgrounds and genders across sectors (Warner, 2014). However, there is one variable that has remained largely unchanged, the underrepresentation of African American women in executive positions in higher education institutions (Cook & Cordova, 2007). Data suggests despite women’s advancement in areas of public life over the last thirty years, in higher education administration they still significantly lag behind their male counterparts. Researchers note that minority women face multiple barriers to their ability to obtain administration positions in higher education (Murhurjee, 1993). In its 2012 issue of the American College President Study Report, the American Council on Education (ACE), notes the number of female collegiate presidents has increased by a meager 17% over the past 25 years (American Council on Education, 2012). Women experience inferior salaries, lower-rank appointments, slower rates of promotion, lower rates of retention, and less recognition through awards are all tangible manifestations of gender-based obstacles (Dominic, 2013).

This study examined the aforementioned phenomenon utilizing the case study approach through a phenomenological lens and used Feminist Poststructuralist Theory as a framework to guide the research. The purpose of conducting this case study through a phenomenological lens is trifold: 1) to identify the contributing factors that limit the advancement and progress of African American women in leadership roles in higher education administration, 2) to illuminate the multiple barriers of entry into campus administrations faced by minority women, and finally, 3) to understand foreseeable
challenges for minority females seeking to fill such positions in the future? The case study entailed in-depth interviews with five (5) highly placed African American (Black) women actively working in HBCUs, who are selected across the southern states of United States of America including Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Educate a man and you educate one person. Educate a woman and you educate a village

-West African Proverb

The American workforce is currently experiencing an increased level of
diversity in comparison to previous decades due to augmented representation of people of
different races, socio-economic backgrounds and genders across sectors (Warner, 2014).
However, there is one variable that has remained largely unchanged, the
underrepresentation of African American women in executive positions in higher
education institutions (Cook & Cordova (2007). Despite the great progress our nation has
made in terms of gender and racial equality, there continues to be a pervasive lack of
African-American women in senior leadership positions (Turner, González, & Wood,
2008; Turner & Quaye, 2010)

Investigating African American women's experience is critical to understanding
racism and sexism in society. Academe can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger
society; in academe minorities and females do not easily attain accolades of duration and
acknowledgement. Women remain significantly underrepresented in senior
administrative leadership roles within higher education institutions across the United
States. In its 2012 issue of the American College President Study Report, the American
Council on Education (ACE) notes the number of female collegiate presidents has
increased by a meager 17% over the past 25 years (American Council on Education,
2012). Researchers and institutions such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have
extensively documented this finding in the literature of academic leadership. Inferior
salaries, lower-rank appointments, slower rates of promotion, lower rates of retention,
and less recognition through awards are all tangible manifestations of gender-based obstacles (Dominici, Fried, and Zeger, 2008). Such obstacles have been described extensively and are an evident widespread problem. The Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the United States also delineate the same lack of diversity in senior level leadership (Johnson-Bailey, 2006). The typical profile of a U.S. college or university president continues the status quo: a white male in his early 60s with a doctoral degree, who has been in his current position for at least seven years (Cook, 2012).

The social order has a tremendous influence on notions about leadership skills and women in leadership positions. Research suggests that women are equivalent to men in terms of leadership; however, the female image in society tends to be inferior in comparison to men (Northouse, 2013). Female leaders possess a multitude of skills that prove their ability to lead, including, teamwork, nurturing emotions, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and compassion (Paris, 2009). Women have also proven to be academic equals to their male counterparts, by earning more than 50% of degrees and professional degrees in the U.S. (Northouse, 2013). Moreover, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics women account for nearly half of the labor market (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Despite accounting for more than half of the managerial positions, women account for less than 15% of executive positions in the Fortune 500 (Chandler, 2011). In the collegiate arena, roughly 13.5% of top leadership positions are occupied by women (Bilen-Green, Froelich & Jacobson, 2008). Overall, these women are confronted with a phenomenon first linked to Wall Street and the financial industry; the proverbial “glass ceiling.” Northouse (2013) contrasts the glass ceiling women face in male dominated industries with a “glass escalator” to the top leadership positions available to white males.
These statistics generated the question of why there continues to be a paucity of women of color in senior level administration jobs despite their accomplishments in higher education? This study examined the aforementioned phenomenon utilizing the case study approach through a phenomenological lens and utilized Feminist Poststructuralist theory as a framework to guide the research. Overall, this research dissected organizational cultures at HBCUs to determine the impact it has on gender inequality in senior level administrator positions in higher education.

As far back as the late ‘90s women accounted for 52% of the collective student body at U.S. colleges and universities (Chliwniak, 1997). The American Council on Education (ACE), is an organization comprised of university presidents. The organization promotes the notion that diversity in higher education is critical and must be a part of every institution of higher learning’s mission. They cite the collective diversity among institutions as the greatest strengths of America’s higher education system. Administrative diversity has a direct relationship with the institution’s strength, intellectual qualities, and output (American Council on Education, 2012). As diversity increases, these variables increase correspondingly. Higher education is structured in a top-down design. Faculty, staff, and student-body take their direction from the administration. Diversity at the administrative level, therefore, provides depth and fertility, which are crucial to create an environment conducive to research and teaching. Preserving such diversity will remain paramount to the future of academe (American Council on Education, 2012).

Scholars have cited affirmative action as key to the employment equity of women in higher education (Gorena, 1996). However, they acknowledge that women are
subjected to multiple factors that impede career advancement. Typical among these factors are sex-based discrimination, objectionable job assignments, inferior job status, and a lack of pay equity compared to male counterparts. Indeed, research delineates that gender equity has not been achieved, and that women continue to occupy inferior positions to men. Multiple researchers found that minority women are faced with racism and sexism, a phenomenon phrased as “multiple jeopardy” (Chliwniak, 1997; Lindsay, 1980; Benjamin, 1997; King, 1990). Such discrimination creates barriers that often encumber the careers of minority women. The contemporary commonality of terms such as “glass ceiling” and “concrete wall” may serve as evidence that gender equity in higher education leadership remains limited. The application of glass ceiling theory to higher education research is not a new occurrence. Throughout the years, scholars have investigated and provided a wide-ranging and in-depth portrait of female roles in higher education settings. Extant research detail a “frigid” academic climate experienced by women in varying roles including faculty, administrators, and graduate students (Bilen-Green, Froelich & Jacobson, 2008).

Multiple aspects, including stereotyping, inequitable agency assignments, assignment of assistance roles as opposed to leadership roles and inequitable distribution of resources produce tension, deter, and hinder women at every level in academe (Bilen-Green et al., 2008). Research has determined that personal influences and experiences persuade an individual’s outlook about leaders, but also dictates their feelings towards gender diversity in leadership positions (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Conger, 1991; Sanchez-Hucles, 2010). For example, if one’s experiences with female leaders in higher education institutions is marred with ridicule, disparaging remarks, and a lack of respect
for one’s efforts; that person may have a negative and biased outlook towards female leaders. In contrast, individuals who had positive experiences with female leaders such as deserving praise, advancement, and inspiration from female leaders, are more likely to have positive attitudes towards gender diversity in leadership positions. Researchers note the attitudes and perspectives towards female leaders have created a pre-conceived judgment towards female leaders (Bilen-Green et al., 2008; Conger, 1991; Sanchez-Hucles, 2010).

Past findings explain that female students make up almost 60% of campus populations, while the leadership positions occupied by women reflect approximately 26% (Blackhurst, Ester, Gores & McDonald, 2017). Research on the topic reveals that women were more likely to lead public institutions than private institutions as of the year 2016. Additionally, they were most underrepresented among doctorate-granting institutions and were more likely than men to lead public special focus institutions (Cook, 2012, Becks-Moody, 2004; Boyd, 2002; Johnson-Bailey, 2006). Issues such as tenure, student evaluations, pay-gaps, and lack of promotions are all issues that women face in higher education, specifically women of color. Benchmarks for success in higher education are being explored by looking at what catalyzes change and how transformation is measured in the gendered university culture. Prior studies have exhibited biases towards women seeking to obtain positions throughout every level of academe. Such positions include internships, fellowships, and chair-positions (Bilen-Green, 2008). Current trends in research also revealed other impediments for women, particularly minorities, seeking leadership in higher education, such as: lack of mentorship, and workplace isolation. Because so few female leaders occupy senior level administration positions, supervisors may have
inappropriate and/or inconsistent management protocols for women. This opens the door for elevated turnover rates, limits opportunities for women and stunts diversity in the senior levels of organizations.

Diversity is important on college campuses and essential to provide the necessary academic and cultural components for all students. One description of diversity is: “multiple different cultures or ethnicities coexisting within a group or an organization” (Bilen-Green, 2008). The selection process, academic gatekeeping, accompanied by resource allocation among the various sectors of the economy, is working to the advantage of men around the globe (Nguyen, 2013). These problems are either slowing down the efforts of women in pursuing higher learning levels or eliminating them from competing for greater echelons of the academy in their respective countries. The concept of gender equity is recognized as a best practice in higher education administration, although it has not yet been achieved.

Diversity fosters increased improvements in virtually every aspect of an institution. In the HBCU setting, the need for diversity in administration is augmented by the challenge of coping with a more diverse student body. By increasing gender equity, HBCUs and PWIs can resolve two problems with one solution. A diverse academic setting serves to reassure recruiters that their students have been trained to accept and respect diversity (Valian, 2005). Prior studies infer that a higher percentage of female representation in ranking executive positions may potentially have greater impact on the respective institutions (Bilen-Green, 2008; Valian, 2005).

Overrepresentation of men in various senior positions in the universities is a concurrent problem globally affecting the efforts of organizations to win the gender
inequality war. However, some states still contemplate on key strategies and techniques to combat this global concern (Gamble & Turner 2015). Existing research related to the status, experience, and position of women in the field of higher education has attracted the attention of researchers, scholars as well as philanthropists. Even though the number of women pursuing higher education has increased over the years as either undergraduates or post-graduate students, they are still failing to advance through ranks of academic leadership in higher education institutions (Smith, 2015).

The governments and civil rights activists in developed nations have attempted to increase the number by lobbying for more women in leadership positions at universities and colleges with little success. The selection process, academic gate keeping, accompanied by resource allocation among the various sectors of the economy continue to work to the advantage of men around the globe (Nguyen, 2013). These problems are either slowing down the efforts of women in pursuing leadership roles in higher education institutions or eliminating them from competing for greater echelons of the academy in their respective countries.

Minority women encounter a more specific challenge in the form of “intersectional discrimination” (Ware, 2000). Inherent bias from both white and minority males characterizes this manifestation of discrimination. Female administrators enduring offensive language and sexist jokes have highlighted such environments. Female faculty members note that such environments lead to students openly questioning their ability to lead in the classroom (Ware, 2000). Esteemed minority female professors have noted instances in which students directly challenged them. Particularly insulting are occurrences in which the professors’ knowledge were questioned in classroom settings
(Ware, 2000). Some scholars document instances in which students have gone so far as to make open suggestions on how classes should be conducted. Such accounts suggest that the tone set by the administration creates an environment in which females in academe are confronted with intersectional discrimination from colleagues and students (Ware, 2000).

As early as 2010, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that women not only lead the U.S. job market; but they also represented the greatest number in the education sector (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This is proof women can succeed in the labor market and also infers that the glass ceiling is likely a residual of ignorance, gender bias, and discrimination. Such negatives are amplified for African American females (Chandler, 2011). Higher education institutions are in a unique position to lead society to a more equitable state. Administrators of such institutions may set the tone for the leaders they are creating, thus reinforcing the need for diversity in leadership. Underrepresentation of female administrators may prevent scholars from understanding true diversity (Chandler, 2011). With appropriate planning and support institutions of higher education can supply the skills necessary for female minority administrators, adequately serve the needs of students, and achieve the general mission of the institution. This change can begin by making strides towards institutions without gender-biased leadership hierarchies. However, by ignoring the issue, colleges and universities are failing to confront one of the greatest threats to academe.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Data suggests despite women’s advancement in areas of public life over the last thirty years, in higher education administration they still significantly lag behind there
male counterparts. Researchers note that minority women face multiple barriers to their ability to obtain administration positions in higher education (Murhurjee, 1993).

Furthermore, groups such as the National Urban league, Glass Ceiling Commission, and UNESCO have conducted studies, which highlight a lack of compliance and adherence to existing affirmative action laws (Williams, 1993). African American women, who do acquire such positions, face a plethora of additional challenges such as isolation, lack of institutional support, responsibilities beyond the job description, and stereotypes (Whitehead, 2017).

African American women are faced with more hardships as they attempt to obtain leadership positions. Longstanding discrimination has formed trends that strengthen traditional barriers of entry for minority women. Despite the looming presence of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and other agencies that monitor and enforce fair employment practices, higher education institutions have failed to take significant measures to adequately address this issue (Whitehead, 2017).

Gender bias is one problem that mostly favors men over women; it has negatively affected the development of economies and academic advancement in various emerging and developed nations (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, & Josephson, 2017). Additionally, the issue of gender bias is a contemporaneous problem that permeates virtually all the sectors of academia. Some of the resulting inequality in academia includes promotions of junior employees, positions, and different income levels for those in the same position, authorship of peer revised articles, successful acquisition of grants, and student assessments (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

In 2012, the stakeholders of higher education developed some strategies to help
improve the meager participation of women in higher education leadership and research roles internationally. There is one problem that has made the issue of the gender gap unsolvable to researchers over the past several decades because it is both multifaceted and complex to understand. The institutional culture and structures of the education are both privileging and preserving the male practices, dominance, and tradition (Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016). The organizational culture of academe has embarrassed the efforts of both women and activists to increase the number of women in the leadership roles in academic institutions (Longman & Anderson, 2016). Women aspire to attain the leadership roles in educational institutions of higher learning across the globe, but the cultural norms established in the organization have impacted their efforts negatively.

Shifts in the organizational culture of higher education occurred as an outcome of struggles over civil rights in the 1960s and by population changes in society during the latter part of the twentieth century. Organizational culture is characterized as shared methods of insight, philosophies, values, suppositions, convictions, desires, states of mind, and standards in associations (Pusser & Loss, 2002). Researchers have examined institutions, organizations, and subunits of organizations as distinct and separate cultures with unique sets ceremonies, rites, and traditions. It is a pattern of shared basic assumptions and is developed over time as people in the organization learn to deal with problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Zhu & Engels, 2014). It is generally acknowledged that educational change benefits from a supportive environment (Fullen, 2001). Cultural influences are a key issue when considering innovation and change processes (Aguinis & Roth, 2005). As scholars suggest, the success of any
transformational effort may well depend on the extent to which organizational culture issues can be addressed (Keup, Astin, Lindholm & Walker, 2001).

It is important to address this issue mainly because the lack of willingness to change could lead to the destruction of an institution. In the past, the culture of HBCUs has been one to resist change. The rich traditions of the universities have nurtured and produced some of the most prolific artists, thought leaders and entrepreneurs of this time. For this reason, it is believed that the “if it is not broken, don’t try to fix it” motto has become complacent in the operational effectiveness of the culture. What they really mean is, if it is not public knowledge, or detrimental to our existence, then put it away until later or until it becomes a problem. This is evident by the lack of concern senior level administrators have for appropriating tasks for the benefit of the entire campus community. Intervention changes perception therefore challenging efforts of diversity and inclusion.

There are common threads that transcend the professional experiences of female scholars and administrators regardless of their social, political, and cultural context. What is missing in research is whether the organizational cultures of our institutions play a role in that experience. It is important to shed light on a perspective that is often not considered because of reasons like prestige, or tradition. This can no longer be used as an excuse. From analytical standpoint, gender bias is a complex issue that flags inadequate representation of women in higher education leadership positions. The problem is thriving under the presumption that there is no significant dissimilarity in the capacity and possibility between women and men (O'Brien & Wegren, 2015). Scholars have established that gender inequality in academia, in most countries, is not a problem of an
explicit and deliberate will of men to subdue women. Rather, many scholars, philanthropists, human rights activists think that it is the outcome of subconsciously working biases which often influence the decisions in any sector of the (O'Brien & Wegren, 2015). Therefore, this case study will attempt to address how the organizational culture and boundaries sufficiently affect the representation of women in higher learning leadership roles through a phenomenological lens.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Higher education remains one of the most important components to societal advancement. In this effort the researcher specifically addresses factors that are critical to the career progression of women of color. The purpose of this case study viewed through a phenomenological lens is trifold: 1) to identify the contributing factors that limit the advancement and progress of African American women in leadership roles in higher education administration. 2) to illuminate the multiple barriers of entry into campus administrations faced by minority women and finally, 3) to understand foreseeable challenges for minority females seeking to fill such positions in the future. Academe’s mission and commitment to the generation and broadcasting of knowledge marks this. Moreover, challenges attributed to the global diminishing of higher education support and resources, demand constant vigilance in terms of efficiency as well as productivity.

The continuously evolving nature of society, our efforts for advancement, and the ever-increasing complexity of global issues demand that returns on societal investment in higher education be justifiable. The underrepresentation of females and minorities in higher education administration roles is so prevalent; it has moved beyond a documented reality, to common knowledge. The statistics are even more meager where race and
gender intersect at African American and female. This lack of representation suggests that the consortium of available and accessible talent is not being optimally utilized (Whitehead, 2017). This trend requires an immediate and thorough investigation to identify and understand its causal factors. This may contribute to the discovery of strategies and creation of policies that lead to a more equitable gender balance in higher education administration, and society.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Women of color at United States colleges and universities encounter a host of issues that their white counterparts do not. Thus, this study’s significance is rooted in its potential to expand the existing body of knowledge in diversity in higher education administration, professional socialization, and professional development of minority women. Previous research by Bobbitt-Zeher (2007) has demonstrated these issues are problematic for academe however, little research has focused exclusively on the challenges that Black female administrators encounter in higher education institutions.

Leadership in higher education that promotes the incorporation of diversity into organizational culture seeks the improvement of colleges and universities. Such leadership holds diversity as its core value and recognizes the need to transform higher education to meet the exigencies of a changing environment. Leadership focused on diversity envisions a multicultural environment at colleges and universities that is inclusive and respectful of the plurality of ethnic and racial groups in society. As such, it pursues a vision of colleges and universities as multicultural organizations seeking alignment with a rapidly changing society to meet the educational and research needs of all population segments in society.
There are ethical responsibilities that make it necessary to address the concerns of women in leadership in higher education. The aim of achieving diversity in colleges and universities neither implies that quotas must be fixed for different groups and races nor is it required that unqualified students should be considered for admission. The diversity sought in this regard aims at the positive future of society in requiring universities and colleges to make efforts in reaching out and making genuine efforts to create a diverse and healthy learning atmosphere that are suitable for their objectives. Structural diversity enhances the chances of students encountering others from diverse backgrounds (Smith, 2015). Although informal interaction with peers that are racially diverse can happen in several campus settings, most of them happen outside the class. Such discussions can include informal interactions, frequent discussions in residence facilities, campus programs and social functions. Another form of diversity experience is gaining knowledge about diverse people and having learning experiences with diverse groups in and out of the classrooms. The influence of ethnic and gender diversity upon education outcomes is enabled mainly from engaging with diverse groups in the informal campus atmosphere both inside and outside of the classroom (Smith, 2015). Structural diversities are necessary but not sufficient to maximize the benefits of education, hence the importance of theories that are based on actual participation of students with diverse groups.

Many consider education to be the foundation, while the experience of gender and ethnic diversity significantly impacts the process of learning in becoming responsible citizens (Dewey, 1966). Students that are educated in diverse environments will prove to be more well placed and capable in participating in an increasingly complex and
heterogeneous society. Theorists such as Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, and John Dewey gave way for concepts like critical pedagogy, which combines education with critical theory. It explains that a teaching approach inspired by Marxist critical theory and other radical philosophies, which attempts to help students question and challenge posited "domination," and to undermine the beliefs and practices that are alleged to dominate (Dewey, 1966). A key focus in this research is how concepts like these are theorized without racial, ethnic, and gender inclusion. The actual experiences that students have regarding diversity on a consistent and meaningful basis, impacts the learning and democracy outcome of higher education.

The extant literature on how women matriculate successfully to leadership positions in higher education severely limited. While research on women in educational administration has grown since 1985, there is little conclusive literature bridging the gap between organizations and women’s practice and leadership theory (Stanford, Oates, & Flores, 1995). The field needs a better understanding of women in leadership (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995). It is critical that researchers create bodies of work that will provide insight into the traditionally conceptualized work of HBCUs as organizations.

1.4 Research Questions

To add to the body of knowledge regarding HBCU organizational culture and African American women in higher education administration and leadership, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What challenges confront African American women that occupy leadership roles in academe?

Relevance: African American women with positions in higher education administration
are the exception not the rule (Howard-Vital, 1989). This question is designed to reveal specific obstacles faced by those Black women that break through. Such obstacles may include but are not limited to entrenched systematic racism and sexism, segregation, interpersonal challenges, and isolation (Evans, 2007).

Foundation of the Question: This question may demonstrate that explicit challenges are faced by various African American women in leadership roles (Howard-Vital, 1989). This data may serve to inform institutions of higher learning; particularly human resource officials and administration leaders. This data may in-turn function as a foundation for reversing longstanding trends (Valian, 2005).

**Research Question 2:** What are the prevalent barriers preventing African American women from attempting to obtain leadership roles as it pertains to the organizational culture at HBCUs?

Relevance: This question is designed to indicate definite barriers significantly contribute to the proverbial glass ceiling (Evans, 2007). This question was also functioning as an indicator of specific problems that arise for minority women from acquiring desired positions.

Foundation of the Question: This question is intended to expose all barriers that significantly dissuade or prevent African American women from attaining the positions they covet. Moreover, this question may provide insight towards the attitudes and exasperation of the few African American women in higher education administration, as well as those seeking to break through. It may answer why women in higher education administration are a rarity (Valian, 2005).

**Research Question 3:** How does advancement of African American women in
leadership roles assist with overcoming obstacles presented by the glass ceiling?

Relevance: Research suggests that positive imagery and peer support function as tools of empowerment for other women. Such tools prove critical for African American women to succeed in leadership roles (Bates, 2007). This question is projected to support the notion that imagery and peer support significant factors in the success of women of color.

Foundation of the Question: Because research has found and there is little to dispute these factors are important contributories to the success of Black women; the exploration of this research question is vital to understanding the way many African American women overcome the effects of the glass ceiling. Research has revealed significant disadvantages faced by Black females that are not presented to non-minority women (Mosley, 1980). The question is expected to illustrate varying levels of success experienced by African American women.

In this study, the knowledge and experiences of African American women in higher education administration were surveyed using the qualitative case study viewed through a phenomenological lens method of data collection and analysis. According to Bogdan & Biklen (2003), qualitative researchers "set up strategies and procedures to enable them to consider experiences from the informants’ perspectives"(p.7). Scholars cite this approach as an appropriate research strategy for researchers seeking to understand how people view their environment and the world (Merriam, 2002). Data was collected through in-person interviews, conducted by the researcher. The two initial instrumental questions were used to gather demographic information about the participants. The final instrument was chosen to extract information pertaining to the participants’ experiences as Black women in HBCU administration positions. Four
parameters were used to manage the interviews: (1) talk about three factors related to your occupational environment that had a positive impact on your career; (2) identify and expound on the three greatest challenges you have faced in higher education administration, and do you believe that they are associated with race or gender (3) what advice if any would you give Black women seeking a career in higher education administration, and (4) what more can colleges and universities do to attract, aid, and retain Black females in higher education administration.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study contributes to a significant gap in the literature concerning Black females in higher education administration. It may advance the discourse related to challenges and successes of Black women in academe. However, this study has limitations, which are important to note in order to fully understanding the findings. Though the research is valid, it focused on a limited setting: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). With the use of case studies in qualitative research practice, research suggests that differences in perspectives in this methodology may prevent researchers from developing a mutual understanding of practice and rigor, specifically when conducted in one socio-economic setting.

As a result, in case studies viewed through a phenomenological lens, investigators adopt this research design to understand a real-life phenomenon under important natural conditions that are relevant to the occurrence under investigation (Hyett, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Thomas 2011). The study focused on the impact of organizational culture on the career progression for women of color at HBCUs, but this could be speculated as a phenomenon in higher educational settings across the world. The
relevance and correlation to the population would arguably stronger had the sample size
been expanded across spectrums of the Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) as well.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the concepts that were discussed
throughout this study, this section will identify, and demarcate how the concepts and
other relevant indicators were contextualized for the purpose of this research as follows:
Critical Race Theory: an epistemological tool useful in recognizing patterns and trends
involving gender, race, and leadership positions (Ladson-Billings, 1995).
Diversity: multiple different cultures or ethnicities coexisting within a group or an
organization (Bilen-Green, 2008).
Organizational Culture: is characterized as shared methods of insight, philosophies,
values, suppositions, convictions, desires, states of mind and standards in associations
(Pusser & Loss, 2002).
Case Study: a descriptive and exploratory analysis of a person, group or event (Yin,
2018)
Phenomenology: a qualitative research method that is used to describe how human beings
experience a certain phenomenon experiences (Giorgi, 2012)
Post-Structuralism Feminist Theory: offers a way of studying how knowledge is
produced surrounding language, meaning and subjectivity (Weedon, 1997).

1.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 has presented the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the
study, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, and the
limitations of the study. This chapter also provided the research questions; 1) What
challenges confront African American women that occupy leadership roles in academe?; 2) What are the prevalent barriers preventing African American women from attempting to obtain leadership roles as it pertains to the organizational culture at HBCUs?; and 3) How does advancement of African American women in leadership roles assist with overcoming obstacles presented by the glass ceiling?; that will be used to study whether the organizational culture of HBCUs impact the career progression for women of color. The results of this study may provide information that leadership could use to reform policy and protocols related to diversity and inclusion for their perspective campuses.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This case study viewed through a phenomenological lens utilized Feminist Poststructuralist theory to examine how organizational culture impacts the paucity of representation of women of color in higher education leadership roles. This chapter highlights relevant scholarly literature for the current study. In addition, the chapter provides the following: 1) a history of North American HBCU’s Organizational Structure and Cultural Practices 2) a description of the accomplishments of women of color in higher education leadership, and 3) a comprehensive overview of the Feminist Poststructuralist theoretical framework. The primary sources of this particular chapter of the research are derived from empirical literature reviews from scholarly articles, studies, and journals that are relevant to women leadership in Higher education or addressing the research problem.

2.1.1 History of North American HBCUs

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are higher learning organizations that were instituted in the 1800s during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. The central mission of these institutions was to allow African Americans to acquire access and opportunity to education. Although the HBCUs have primarily focused on offering educational opportunities to the underserved African Americans, the institutions also enrolled all learners in spite of their ethnic background. Presently, the available literature has mostly concentrated on the role of HBCUs while there are a limited number of studies on the history of HBCUs, their organizational structure, and cultural practices. In light of this, the analysis will seek to review the available literature
on the history of North American HBCUs’ organizational structure and cultural practices.

According to Mobley and Johnson (2015), HBCUs were established as one of the steps of Black Americans' fight against disparities and injustices. The authors indicated that traditional Americans’ culture tends to perceive education achievement as the critical root of an individual's position in society (Mobley & Johnson, 2015). However, the nation denied African Americans equal chances to education, thus, the educational rift between the whites and the blacks made them assume a dominated status in the society. The literature delineates that HBCUs were therefore started to perpetuate black culture, enhance their life, and set up the next breed of African American leadership through the provision of equal educational prospect (Mobley & Johnson, 2015). Therefore, HBCUs have been effective in reflecting the conditions of Black Americans in addition to highlighting the transformative capability of education in changing their lives.

Correspondingly, Upton and Tanenbaum (2014) documented that HBCUs were instituted in North America for the sole intention of offering education to African Americans who initially had negligible prospects of joining institutions of higher learning. The study postulated that before the Civil War, advanced training was practically inaccessible by African Americans. Precisely, the nation denied the recently freed slaves an opportunity to enroll in the established universities and colleges that were primarily dominated by white students (Upton & Tanenbaum, 2014). The state thus formed HBCUs as one of the critical means of addressing the educational disparities that Black Americans faced. Arroyo and Gasman (2014) also designated that before the establishment of HBCUs, African scholars such as Fredrick Douglas, who managed to acquire solid education, studied in dangerous and undesirable settings. As a result, during
this epoch before the institutionalization of HBCUs, most individuals who were unable to obtain formal education resorted to self-learning.

Similarly, Longmire-Avital and Miller-Dyce (2015) argue that the primary purpose of forming HBCUs in the 1800s was to increase access to postsecondary learning institutions among Black Americans. The authors noted that before the Reconstruction epoch, the US had subjected Africans living in the US to servitude to the extent that they denied them access to formal education. Gasman and Commodore (2014) also indicated that before the Reconstruction period, it was prohibited for a slave to acquire precise knowledge on the grounds that it could disrupt labor hierarchy and slavery institution. In retrospect after the Civil War, the quest for knowledge became an intriguing pursuit given that it was the only hope of liberty and ethnicity upliftment (Gasman & Commodore, 2014). HBCUs accordingly served as the starting point of educational accomplishment for Black Americans and the immense pride of the whole nation.

In his study, Strayhorn (2014) highlighted that before the Reconstruction period, the US lacked a structured post-education system for African American students. At worst, federal policies and particular statutory banned the provision of education to black students in the nation. In response to this disparity, the first HBCUs were established in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, in the year 1837 (Strayhorn, 2014). Later on, before 1957, the country had instituted two HBCUs institutions, which included Wilberforce University in Ohio and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania (Strayhorn, 2014). However, Christy (2017) noted that despite the fact that the organizations were referred to as the institutions of higher learning, the primary mission during the initial stages was to offer both elementary and secondary education to learners who had no prior training. In the early
1900s, the institutions started offering higher learning programs.

According to Lockett and Gasman (2018), the US established the second wave of African American higher learning institutions after enacting Morrill Act in 1862 to offer education to the blacks in the midst of ethnic segregation. The act necessitated all states in the US to put in place a land grant college for African American learners who were denied access to the existing postsecondary institutions subjugated by the whites. In the same way, Christy (2017) asserted that implementation of this act was because most of higher learning organizations barred Black American students from admission during segregation. However, following the passage of the Morrill Act, the country instituted public land-grant learning facilities precisely for Black American students. Moreover, the author noted that during this period following the implementation of the Morrill Act, the majority of the private black learning institutions were put in public management (Christy, 2017). Initially, the majority of the HBCUs institutions provided programs in mechanical skills, agriculture, and technical specialties with few learning facilities giving college and university level degree programs.

2.1.2 Organizational Structure of HBCUs

According to Hyatt et al. (2015), administration in higher learning institutions refers to the manner in which macro-level decision and policies are formulated within these facilities. Based on this definition, it is a general approach to defining the structures and procedures that HBCUs institutions implement when making organizational decisions and allocating responsibilities that enable them to acquire clear authority patterns. The study also postulated that governance is critical in postsecondary learning facilities given that it offers guidance regarding how the institutions operate and make
decisions (Hyatt et al., 2015). However, the authors noted that the administrative structure of HBCUs could vary from one organization to another based on their foundation, traditions, and political structure. While the argument is valid, Hyatt et al. (2015) recognized that three elements of the administrative structure are consistent across the HBCUs learning facilities. The aspects include the institution’s president, the board of trustees, and the senior administrators who significantly influence the institution’s culture.

Bark and Bell (2018) point out that the duties and obligations of the board of trustees in HBCUs are consistent regardless of whether they are private or public. According to this study, the investigators found out that the board of trustees makes up the administrative body of the HBCUs institutions (Bark & Bell, 2018). The board has the responsibility of carrying out strategic planning and overseeing the institution’s president who has an obligation of actualizing the plans of the board. In another study, Washington Lockett, Gasman and Nguyen (2018) stated that the major role of the board of trustees is to formulate all legal and fiduciary plans about the institution, which is critical in determining how the institution operates. In this case, the authors were on the view that the board of trustees plays a role of developing HBCUs programs, service policies, and school’s missions and visions (Washington Lockett et al., 2018).

According to Herron-Williams, Hoffman, and Brown (2017), for the HBCUs to run at the peak of efficiency, a comprehensive understanding of the institution’s missions and objectives is necessary. The study found out that the board of trustees usually has in place the much-needed knowledge required to govern the institution (Herron-Williams et al., 2017). The study, therefore, hypothesized that it is critical for the board of trustees to
figure out the direction of the institution regarding where it is coming from and where it is heading (Herron-Williams et al., 2017). White (2016) also argues that the importance of the board of trustees in the HBCUs administration structure cannot be underestimated. However, much of the documented literature have put more emphasis on the role of faculty in HBCUs governance and have grossly overlooked the part of the board of trustees.

Nevertheless, the board plays a pivotal role in critical decisions that influence the operation of the institutions. One of the most crucial parts of the board of trustees designated in this study is the selection of the institution’s president. In other words, it is during the selection period of the president that the board of trustees creates a foundation for an affiliation that can either engender progress or turmoil in the organization.

Regularly, individuals tend to comprehend the role of the board entirely in the limited perception of acquiring new funds for the institution. However, Freeman, Commodore, Gasman and Carter (2016) argue that the boards of trustees play more roles beyond making financial decisions. The board has the capability of influencing nearly all areas of administration including the institutional culture and practices. The author puts forward a claim that even though they are primarily disregarded in higher education leadership, trustees are the significant contributors of decision-making procedures in HBCUs (Freeman et al., 2016). Therefore, the immense presence of the trustees in the administrative processes and decisions has become a common culture across the HBCUs learning institutions.

The president of the HBCU institutions plays an essential part in the administrative structure. Taylor (2018) highlights the need of a competent president in
these institutions for the preservation and maintenance of academic culture and organizational issues. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the leader is obligated to the board of trustees and as the chief executive of the school has a responsibility of heading daily operations of the university (Taylor, 2018). In other words, the president has a duty of regularly informing the board concerning all issues in the university in a timely and correct way. The study also indicated that the president is anticipated to illustrate adequate leadership skills and competencies to enable the institution to achieve the dynamic quest of the objectives reflected in the schools' mission and vision (Taylor, 2018). In doing this, the president should therefore comprehend the needs of higher education learning and collaborate with the faculties and the board members to develop programs that are aligned with those requirements.

Senior administration is another significant aspect of HBCUs governance structure. Murnane (2017) found out that administrators in these higher education learning settings play a plethora of supportive duties in the institutions including secretarial, managerial, monetary, and staffing tasks. In this view, senior administration functions closely with the individual faculties and academic registrar department for the smooth running of the institution. Contrary, Washington Lockett et al. (2018) found that in some HBCUs higher administrators can either focus on student admission, quality assurance, finance, human resource management, or institution marketing and public relation. In most cases, individuals tend to target the topic of HBCU leadership majorly on the president while overlooking other contributors at hand in administrative structure. The role of the higher administrators cannot be ignored given that they play supportive roles in the administration of HBCUs institutions.
2.1.3 Selection of HBCU Presidents

Research suggests that it is significant for the HBCUs to effectively select the institution’s president to assume the responsibility of managing the fraternity, guiding decision-making process, and maintaining academic culture (Wright, 2015). The analysis pointed out that HBCUs organizations are ethnicity-focused and, for this reason, they tend to be racially and culturally intertwined. In this case, the author argued that it is significant to understand the process of selecting a president in these institutions based on the organization’s values and ethnicity perspectives (Wright, 2015). Correspondingly, Freeman and Gasman (2014) assert that given the racial identity of HBCUs, it is essential to comprehend that appointing an HBCU leader can be considered as an additional position of individuals whom the society perceives as a Black American leader. However, the study failed to offer a comprehensive view regarding the selection process of the HBCU president since it only focused on the narrow perception of postsecondary learning and institutional type. Therefore, when selecting an HBCU leader, it is critical to have a complete understanding of HBCU racial background, historical importance, and traditional and modern racial challenges to acquire a fuller context of HBCU presidency.

Research suggests that the selection process of the HBCU leader is one of the most critical roles of the HBCU board of trustees (Freeman et al., 2016). By stating this, the authors were on the argument that the future progress and the sustainability of the institutions lie on the ability of the board members to select the most competent and successful president (Freeman et al., 2016). The function of the board composition plays a significant part in the decision-making process during the selection of a president and determines whether it will be in a better position of choosing the most competent and
able leader to head the institution. Nevertheless, the investigation failed to recognize the various challenges that render presidency selection to be a daunting task. Given the economic hardships that HBCUs experience, most of the prospective candidates might not be willing to apply for the presidency position thereby limiting the pool of applicants, from which the board can choose. Therefore, the issue raises a question on the credibility of the HBCUs leaders and whether they were the best suited for the position.

Commodore et al. (2016) offered a study documenting the selection process of a president in HBCU institutions. The analysis indicated that the board of trustees plays a significant role in decision-making concerning the selection of the president. However, the president does not take part in these discussions to maintain the credibility of the process. The analysis also indicated that the board of trustees selects an executive committee that would assist the board in choosing the most suitable candidate (Commodore et al., 2016). However, it was not clear on whether the executive committee elected is allowed to incorporate outside consultants to enable them to play their role adequately. During the selection process, the vice president is expected to play a secretarial position in addition to managing the resources required for the smooth operation of the committee.

According to Scott and Hines (2014), the selection criterion of the presidency is developed to offer guidance to the selection committee and the board members. Precisely, the principle is formulated after a full consultation within the institution governance to determine the qualities and experiences that are relevant for the post. The investigator further indicated that after the prospective candidates have sent their applications, the committee reviews the list and shortlists the candidates who have met the requirements
for an interview (Scott & Hines, 2014). The final meeting is usually discussion-based to enable the selection committee to respond to the applicants’ questions and also enable them to effectively determine if the applicant’s competencies and attributes are the best fit for the post. Subsequently, the committee then forwards the name of the chosen applicant to the full board of trustees for recommendations. Although the study was significant in illustrating the process of selecting a president in HBCU institutions, the investigator did not show the party that determines the practicing terms and conditions of the new leader in the learning organization.

A study by Taylor (2018) revealed that succession planning poses a significant challenge during the president search and mainly if it happens a few times in a decade. Although the majority of the HBCU institutions have policies in place that guide the selection process, such provisions often get outdated. However, the study found out that HBCU institutions that adequately prepare for the next election before it happens to acquire a better position of succeeding the institutions into the next era (Taylor, 2018). In a similar study, Leichter and Somers (2017) found out that the most challenging task of selecting an HBCU president is the transfer of organizational knowledge to a committee, whose members are different in every selection period. The board members serve the university for a short period, and most of them do not outlast one president. The analysis recommended that it is significant to educate new board members concerning the president search process in addition to combining the board members who have served different generations to share ideas on the best practice.

2.1.4 Accomplishments of Women of Color in Higher Education Leadership

Much of extant literature on Minority administrators in higher education does not
specifically highlight African American female administrators. It is important to understand the historical context in which women of color were able to enter the landscape of higher education.

In the early days of the United States republic, laws barred African Americans from learning to read and write. Legislation that guaranteed an education as a basic right led to the right to a significant number of female minorities acquiring basic and, subsequently, higher education. The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees equal protection under the law for all citizens. The landmark case Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS resulted in a unanimous decision that the standard of “separate but equal” rule was unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS, 1954). Data suggests that since the beginning of the twentieth century African American women have made significant advancements in higher education (Bates, 2007). However, more appointments of minority women are needed to close the racial and gender gap at the senior administration level of America's higher education institutions.

In 1932 the introductory edition of The Journal of Negro Education was published. Among its articles was "Reading Achievements, Interests, and Habits of Negro Women". In this article, author Alva Hudson addressed what she deemed “problematic issues in achievements of Negro women in oral reading, their rate and comprehension in silent reading, the types of reading in which they engage, the factors affecting their reading interests and habits, and the relationship between the kinds of
recreational activities in which they engage and the types of material which they read” (Hudson, 1932). Hudson concluded that it was necessary for educational institutions and authorities to provide guidance to increase the reading achievement of Negro women and to improve their reading interests and tastes (Bates, 2007). In the wake of Hudson’s observations, black women began to make measured progresses in the procurement of higher education by the mid-1900s (Evans, 2007).

Anna J. Cooper was among the first few Black women in the United States to earn a PhD. She earned a Doctorate from the University of Paris-Sorbonne in 1925 and among her many accomplishments in 1930 she was named the second president of Frelinghuysen University in Washington, D.C. (Bates, 2007). In 1904 Mary M. Bethune established an industrial institute for women that bore her name. In 1923 she merged her school with a co-educational school in Florida known as the Cookman Institute. In less than twenty years she had upgraded the school into a college; and become a college president in the process. This bold act granted perpetual access to higher education for African Americans (Hine, 1993). Mable P. McLean earned a bachelor’s degree in education from Johnson C. Smith University and a master’s degree in education at Howard University. In 1974 she was named first woman President of Barber-Scotia College in North Carolina; where she served two separate terms. Among multiple other honors and accolades, in 1986 she was elected the first female chairperson of the Council of Presidents of the United Negro College Fund (Bates, 2007).

Dolores M. R. Spikes earned a degree in mathematics is from Southern University
at Baton Rouge. She later earned her master’s degree in mathematics is from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, and her doctorate in mathematics is from Louisiana State University. Dr. Spikes returned to her Alma mater to serve as the President of the Southern University and A&M College System in Louisiana. This made her the first female President of a Louisiana public college or university, and the first African American woman in America to serve as president of a multi-campus University System (Bates, 2007). Marguerite Ross Barnett graduated from Antioch College with a bachelor’s degree in political science in 1964. She earned a master’s from the University of Chicago in 1966 and a doctorate degree in 1972. She ultimately became the first African American female President of the University of Houston in Texas, a predominantly White institution (Bates, 2007). Preceding her presidency at the University of Houston, Barnett served as the first African American Chancellor of the University of Missouri-St. Louis (Wells, 1989). Such pioneers in education prove the abilities and potential of minority women in academe. Thus, the lack of representation of minority women in higher education administration cannot be accredited to lack of ability.

In a study of African American administrators in land grant institutions, Hoskins forecasted an uncertain future for African American women in higher education administration. His data revealed that women held less than 30% of the administrative positions, and these positions were usually lower in the hierarchy than those of African American males (Hoskins, 1978). Less than a decade later, Lea Williams compared the characteristics of males and females occupying the position or comparable rank of, chief
academic officer at 36 African American colleges and universities. Only six women occupied these positions (Williams, 1986). Williams found evidence that female African-American chief academic officers at an African-American college or universities are likely to be (1) paid lower than male counterparts, (2) promoted from within the institution, (3) slightly older than male counterparts, (4) more tenured, (5) single, (6) engaged in little scholarly writing, (7) a member of several professional organizations, (8) performing slightly different tasks than male counterparts, and (9) not expecting to assume the college presidency as her next position (Williams, 1986).

There is little dispute about African American women’s contributions to the world, however, research that adequately addresses the common experiences of Black females in higher education administration affairs (Jackson, 2003). A review of the extant literature exposes the tendency of researchers to group African American women on all levels of academe together. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students are typically studied as a group. This approach fails to identify variances between the groups of Black females in higher education (Jackson, 2001). Initial research about Black women in academe concentrated on matters involving recruitment, retention, advancement, and tenure (James & Farmer, 1993). Contemporary research continues the dialogue but offers some guidance for those facing similar barriers and obstacles (Guillory, 2001).

However, research investigating the interaction of race and gender in the experiences of Black female higher education administrators is significantly limited. Thus, this literature review summarizes research concerning Black women in higher
education, to sort and compile literature concerning challenges of African American women in higher education administration. In his important work Robert Staples provided a thought-provoking discussion of the academic environment and practices that generally exclude minorities seeking administrative positions. Staples described academe as a politically based, billion-dollar industry geared toward maintaining the power, status quo of the majority (Synnott, 2008). Current research concerning Black women in higher education maintains that Black female students, faculty and staff face obstacles due based on race and gender (Nichols & Tanksley, 2004). Researchers have found recurring themes of racial and gender discrimination and a lack of institutional support (Zamani, 2003). Other research has revealed Black women as trapped in inhospitable, indifferent, and isolated environments (Watts, 2003).

Joan Acker of the University of Oregon argues that most feminists writing about organizations assume that organizational structure is gender neutral. In fact, organizational structure is not gender neutral; quite the opposite, traditions concerning gender lie beneath the documents and contracts that constitute the foundation of organizations and the basis for positing about them. She notes: “The positing of gender-neutral and disembodied organizational structures and work relations is part of the larger strategy of control in industrial capitalist societies, which, at least partly, are built upon a deeply embedded substructure of gender difference” (Acker, 1990, p. 139). Other scholars also reference evidence to suggest that gender discrimination is a deliberate component of modern organizations. Citing the suppression of sexuality as one of the
initial undertakings of any bureaucracy (Burrell, 1984). Historically, large organizations such like armies and religious foundations allowed only limited participation of women. Furthermore, a trend of progressively excluding women and endeavoring to eliminate sexuality in efforts to control members and other elements of the organization's activities (Hacker & Hacker, 1987). Active sexuality was perceived as detrimental to organized processes and practices. By omitting female participation in specific areas was likely, a way to govern sexuality. Sexuality had to be observed or applied outside the organization. Since women are associated with sexuality, they therefore face inherent barriers to executive levels of organizational hierarchies (Burrell, 1984).

In her work: The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy (1984), Kathy Ferguson of Temple University offers a pervasive analysis of bureaucracy as a configuration of oppressive male power; built through an abstract and male-centric take on rationality, rules, and procedures. Consequently, substantiating the arguments of Burrell and Hacker. Ferguson suggests bureaucracy itself is a construction of male domination. Under the weight of such crushing organizational pressure; females must formulate ways of managing and overcoming the powerlessness they experience. Ferguson argues the answer is rooted in the personal experiences of females experienced separate from the organization. The notion is that it offers a basis for opposing the organizational norms and for the formulation of unconventional practices and organizational structures.

This review of the literature demonstrates the need for more research about, and more theoretical construction by and about African American women as they enter
institutions of higher education as undergraduates and attempt to pursue professional careers. Some researchers consider the study of African American women's experience as essential to understanding racism and sexism (Smith & Stewart, 1983). Others perceive the colleges and universities as a microcosm of society; the accolades and advancement are not easily attained by women and minorities (Gregory, 2001).

2.2 Theoretical Framework of Feminist Poststructuralism

![Theoretical Framework Diagram]

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework
Source: (Smith, 2019)

Within higher education, there are multiple theories that seek to explicate the paucity of female leaders at senior administrative levels. Feminist Poststructuralist theory (FPS) is unique, because it provides a method to examine how knowledge is produced (Weedon, 1997). The body of research on the lack of female leadership in higher education institutions all highlight the fact that in order to effectively address this
problem, it must be viewed through the lens of the lived experience of the marginalized
group: leaders who are women of color. For the purposes of this case study using a
phenomenological lens, the Feminist Poststructuralist theory and the tenets of agency,
discourse and power were utilized as a framework to guide this research.

Poststructuralist feminisms refer to a collection of feminist critical engagements
with questions of agency, discourse, difference, identity, knowledge, language, and
power (Giblin, 2016). They are frequently related to an alteration in feminist praxis
during the 1980s and early 1990s that strayed from perceiving women as a homogenous
group and began recognizing the plurality of gendered identities and subjectivities
(Giblin, 2016). The origin of post-structuralism is rooted in 20th-century French
philosophy. There are a plethora of scholars, including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault,
Julia Kristeva, and Judith Butler, who refuted the traditional structuralist principles and
created the basis of post-structuralism (Barrett, 2005). In deconstructing and adapting
these frameworks, theories concerning knowledge creation, gender and sexuality, and
identity have become a meticulous target for poststructuralist feminist critiques (Giblin,
2016).

In 1976 Michel Foucault gave a synopsis of the postructuralist movement: “for
the last 10 or 15 years, the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions,
practices, and discourses” (Foucault, 1976. p. 28). This indicates that the way scholars
viewed their institutions, as well as how they dissected their practices and discourses
should be questioned through a different, specifically, poststructuralist perspective.

Foucault also describes the notion of “subjugated knowledge” (Foucault, 1976. p.
31). In the context of this study is predicated on the concept that one’s ideation is
bounded by rationality, and also bounded by the source of their knowledge. The crux of this knowledge rests in the fact that women who attempt to navigate the higher education landscape have a distinctive perception of how HBCUs operate and how the organizational culture manifests at these institutions, which can provide a unique outlook that can add value to administration. Without highlighting these experiences, women of color may continue to be subjected to gender and racial bias in their attempts to become leaders at higher education institutions, unless the current patriarchal system is questioned, critiqued and dismantled.

The theory of feminism adds to post-structuralism by fostering the ability "to address the question of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class, and race might be transformed" (Weedon, 1997, p. 20). There are intrinsic features in feminist post-structuralism that differentiates the theory from postmodernism and other concepts: the focus on issues related to self and identity. Weedon (1997) notes that, "while different forms of post structuralism vary in both their practice and in their political implications, they share certain fundamental assumptions about language, meaning and subjectivity" (p.20).

Essentially, within poststructuralist theory, there is a commonality in the way social meanings, social organizations and individual consciousness are cognized and analyzed: language. (Lupton, 1997). Language is important in poststructuralist theory because it operates through chains of discursive dichotomies, which result in the creation of our sense of selves or our subjectivity. These constitutions of language are not innate, but constructed, normalized and maintained through a plethora of social practices. A central facet of poststructuralism is a clear understanding of Saussure’s theory of the sign,
whereby he postulates that language is in fact an abstract system, comprised of chains of signs. According to Weedon (1997), these signs are bifurcated into a signifier (sound or written image) and a signified (meaning). This indicates that the meaning of signs is relational within the poststructuralist context (Lupton, 1997). Similarly, according to Lupton (1997), the tenet of power exhibits relational properties: “Power is not a position of particular social groups, but it is relational, a strategy which is invested in and transmitted through all social groups” (p. 99). This indicates that language, meaning, power and subjectivity all inextricably linked in the feminist poststructuralist context.

Overall, the feminist poststructuralism offers a framework for this study to dissect the current socially available discourses at HBCUs and ways African American women encounter them (Davies, 2000). The salient questions that are associated with feminist poststructuralism include, but are not limited to: “How does discourse function? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects?” (Bové, 1990, p.54). Barron (1995) highlights some additional questions that are pertinent to this study: “What discourses are being mobilized? Whose interests are being served by these discourses?” (p. 109).

Consequently, feminist poststructuralism is the best theory for this case study through a phenomenological lens because it can create the possibility of change while simultaneously requiring the examination of any connivance in maintaining social inequality (St. Pierre, 2000).

The concept of agency within feminist poststructuralist theory is associated with the notion that women do not have autonomy over their bodies and thus their positionality in life. (Giblin, 2016). From a historical context, higher education
institutions are steeped in patriarchal and colonial traditions, which impact the way women, navigate through the world. Likewise, when women of color attempt to move through the realm of higher education institutions they do not have control over their career progression. Extant research delineates the fact that even though black women have played a pivotal role in the development of Historically Black Colleges and Universities across the nation, they have all but been left out of the senior level administration. This is a critical issue because the paucity of black, female leaders directly impacts the type of knowledge, scholarship, and epistemological programs that are being diffused at these universities. The limited number of women further evidences this and gender/equity studies programs offered at HBCUs across the country.

For the purpose of this study the tenet of discourse will be used to endeavor to gain a better comprehension of ways women in higher education have come to understand their roles, aspirations and successes (or lack thereof) and to highlight discourses that have been formerly marginalized to the forefront (Burr, 1995). Within Feminist Poststructuralism, discourse is envisaged as a “set of beliefs and understandings, reinforced through daily practices,” (Weedon, 2004, cited in Barrett, 2005 p. 82). These beliefs and understandings can ultimately shape our comprehension of how we should best navigate our environment (Weedon, 2004).

Bové (1990) highlights the importance of discourse and states that:

‘‘provides a privileged entry into the post structural mode of analysis because it is the organized and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language that it studies: its aim is to describe the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought’’ (pp. 54– 55).

This study seeks to capture the perspectives of African Americans in higher
education who have been impacted by a male dominated organizational culture at HBCUs. The tenet of discourse will be used to give a voice to the women interviewed for this study to share their lived experiences that have been previously silenced, to be promulgated. According to Barrett (2005), in this context, discourse does not refer to a specific type of language or text, but is the outcome of our language practices, which engender shared cultural narratives.

These narratives are important to understanding the barriers that African American women face in their attempts to ascend the higher education leadership hierarchy. It is essential to note that there is intersectionality between discourse and notions of identity, which can dictate not only how women perceive themselves, but also even how they envision success, and who or what a successful leader looks like. To that end, although African American women may be positioned in leadership roles, this can often be juxtaposed with conflicting discursive practices from their professional male dominated environment. Consistently enduring the aforementioned conflicting discourses within the higher education landscape can often create feelings of discontent, lack of belonging, and angst for women, which further elucidates the need to create a safe space for their voices to be heard.

2.4 Review of Related Literature

This section of the dissertation reviewed relevant literature, which addresses the research problem, purpose, and research questions. The researcher based on the concepts in the research questions and the rationale behind the study to review and caption this section of the dissertation as shown below.

2.4.1 : Review of Related Literature of Women and Leadership
The fight for women’s inequality in the United States can be seen as a major vantage point in the ongoing campaign to increase female visibility in the American public sphere. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (2015) report on the status of American women, it was observed that occupational segregation persists across various industries, including the lucrative fields of engineering, technology, and medicine. This lack of gender diversity extends to decision-making roles, and although women have made strides, they are still underrepresented in most masculine dominated fields.

Colleges and universities have increased their efforts in recruiting women to fill positions in which they are represented in lower numbers than their male counterparts. The efforts by the institutions to raise the number of women working are due to the need to advocate for gender equality between men and women (Seltzer, 2017). Furthermore, the organizations are augmenting the number of women employed as a response to recent research which shows that a highly varied staff; including the gender diversity, is crucial in helping students succeed much better as well as improve the research ability of the institutions (Seltzer, 2017). According to Seltzer (2017) women working in administrative positions in establishments of higher learning have been earning less than their male counterparts for a long time.

Although the number of women participating in the academic leadership is increasing, the rates are still low compared to that of male counterparts. The benefits derived from balanced gender staff in universities not only indicate the growth in gender equity but also mean a lot to the success of students and the quality of institutions' research ability (Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013). Diversity helps to improve the quality of
research. For that matter, it is important that institutions embrace the ways of bringing the gender balance in the academic leadership (Garret, 2015). Institutions themselves need to spearhead the reforms necessary in bringing a gender balance in the academic administration. Organizational cultures of higher learning institutions are one of the key elements that need prior reforms. The notion that education is a male domain must be discarded to curb the gender prejudice that women go through when they intend to take academic leadership.

2.4.2 Gender Inequality in Leadership

The idea of women being weak in organizational politics is supported by Lester, Sallee, and Hart (2017) in their study on gender in organizations. Gardner (as cited in Lester et al., 2017) finds out that women experience sexism in most of their interactions with colleagues. According to the study of Gardner (as cited in Lester et al., 2017), females feel that they do not get due credit for their hard work and therefore engage heavily in tasks, which they perceive as feminine.

Some of these interactions contribute to their decisions to leave the institutions. Women are restrained by some cultural structures in which they are expected to take care of the children and their spouses. While men are considered as the key providers for their family, women are treated as custodians of the family to ensure that the children and the husband are well taken care of (Reinarz, 2002). However, Reinarz (2002) further argues that females of today are brought up in a way that empowers them to achieve anything they want; she holds that there are still some minor constraints that obstruct them from achieving equally as males.
Nonetheless, Jackson, and O’Callaghan (2009) introduced ‘glass ceiling’ which basically refers to the barriers women and racial minorities face while ascending the ranks of leadership. In fact, diversity efforts through the federal government have made higher education institutions still grapple with ‘glass ceiling’. The Glass Ceiling Commission set to research on this issue found barriers keeping people of color and women out of leadership positions. Inadequate qualified minorities and their willingness to take up these positions formed societal barriers. The internal structure barriers emanate from the business environment, which intentionally alienates particular groups while government barriers included inadequate reporting and lack of law enforcement for equality. Jackson and O’Callaghan (2009) state that institutional theories aiming at stability use the same policies that alienate minority groups. The social theories also associate leadership and managerial roles with masculinity as has long been directed by culture.

Davis and Brown (2017) also showed that black women are discriminated against in higher education institutions that are predominantly white. They mark time in the lower positions and are always are left out of promotions. Black women face ‘double blind’ difficulties, which implies both racial and gender marginalization. They go through hardships as their credibility is perpetually questioned and are deemed as lacking adequate credentials. Their valuable contribution is always undermined, and they also suffer negative stereotyping, and blanketed as ‘angry’. These factors have led to a low ratio of black women working in institutions of higher learning (Davis & Brown, 2017). Those who employ them also often exploit them by assigning them responsibilities that
do not match their low pay. These women simultaneously prove their worth and fight against this sidelining. This struggle is neither experienced by men nor by the white race. As these women fight to be retained in the biased organizations, their personality, beliefs, and capabilities may be washed down because of too much negativity (Davis & Brown, 2017).

Like others, Larocca (2003) demonstrated that women are overrepresented in low pay and low skill jobs while men dominate the superior positions with high earnings. Gender stereotyping favors the male attributes for leadership while the female attributes are seen fit for subordinate roles. In an organization, the leadership style mattered, with democratic leaders being evaluated as competent as opposed to autocratic leaders. Autocracy was associated with masculinity while femininity was linked with democracy. This neutralizes the social beliefs that masculine and not feminine attributes demonstrate competency in leadership. The low number of women in managerial positions magnifies the effect of a negative evaluation, where the notion of bias is created is because of their few numbers.

Jackson and Harris (2007) stressed that racial discrimination, gender stereotyping that perceived men to be more competent, exclusion from informal networks, and inadequate preparation for the high profiled position were barriers for black women’s ascent to college/university presidency. It is important is that black women understand the situation are prepared to overcome these hurdles. They also strive to rise above discrimination along gender and racial lines. Women presidents of higher learning institutions grapple with female stereotyping and preconceptions of women. Their white colleagues do not value them highly also interact with them based on certain
assumptions. Though internal hiring and gate keeping have hindered women of color for rising in the leadership ranks, this study did not report so. This may be attributed to the tenacity, positive attributes, and appropriate preparation in terms of skill acquisition and leadership training that they have undertaken.

Dominici et al., (2008) wrote that the progress to top leadership positions in academic institutions is sequential from one rank to the next. Since women are rarely appointed to leadership positions, the number that can reach the top ranks is limited. Men are the majority in the administrative and executive leadership positions at most colleges and universities. Women hold positions at lower levels such as heading research, chairing committees and overseeing academic programs (Dominici et al., 2008). They also note that with the current understaffing at these institutions, holders of administrative officers have to dedicate longer working hours. Women cannot fit in these schedules because of family obligations while men are more/less flexible hence considered. Most women do not agree with the leadership style in place where men propagate hierarchical and transactional leadership.

Women see this as going against altruism required of these institutions and moreover, they discourage collaboration. Given a chance, they would propagate transformational leadership to cater for the multidisciplinary teams that make up colleges and universities. Lack of recognition of senior women leaders discourages the upcoming career women from following in the footsteps. The programs that women leaders start are often neglected after their exit from leadership positions. Finally, women are often exempted from informal leadership networks in which men mentor newly appointed male leaders to ensure a smooth transition and adoption of values.
When women are appointed, they lack this sense of direction increasing marginalization by the male dominated faculties (Dominici et al., 2008). Shepherd (2017) notes that in the UK gender imbalance resonates in all sectors including education. Agreeing with other scholars Shepherd (2017) says that despite women making up a sizeable population as academic staff and as students in postgraduate education, only a small percentage hold leadership positions. She notes that the responsibility of advancing one’s career in academia is the sole responsibility of an individual. Most women lack the ambition or the confidence to pursue senior positions due to the barriers that persist at these institutions. Those who do so, attempt after being encouraged or coerced by colleagues. Furthermore, there are few who are courageous and resilient and apply for the senior level leadership positions. Those women who have applied for these positions are frequently unsuccessful in securing them. This translates to more men leading institutions of higher learning and further deviating from the goal of gender balance. Like men, women perceive the executive position as demanding or unappealing and those already in tend to walk out, leaving a male dominated leadership team. Shepherd (2017) points out that through the internal hiring system more women succeed. This contradicts other studies where women saw this system as biased against them. She states that the institution leadership tends to appoint junior leaders who are more like them. On a gender basis, more men will thus be appointed to mirror the image of their male seniors, which blocks women out of leadership.

2.4.3 Leadership Barriers to Women’s Progression

It is surprising to find out that women in developed countries such as USA, Canada, the Netherlands, and Norway experience the same difficulties as women in
developing countries such as South Africa. Gibson (2006) finds out that organizational politics plays a big role in assigning the administrative roles in colleges and universities. According to Gibson (2006), most women are not pervasive in politics, that is, men in taking leadership positions outnumber them. Men have the strong personalities, which many women find hard to stand in managerial politics.

Nguyen (2013) argues that the most prevalent barrier that obstructs women from taking the administrative positions in organizations of higher learning is the prejudiced attitude that women face. Women are often associated with communal characteristics such as affection, kindness, helpfulness, sympathy, and gentleness, which are regarded as unfit for someone holding a leadership position. On the other hand, men are associated with tough traits such as aggressiveness, self-confidence, ambition, self-reliance, dominance, and individualism. These are the qualities considered as the best characteristics of a leader (Stensaker, 2014). Mabokela (2003), in his study of the organizational culture and the impacts on female administrators in South Africa, states that gender inequality is pervasive in allocating administrative positions in most establishments of higher learning. According to his study (Mabokela, 2003), the institutions in the country were undergoing transformations to appreciate equality in leadership. Most of the regions in the world are undergoing the same alterations to have a gender inclusive institutional administration.

Nguyen (2013) points out that the women are much under-represented in management positions in institutions of higher learning. According to Nguyen (2013), there are women with aspirations to climb to high positions in academics, but different barriers in achieving their success hold them back. Nguyen cites various obstacles that
have kept the number of female academics very low across the globe. Nguyen (2013) divides the obstructions into two categories: the psychological and cultural theories. Psychological perspective argues that the negative stereotypes about gender impede women in taking administrative positions in the institutions. The cultural theory holds that women are faced with hurdles on the socio-political, organizational, and individual levels in rising to leadership positions in academic careers.

2.4.4 Review of Related Literature of Organizational Culture and Gender Inequality

Mohajeri, Mokhtar, and Balash (2015) introduced the term ‘sticky floors’ to highlight that women are posted to low skilled positions translating into poor pays. Where universities offer training for skill enhancement, women are often left out. Bureaucracy in these institutions has led to the notion that only men can survive in these institutions. The organization also imposes cultural traditions on women and most women prefer to conform to rather than compete with men.

Women also have domestic roles that circulate around bringing forth children and caring for the family. This hinders career development due to lack of time and stereotyping, which denies them the opportunity to advance. The society also associates women with weakness and dependence on men and this keeps them from joining professional networks and displaying their management prowess. European women do not perceive these hurdles (Mohajeri et al., 2015).

Mohajeri and co-authors reiterate that women seeking leadership positions in institutions of higher learning face turns and twists. Organizational culture, cultural factors, and personal attributes are all barriers to this ascent. Organizational structure lacks formal mentorship and support for women. These mentors are role models who
assist them to adjust to and even advance their careers. Since men have historically headed academic institutions, the facilities, protocols, and policies are male oriented and even with women securing employment positions, the system is still hard to modify.

When studying the organizational culture of a university/college Tierney (1988) points out the exact components that need emphasis including the leadership, environment, mission, socializations, strategies, and information. These aspects help to explain the events happening on campuses, which reveals the organizational ills at the various institutions and thereafter simplifies the problem-solving procedures. Understanding the culture of an organization is critical for administrators, as it will help make decisions that will have limited negative ramifications. It will also establish areas that compromise social cohesion and impede performance. This clarity places administrators at better positions to resolve conflict, implement and manage change in their institutions (Tierney, 1988).

Rus and Rusu (2015) bring forth distinctions between the cultures of public and private institutions that may impact the marginalization of women. Private institutions respect leadership, maintain ethics, collaborate to achieve goals and overcome challenges. They thus develop and work in a positive organizational culture. In public institutions, the leadership is feared, and the workforce only aims to please them, which make them, feel like objects. There lacks flexibility, consultation and collaboration thus denoting a negative environment. These differences alienate the role of managers in cultivating organization culture, thus impacting diversity and inclusion. Public administrators have the mandate to replicate the culture of private institutions.

Lacatus, (2013) pinpoints that the culture of a university determines how well it
advances, performs and grows. It directs where reforms are needed and how management improvements should be made. Based on the factors considered by an institution as important and informed by government educational policies, several cultural models can be adopted as in the table below:

Figure 2. University Culture Models (Lacatus, 2013)

According to Muya & Wesonga (2012), history, size, location, primary function, selection and hiring processes in addition to components mentioned by Tierney, (1988) influence the development of culture. Culture, in turn, affects the performance of an organization as it determines the conduct of managers in decision-making and strategy development. The latter aimed at satisfying customers and growth (Muya & Wesonga,
2012). Similarly, Inga, Ilze, & Aramina, (2015) note that organizational culture determines the success of an organization. If the culture is strong then the organization performs better. Conversely, a lack of defined culture compromises the effectiveness of an organization. It is shaped by the experiences of the past. Inga et al., (2015) highlights that the mistake most organizations commit when implementing change is failing to place the current situation and projecting where they want to take it with the planned change.

2.4.5 Stereotypical Norms of Standards of Leadership

Stereotyping can take many forms within the context of an African American experience. The term stereotype threat, first postulated by Steele and Aronson (1995), illustrates that when one views oneself in terms of the salient group membership (e.g. I am a woman and women are not expected to be leaders) there can be negative consequences. According to Steele and Aronson (1995), a stereotype threat is defined as “being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (p.1). In fact, Steele and Aronson’s experiments revealed that academic prowess can be diminished by the realization that one’s performance can be viewed through the lens of racial stereotypes (Steele, 1998). According to Steele and Aronson (1995) stereotype threat can “impact any individual for whom the situation invokes a stereotype-based expectation of poor performance. Everyone belongs to at least one group that is characterized by some sort of stereotype” (p.2).

These impacts can take different forms, including altered professional identities and ambitions. Gupta and Bhawe (2007) posit that stereotype threat can modify stereotyped students’ professional identities by amending their aspirations and career paths. Essentially, when “male characteristics” were accentuated as imperative in a career
field, the fewer women articulated an interest in entering that field (Gupta & Bhave, 2007). To that end, stereotype threat is of importance to this phenomenological case study because women of color can be deterred from pursuing careers in higher administration because of the male domination within the field.

A culture that still dwells on the western stereotyped concepts of leadership is bound to feel resistance when trying to transform (Adrianna & Deckle, 2000). Resistance to change encourages continued stereotyping and male dominance. Organizational culture impacts the change process in an organization and has been linked to the success in higher education (Adrianna & Deckle, 2000). Four cultures are observed in institutions of higher learning including collegial, managerial, developmental and negotiating cultures. Adrianna & Deckle (2000) identify six universal change strategies including collaborative leadership, staff development, administrative support, robust design and visible actions. Their application is unique and dependent on the culture of an institution and the change process directly involves two or more of the mentioned cultures simultaneously. Change will only be successful if the strategies align with the culture.

Parker (2001) narrates the experiences of black women leading white dominated institutions. They use interactive leadership where one on one conversation is dominant, and employees’ autonomy is upheld. They adopt boundary spanning in which the mission and values of the institution are used to inform strategies and projects. Open communication allows them to be direct, negotiating but never intimidating. They foster collaboration in information gathering and decision making where all speak on their views, listen to opposing sides and decisions are made together. They are keen on empowerment, to equip their staff with the required resources then communicate goals
and objectives with the belief in their staffs’ abilities. These experiences dispel the stereotyping and cultural beliefs on black women. Parker (2001) advises that diverse knowledge bases should be consulted to validate assumptions.

In an attempt to break the stereotyping of the black community Douglas (2012) categorically states that in westernized masculinity, men position themselves as superior to women and the oppression of women by men is continuously being tolerated. Women are also taught to rely on men and those who attempt to be independent endure pays that are lower. Douglas (2012) asserts that HBCUs are breaking the culture through their mottos and assisting the black community to break free of the negative stereotyping by the Westernized norms. They strive to produce graduates who are service leaders that have resisted this practice and are preaching equality where women are equally rewarded and treated well. The author suggests that for this to have an effect on the graduates, the administrators need to create the culture of equality, respect and mentoring within its organization.

2.4.6 Change Factors for Diversity and Inclusion

The number of women in academic administration is still low despite the interventions by those in the leadership of higher education to encourage them to compete equally with men in taking the positions (Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2008). According to Dominici et al. (2008), academic deans and department chairs in higher learning institutions can play a very fundamental role in changing the status quo in leadership. The problem is that women are still not adequately represented in such positions to influence the change during recruitments. There are many gender-based obstacles that hinder women from venturing into the academic careers. They include
factors such as low salaries for women academics, slow rates of promotion in the institutions, and less recognition through awards. Dominici et al. (2008) mention that women in academia face the challenge of motherhood whereby most of the tenure decisions coincide with the childbearing time. Some of the female academicians tend to quit their jobs temporarily to focus on their new duties as mothers. The issue of parentage affects the career of women more than it does to men.

Zhu and Engels (2014), Muya and Wesonga (2012), and Tierney (1988) posited that organizational culture is comprised of values, ideologies beliefs, philosophies, norms, expectations, attitudes and assumptions that organizations develop for internal cohesion and to fit with the external world. It takes time to shape it, therefore, influencing the behavior of people therein. As such, the organization’s culture is critical when introducing innovation and change. An organization that emphasizes collaboration, teamwork and above all diversity is always successful when implementing change (Zhu & Engels, 2014).

Dominici et al. (2008) discussed several reasons as to why the number of women in leadership positions in higher learning institutions is lower than that of men. Besides the low salaries and the challenges of motherhood, the paths to leadership are normally blocked, and this discourages most of women to engage actively in it. The current definition of leadership roles in institutions is becoming less attractive to women so is to men. The problem of understaffing and underfunding of the administrative offices tends to prevent women who may be ambitious from taking up such positions. Blackhorse et al. (2017) contemplate that gender diversity and balance is much needed to curb low representation of women in the leadership of higher learning institutions.
2.5 Chapter Summary

Towards this end, I observed from the numerous kinds of literature that women and leadership have been debated for a long time in academia. In perusing the various literature addressing leadership roles of women, I observed that cultural responsibilities, gender role assignments and stereotyping have for a long time closed out women to leadership positions even in institutions of higher learning. Unfortunately, women of color receive the blow twice because of their gender and race. HBCUs have favored their progress as they preach and serve with equality and respect, which has made black women more resilient while serving in predominantly white institutions. The Black men are also accommodating women based on the culture they learn at the HBCUs either as students or staff. Where black women more so black are allowed to lead, their leadership is highly praised. Since gender imbalance at top leadership position is still large, women should be given opportunities tried as the preconceptions of their ability are mere assumptions and not necessarily true.

In this particular chapter, I further observed that although the number of women participating in the academic leadership is increasing, the rates are still low as compared to that of their respective male counterparts. The benefits derived from balanced gender staff in universities not only indicate the growth in gender equity but also mean a lot to the success of students and the quality of institutions' research ability (Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013). Diversity helps to improve the quality of research. For that matter, it is important that institutions embrace the ways of bringing the gender balance in the academic leadership (Garret, 2015). From the literature reviewed, there is the great
knowledge gap on the ways of increasing the number of women in academic leadership. Institutions themselves need to spearhead the reforms necessary in bringing a gender balance in the academic administration. Organizational cultures of higher learning institutions are one of the key elements that need prior reforms. The notion that education is a male domain must be discarded to curb the gender prejudice that women go through when they intend to take academic leadership. My study and its related literature reviews are very paramount because the chapter points out vividly the research gap and how it tends to fill the gap. Based on the knowledge gain from the literature reviews, the study suggests that future research should focuses on ways of increasing gender inclusiveness in the institutions, particularly in HBCUs Higher Education.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology for the current study and justifies each of the selected methods to explore factors women report as barriers that contribute to the gender gap in senior level administrative positions at HBCUs. Empirical studies have shown that phenomenology and case study play a critical role in creating and analyzing many scholarly works such as the feminist post-structuralist theory of pedagogy. Although the latter has many stereotypes, many types of research, especially those concerned with awareness theories, seem to popularize it. Topical issues such as community studies, life histories of people or families, organizational decision-making and innovative projects have immensely benefited from the case study. On the other hand, phenomenology has also significantly contributed to the process of assessing people with similar historical pasts such as feminists. Approaches of case study and phenomenology influence the feminist theory of pedagogy due to their specific investigative features.

3.2 Research Questions Reiterated

1) What challenges confront African American women that occupy leadership roles in academe?

2) What are the prevalent barriers preventing African American women from attempting to obtain leadership roles as it pertains to the organizational culture at HBCUs?

3) How does advancement of African American women in leadership roles assist with overcoming obstacles presented by the glass ceiling?
3.3 Research Design

According to Yin (2018), case study refers to a research approach whose popular methods thrive on empirical inquiry as they investigate real-world settings. This approach has, from the past, faced many setbacks with the most constant ones creating various stereotypes (Yin, 2018). However, case study designs have influenced multidisciplinary contexts and foundations; thus, their philosophical underpinnings established diverse types of methods. This situation has contributed to the robust transformation of this term since 1970s courtesy of the parallel influences in the historical approaches to investigate and author’s preferences, case studies and their perspectives (Mann, 2018). The fundamental differences are the underpinning epistemology-based and ontological knowledge of the participants in the transformation of case research.

3.4 Case Study Design

Empirical studies have shown that case study has many methods and exponents, yet these elements have sister patterns applicable to all. This concept emerges as a versatile form of qualitative inquiry that suits a comprehensive, complete an in-depth investigation of sophisticated issues (Yin, 2018). This status prevails where there is an unclear boundary between an event and the context and has many variations. The case study is therefore applicable to a range of topics and aims but the vital requisite for using it come from one’s motivation to illuminate the knowledge of complex events. The ability by case study to explore and describe issues presents it as a suitable tool in rendering quality response on why what and how a specific incident happened in real life.

The act of explaining and bonding the case could be challenging because many target points and variables meet and overlap within the research. Either, formulation of
research statements or positions to choose the situation requires that one identifies the focus and review the boundaries to create the elements of research design effectively (Tessier, 2009). The significance of bounding the case is critical in framing, focusing and controlling data collection and synthesis. Such activities entail the acts of selectivity and specifying the parameter identification within the case with an inclusion of the participants’ location.

The utilization of many methods to gather and evaluate data seem manually informative when applied in the case study research where they collectively provide a more synergistic and comprehensive view of the investigated issue. According to Yin (2018), many methods have varied characteristics and depend on the study objective and design, which emerges as a variation of one or many case study research designs (Yin, 2018). As such, interviews and focus teams, observations and explanation of artifacts often shape the collection and generation of data with triangular approaches and data but remains isolated.

The case study has two types of designs particular when explaining a given phenomenon, namely single-case design and a multi-case design. The single-case model evaluates a given theory to disconfirm the role. On education matters, the chosen study institution had an illustrious and documented history or past innovations. The case, however, indicated that the latest change had been unsuccessful (Yin, 2018). The case helped to dispel the then-prevailing notion of obstructions of change as the contributing factor for the failure. This scenario led to the invalidation of the idea that such barriers existed. Instead, it asserted that the implementation procedures could severely affect the result of the innovation.
On the other hand, a multi-case design entails that a range of cases provides the target conclusion. These cases are suitable when a normal phenomenon seems to exist in a diverse range of situations. At this point, there is a need to conduct vigorous case studies on an individual basis with the collection of case studies on the same topic aiming at confirming or imitating the outcomes (Yazan, 2015). The two studies of knowledge utilization applied a multiple-case design. The particular cases chosen for investigation had adequate information about utilization experiences. Here, both models followed the strategy of selecting exemplary or extreme cases but not representative (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). The warrant given to the said strategy emerged because the general investigative objective was to analyze why and how the utilization of knowledge happened. This activity was to provide a quality example of situations for proper documenting of the process. Lastly, one of the elements of this approach was to identify cases with no illustrations and validate the prediction about them based on the availed case examples.

3.5 Phenomenology and the Feminist Post-structural Theory of Pedagogy

The term phenomenology refers to a method of qualitative research focusing on the same histories among a given group. Feminist researchers wanted to align women on one course. As such, they sought the fundamental principle of phenomenology in providing detailed information about the so-called gender isolation and sexual injustice in their investigations. The availed feminist literature explained how females experienced the phenomenon instead of their preconceived perception they have on the investigated issue.

3.5.1 Phenomenological Research Method

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), a German philosopher, is often referred to as father
or founder of phenomenology (Byre, 2001; Ehrich, 2005; Gill, 2014; Laverty, 2003). Phenomenology has its roots in a 20th century philosophical movement based on the work of the philosopher Edmund Husserl (Byre, 2001; Ehrich, 2005; Gill, 2014; Laverty, 2003). As research tool, phenomenology is based on the academic disciplines of philosophy and psychology and has become a widely accepted method for describing human experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989).

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that is used to describe how human beings experience a certain phenomenon experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). A phenomenological study attempts to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about human experiences, feelings, and responses to a particular situation experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). It allows the researcher to delve into the perceptions, perspectives, understandings, and feelings of those people who have actually experienced or lived the phenomenon or situation of interest experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Therefore, phenomenology can be defined as the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced by people living those experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989).

Phenomenological research is typically conducted through the use of in-depth interviews of small samples of participants’ experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). By studying the perspectives of multiple participants, a researcher can begin to make generalizations regarding what it is like to
experience a certain phenomenon from the perspective of those that have lived the experiences (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989).

This concept allowed feminist authors to keep an open mind, thereby listening to their target research participants' articulation of the phenomenon in question. Feminist authors also engaged in intentional preservation of their knowledge of daily beliefs, which could help to describe the event in prevalence (Mann, 2018). This status would then follow the imaginative variations, which reveal the structural topics from the textural explanation, after emerging during phenomenological reduction. This element allows the researcher to have varied perception of the investigated event. Lastly, the concept of developing a research statement from the composite textural and structural illustrations shows the essence of the studied issue.

3.6 Case Study and Feminist Poststructuralist Theory of Pedagogy

The founders of feminism identified critical elements of the case study and utilized them in creating public awareness among females. First, they employed interviews to identify issues of concern to the majority of females in society. Secondly, they developed literature that appeals to the audience’s emotions. These feminists used dialogues, quotes, and also statements from multigenerational females (Yazan, 2015). They applied the kind of research that creates the impression that women are heroes, and no one should look down on them. Lastly, they developed stories, which captivate the audience towards demanding what they term equality.

Basing on both the elements of case study and phenomenology, feminist authors developed the issue of feminist pedagogy. This theory entails collaborating feminist
values into the process of learning and teaching. The established features of feminism pedagogy include championing for social change, exploring sexism and heterosexism, and improving the lives of female learners. Moreover, this pedagogy encourages openness to sexual identities and highlights group connectivity. Pedagogies also create the epistemological structure to enhance the reality of knowing.

To explain the concepts of feminist issues, especially on pedagogies, feminist scholars employed case study designs, research methodologies, data analysis procedures and other related methods to establish four principles that define this phenomenon (Mann, 2018). These guidelines include power, diversity, holistic learning, and integrating dichotomies and social change. Having understood the source of energy and isolated oppressive force, feminists combined personal experience and emotional education with rational synthesis to link the objective-oriented textbook learning, personal growth and self-awareness (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). They also responded to oppressive patterns as well as privileges by initiating knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse cultural realities hence promote sound and promising solutions to the current conflicts. These people also connected classroom issues to social change, which had to do with transforming oneself, the process of learning and the broader community.

3.7 Study Population

According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, with respect to the 2010 and 2015 population census on housing, the overall population of Blacks Female in the year 2013 is estimated to be 23.5 million, indeed representing 52% of the total Black population compared to Black males who make up 48% of the Black population. Compared to all females in America Black females are on average younger at 35 years old compared to
the age of ‘all females’ at 39 years old (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In 2013 about 57% of Black women 25 and older attended college although only 31% have completed at least an Associate’s degree compared to 60% of ‘all women’ who attended college of which 39% completed a degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Black women have been more successful than Black men in closing the gap when it comes to college degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). About 22% of Black women have a Bachelor’s degree compared to 30% of ‘all women’ (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Also, the number of Black women who finished high school but did not pursue higher education is about the same as it is for ‘all women’, 27% compared to 28% respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

The percent of Black women who have an Associate’s degree (9%) is equal to that of ‘all women’ (9%) in America. Only 15% of Black women over 25 did not complete high school, which is only slightly higher than ‘all women’ at 13 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The 36% of African American women who worked full time all year in 2013 had median earnings of $33,780 in 2013 compared to $38,097 for ‘all women’ (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Of Black females ages 16 to 64 years old, 25% had no earnings in 2013, which was higher than the 26% with no earnings of ‘all females’ in the same age group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Also, a larger percentage of Black females 16 to 64 were unemployed than for ‘all females’ (9.6% compared to 5.8%) and were living below the poverty level (29%) than ‘all females’ (17%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Compared to ‘all women’ in the United States Black women who worked were less likely to work in occupations that may be considered white collar and were much more likely to hold service jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Only 64% of working Black women held white-collar jobs compared to 72% of ‘all women’ (see left chart).
For the purpose of the above table white collar occupations include but are not limited to jobs in management, business, computers, office, legal, education, etc. Blue-collar occupations, which were held by 8% of working Black women, include employment in construction, maintenance and repair, installation, production, transportation, etc.

Service occupations include healthcare support, protective service, food preparation and serving, etc. *African American (Black) Women Workers in HBCUs Institutions of Higher Education.*

Using the *African American (Black) Women Workers in HBCUs Institutions of Higher Education* Data Set, a smaller subsection of the national *Black Women* Project, the sample consists of in-depth interviews with 5 highly placed African-American (Black) women actively working in HBCU institutions of higher education, who are selected across the southern states of United States of America such as Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.
Figure 3. Map of USA, Showing Percentage of Population Self-Reported as African American by States in 2010
Source: (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013)

3.7.1 Sample Size (Participants) and Sampling Technique

A purposive sample of 5 highly placed African American women participated in an interview. Participants were selected based on the following selection criteria or characteristics. The following were characteristics of the sample or the participants: (a) African American women; (b) administrator, staff, or faculty member at an HBCU; and (c) sought out a senior-level leadership position and were not selected or could not maintain the position for various reasons. These individuals were required to provide information on their perception of women leaders and why or if their male counterparts...
are perceived to be more qualified administrators, the culture of the organization, and barriers, should any be reported, that contribute to the gender gap in their organization via interview questions posed by the researcher. In the process, researcher contacted the women to determine their willingness to participate in the interviews for the study.

The age of the participants ranged from 36 to 58 years of age and included women of various marital and socio-economic statuses. The researcher adopted data diversity and stratification across all the participants in order to provide a rich representation of the factors that influence the barriers that women of color face during their journeys to senior-level administrative positions at HBCU institutions of higher education.

3.8 Data Sources and Type

This study utilized primary-source data from in-depth, semi structured interviews, which will focus on the following key issues: (1) perception of women leadership, (2) perceived comparative advantage of qualified administrators (i.e. between male and female), (3) how organizational culture in the HBCU institutions of higher education affects women of color’s promotions, and (4) barriers that women of color face during promotions in the HBCU institutions of higher education. It is very important to add that the interview was conducted with highly placed African American women actively working in HBCU institutions of higher education, who are selected across the United States of America from such states as Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

The basis for the data collection procedure is African American (Black) Women Workers in HBCUs Institutions of Higher Education Data Set qualitative method of
collecting information across the concept of a “Black-Women” research for a comprehensive study. In fact, after selected participants provide their informed consent to participate in the study, they completed detailed demographic characteristics, which include information regarding their age, education, marital status, employment category (Part-time or Full-time), employment position (i.e. past and current), and promotions. In all, the participants responded to 21 open-ended questions, which address the various aspects of the perception of women leadership; perceived comparative advantage of qualified administrators (i.e. between male and female); the culture of the organization; and the barriers that women of color face during promotions in the HBCU institutions of higher education. The study adopted an interview style as a follow-up procedure to get an in-depth thought, information and discussion from the participants regarding the necessary subject matter. The interviews, which occurred in the participants’ workplaces, lasted for one hour 30 minutes (1hr 30mins), although the research took into consideration that some interviews lasted longer than initially planned. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

All the interview questions focused on the four thematic subjective matters: (1) perception of women leadership, (2) perceived comparative advantage of qualified administrators (i.e. between male and female), (3) the culture of the organization, and (4) barriers that women of color face during promotions in the HBCU institutions of higher education. The semi-structured interviews for this case study were asked to address questions regarding (1) perception of women leadership, (2) perceived comparative advantage of qualified administrators (i.e. between male and female), (3) how the culture of the organization of HBCUs affects women leadership, and (4) barriers that women of
color face during promotions in the HBCU institutions of higher education. Furthermore, critical text analysis determines the amount of times certain words or phrases used and then coded to determine meaning, context, and interpretation.

3.10 Justification of the Case Study Research Method Viewed Through a Phenomenological Lens

Phenomenological method of a qualitative research design was selected because its scientific approach or field of investigation is different from other research methods (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985). With respect to this difference first of all, phenomenology should be differentiated from natural sciences’ research methods. The first difference is, natural sciences study the world of nature, the physical nature that follows its own laws commonly known as the laws of nature (Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985). Physical nature exists in time and space and it follows the laws of time and space for example causality (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985). Rather than having events in nature as its subject matter, phenomenology studies the purely mental phenomenon. It studies consciousness (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985). The subject matter of phenomenology is the structure of consciousness, while everything pertaining to time and space, to the physical nature is eliminated from the consciousness (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985). How phenomenology attains to this aim of eliminating everything bound by time and space, everything physical from its subject matter? It is done through a change in attitude of the researcher (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985).

Phenomenology asks a researcher to suspend all judgments about the physical world (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985). This is called “epoche” in the language of phenomenology. “Epoche” means ‘to pocket’ (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997;
Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). A researcher, while exercising epoche’ holds back, or pockets or brackets all judgments about the physical nature. A researcher has to bracket or hold back even the most basic beliefs about the nature (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). The most fundamental belief is the belief in the existence. So, while doing a phenomenological investigation, one is not concerned about the existence of an object of consciousness. For example, in the case of this study, the research holds back all judgments or existing truth or belief about the barriers that contribute to the gender gap in senior level administrative positions at HBCUs, but allows the participants to freely expressed their perception, opinions, and belief about the barriers that contribute to the gender gap in senior level administrative positions at HBCUs. Here, all judgments are to be suspended and the only thing to be considered is how people are experiencing the phenomenon in their consciousness (Giorgi, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989).

3.11 Limits/Realities of Case Study Viewed Through a Phenomenological Lens

As underscored earlier, critics assert the case study methodology lacks rigor, is too lengthy, consists of small sample sizes, and relies on “floating” hypotheses (Goldthorpe, 2000; & Mjøset, 2005). Furthermore, some scholars argue the method may not be plausible in its original sense because researchers bring their views, assumptions, and biases to the study when building the themes or during the thematic analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

The principal foreseeable limits for the study include insufficient resources, lack of collaboration, and the difficulty in the unbiased interpretation and analysis of the
obtained data. The nature of the study is very intensive and requires both financial and human resources. Secondly, the selected groups of participants were not as willing to collaborate due to the complexity of the topic, retaliatory sanctions, and the amount of time that the interviews would consume. Lastly, data analysis was be complicated due to the numerous pieces of information that would be obtained as a result of many tools of data collection (assumption). The reality is that gender bias exists in most institutions and women lack participation in higher education senior level leadership roles since the beginning of time. As so, intervention, regardless of the method is necessary for change.

3.12 Researcher Positionality/ Reflexivity

Subjectivity in research is the quality of the findings being influenced by opinions or personal feelings of the researchers (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014). One key feature of qualitative research is that it primarily focuses on verbal and observed data that give a real-life depiction of the participants’ experience (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014). Therefore, the data collected using qualitative designs must be analyzed in a subjective, impressionistic and interpretive manner (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014). This researcher identified as an African- American female who is employed in the field of higher education administration and is cognizant of the researcher bias that exists when studying familiar environments (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014). Through personal experiences and professional interactions with other women of color at higher education institutions, the researcher was aware of the career progression challenges that exist for female leaders at HBCUs. It was of paramount importance to identify and recognize all biases prior to conducting this study to ensure that the voice and positionality of the research participants were accurately represented. The researcher believed that the well-selected
data analysis techniques assisted to eliminate negative subjectivity that the study may face, thereby making the findings reliable.

To mitigate bias, the researcher can use techniques like member checking and bracketing (Creswell, 2014). Member checking is a technique that allows participants to verify the researcher’s interpretation of the data and enhance the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bracketing is the process in which the researcher highlights past experiences that may impact the researcher’s approach to the study. These are both techniques that could assist in mitigating biases in the validation processes when collecting and interpreting data. In inquiry research, authors suggest that in addition to mitigating bias, the researcher should trustworthiness of the data by ensuring data credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability through providing rich thick descriptions of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be achieved by verifying participants’ responses at the end of each interview via interview transcript verification (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014). However, subjectivity might not be eliminated due to the sampling technique that was selected for the study.

3.13 Data Analysis

The study utilized the case study viewed through a phenomenological lens research method and the available qualitative techniques such as interviews to explore the research questions. These interviews were recorded and transcribed, and then came the phenomenological analysis. The researcher started the analysis with open coding, and later moves to more selective coding where one systematically coded with respect to core concepts or the research questions (Corbin& Strauss, 1990). Based on the open coding strategy, the researcher identified themes (i.e. thematic analysis), and concepts such as (1)
perception of “Black” women leadership, (2) Perceived Comparative Advantage of Qualified Administrators (i.e. between “Black” male and female), (3) The Role of Organizational culture in Black women’s Promotions, and (4) Barriers Women of Color.

The analysis of the data focused on those items that attempted to answer the research questions. Organization and management of data are essential to make sense of the information collected in a case study (Merriam, 2009). Data was collected from participants meeting the eligibility requirements for the study. The data analysis process began following the receipt of consent from each participant. Each interview was recorded using a Sony, BX Series voice recorder. The researcher listened to the responses from the participants to capture, and re-capture, the information. The participants’ interviews were recorded so the researcher could obtain additional explanation (if necessary), clarify, and verify the accuracy of the transcription.

In transition from collecting the data to organizing it, NVivo, qualitative data analysis software, was then used to help strengthen the study. The identification of major themes was used to break data into segmented units. The use of similarities and differences found in the information gathered during the study created general statements that were commonly noted throughout each participant’s responses. Data collected from the participants in this study indicated patterns related to their experiences.

3.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the purpose of the study and explained the qualitative methodology that was used to conduct this study. It described the integral elements of the case study through a phenomenological lens, including the research method, research design, data collection, recording, and analysis of data.
Evidence shows that case study and phenomenology are the key factors that influence the creation, implementation and success of the feminist post-structural theory of pedagogy. Whereas case study focuses on empirical inquiry as they investigate real-world settings, phenomenology investigates commonality of lived experience within a given group. Feminists explored their social change agenda via these two strategic approaches. It is therefore clear that case study and phenomenology influences theories of pedagogies among feminists.
CHAPTER 4
DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the study findings. It concludes with one data source of in-depth interviews of voluntary participants purposefully chosen from HBCU institutions across the “American South.” All the respondents are female and educated up to Ph.D. level. They occupy managerial positions in their various jobs and were based on one (1) of three (3) connections to the role of President in institutions of higher learning, namely 1. They aspire to be president, 2. They have been appointed the interim or president responsibility, or 3. They have no desire to become president as a result of the perceived barriers they face in their current roles.

4.1.1 Overview of participants

Participant 1 was formally an Interim President for a University System and currently is the founding president and CEO of a nonprofit organization that creates programs to train students in pursuit of Education degrees from such institutions. Participant 2 pursues the progress to the role of president, serving in the capacity of Assistant Provost and Executive Director. Participant 3 is a senior level administrator at a university in the state of Louisiana. Presently, she performs dual roles as she reports to both the President who is also a Chancellor. Participant 4 is working in the capacity of a research administrator for a federally funded project. Previously, she was employed as a senior associate vice chancellor for Academic Affairs, which was her most recent administrative post. Prior to retirement, she served as the interim executive vice president for Academic Affairs and Provost and Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Participant 5 does not wish to attain the role of president due to
The chapter provides a succinct summary of the responses of the study participants in the form of themes and sub-themes that are explored to provide insights into the challenges that women of color in institutions of higher learning experience and the opportunities existing for them with regard to leadership in historically black colleges and universities. The participants were interviewed, and their voices were recorded with informed consent, after which the voice recordings were transcribed into texts. The latest Nvivo 12 software was used to code and analyze the qualitative data. The themes and codes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes and codes assigned to interview responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>African American Women in Leadership and Challenges</td>
<td>Pay gap, work-life balance, stereotypes, lack of respect, personal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Barriers women of color face during promotion in the HBCU institutions of higher education</td>
<td>Gender stereotypes, family, mentors, politics, sisterhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Overcoming Glass Ceiling</td>
<td>Deliver, performance, success, prove, empathy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Word, length, count and weighted percentage and word cloud for frequency based on Nvivo 12 analysis are shown in Appendix C.

4.2 Theme: African American Women in Leadership and Challenges

The results of the study indicate that African American women that are already in leadership positions in institutions of higher learning face significant challenges that hinder them from performing their duties and responsibilities effectively. These challenges have been specifically associated with women in leadership positions in institutions of higher learning because they occur mainly in relation to their gender.

The challenges confronting African American women that occupy leadership roles in
academia as expressed by the participants are multifaceted. Some women of color are put in a particular leadership position based on her personal relationships and not her education or work ethic. The tenets of agency, discourse, and power are linked to this theme. The intersection of discourse and identity can also play a role in these cases, as the women may perceive themselves negatively for using the opportunity, which can impact their performance. There may be negative discursive practices associated with the women in a new position of leadership that is opposed by a male dominated environment. The question also bodes, whose interest was served by the prevailing discourse in these cases? The women who are placed in leadership positions based on connections often encounter issues surrounding power because the individual who placed them in that position may seek to control the way they navigate as a leader, which undermines their efficacy in the workplace.

There is also a perceived inability to establish themselves with mentors, which is a prevalent themed that emerged from the respondents. Being underpaid in an administrative role compared to her male counterparts with the exact same job responsibilities emerged as a challenge as well. Noticeably, another challenge is just being respected and viewed as a leader while trying to balance life, work and family and to bring about positive change. Figure 4 summarizes the challenges that minority women in positions of leadership face.
4.2.1 Sub-theme: pay gap

Pay gap was recognized as a key challenge that African American women in leadership positions experience. Based on the importance of compensation, the pay gap between men and women in positions of leadership in universities and colleges poses significant challenges for women concerning their capacity to have the motivation to continue delivering in their positions. Respondent 3 offered insights into the pay gap challenges by stating that:

The opportunity itself or the pay factor where, as you know, in this state particularly, we only get paid, what, 65, 70 cents, depending on some career, maybe a dollar. Yeah. So, the dollar let every male gets it. So, like you said, contracts, as far as what stipulations are in those contracts for those women in those positions are some contributing factors to how long their teachers are at those institutions if they choose to serve.

The administrator was visibly upset when talking about the issue of pay gap and this offered insights into the extent to which the pay inequalities affect women in leadership
positions. Respondent 3 further stated that:

I have noticed fewer opportunities available to fill an open leadership position. I also feel that my female colleagues are less likely to serve an extended period of time in an administrative role. Overall, I am significantly underpaid in my role compared to my male counterparts.

The claims made by Respondent 3, a senior-level administrator at a state university, indicate that women are paid significantly lower than men in similar positions. Given that she serves in a senior leadership position in a public institution but still deals with the challenges presented by pay gap implies that the problem is systemic and must be addressed at a national level. Whereas the challenge is not limited to women in academia, it demotivates women in leadership positions in institutions of higher learning. The response implies that many African American women in leadership positions lack organizational commitment because of the low pay. The findings further indicate that institutions of higher learning can lose important talent as women of color in leadership positions secure employment elsewhere. Respondent 5 also indicated that the issue of pay is a major challenge that women in leadership positions face by stating that:

My personal philosophy on administrative leadership in higher education is somewhat different from others. I feel the respect of leadership in higher education have deteriorated over the years. It is no longer about educating our future, but it is about getting a paycheck.

While the respondent did not specifically refer to the issue of pay gap, her view regarding the motivation of pay in the sector implies that many women in academia are pushing for better pay and are not willing to settle for less pay than that which they believe that they deserve. Whereas Respondent 5 considered the claim for equal pay as the absence of respect for leadership position in universities and colleges, Respondent 3 thought that there is a need for women to be paid equally as men in similar management and leadership
positions. Respondent 5, on the other hand, considered the lack of respect for women in leadership positions to be the most significant challenge that women in these positions face.

The idea of women being weak in organizational politics is supported by Lester, Sallee, and Hart (2017) in their study on gender in organizations. Gardner (as cited in Lester et al., 2017) finds out that women experience sexism in most of their interactions with colleagues. According to the study of Gardner (as cited in Lester et al., 2017), females feel that they do not get due credit for their hard work and therefore engage heavily in tasks, which they perceive as feminine. Pay gap is, therefore, a key challenge that women in leadership positions face. The problem does not only demotivate women in such positions, it also leads to fewer women applying for leadership positions. The pay gap challenge thus leads to the loss of key personnel in institutions of higher learning as women that could have taken up or remained in leadership positions pursue other opportunities that result in better pay.

4.2.2 Sub-theme: personal relationships as a ladder to leadership positions

The study findings also indicate that women of color that qualify for leadership positions are often overlooked if they do not have personal relationships that can help them secure these positions. Personal relationships cause women to be indebted to those that fronted them to positions of leadership, a factor that deters them from executing their duties effectively. Respondent 5 stated that:

Because of the lack of women of color in senior level positions in institutions of higher learning, it is a crab barrel syndrome that is portrayed. Unfortunately, if a woman of color is put in a particular position, it is based on her personal relationships and not her education or work ethic.

The views of the respondent imply that even women that take part in the
appointment of leaders of HBCUs overlook competent women of color because they believe that African American women cannot lead institutions of higher learning. Instead of being at the forefront of pushing for more women in leadership positions, they work toward maintaining the status quo. According to Respondent 5, many women that are appointed to leadership positions in institutions of higher learning are thus appointed to such positions because of the personal relationships that they have established with the appointing authorities, an issue that hinders female leaders from working independently after they have been confirmed to these positions. The administrator’s tone showed that this is a highly emotive issue for her because she believes that it limits the ability of women of color to truly use their skills and talents to excel in leadership positions. She stated clearly that this is one of the key reasons preventing her from pursuing higher leadership positions within the higher learning sector. Respondent 4 also alluded to the connection between personal relationships and leadership positions by stating that:

It does, starting from the board of supervisors was selected by the governor, which is a political position.

The fact that the board of supervisors is selected by the governor shows that those appointed to leadership positions are sometimes confirmed to these roles based on their personal relationships. Respondent 3 has also been a beneficiary of her relationships. The senior-level administrator at a university spoke candidly on how the opportunities presented to her have come as a result of her personal relationships especially with male bosses, executives, or appointing authorities. The respondent stated that:

So that is so interesting that you say that because every single opportunity that has presented itself for me has typically been a male that has made the recommendation or a male who has sort of taken me under his wing to help me develop professionally. When I was tapped for the governor’s position with the governor’s office as director of
Highway Safety that was a male on the Board of Regents that just saw something in me that he thought would be valuable in moving and changing the culture of another State Department. And I was tapped for that. You know, I can go as far back as, you know, being a teacher in a classroom with two high school teacher was my principal who was a white male who, you know, saw something in me and, you know, was trying to get me to go get certified. And, you know, a white male in Exeter was my chancellor at the time, black male.

While such individuals may be qualified enough to secure leadership positions in a competitive process without the mediating role of personal relationships, the fact that their personal relationships have played a central role in them securing leadership positions extensively erodes their ability to provide independent and effective leadership. Women appointed to leadership positions due to personal relationships are thus likely to find it difficult to discharge their duties effectively. Additionally, accessing leadership positions due to personal relationships raises the question of the sustainability of the approach as a means to achieving career progression especially when the individuals that bestowed such positions no longer have the power to make such appointments.

4.2.3 Sub-theme: work-life balance challenges

Women of color in leadership positions also experience challenges with regard to work-life balance. Most of them are still expected to perform duties that are traditionally ascribed to the female gender in society while still delivering in their leadership positions. Women that have to balance leadership responsibilities and motherhood especially find it difficult to attain a work-life balance. In many cases, they are forced to choose between career progression and motherhood. Respondent 4 argued that the luck of work-life balance was one of the main reasons why she quit her job in the academic sector even though she served in a leadership position as a senior associate vice chancellor for academic affairs. The now research administrator for a federally funded
project stated that:

And I was really torn between work and family and just having to make that hard decision of choosing family. So, I decided to retire. But I don't regret it because it's been great. I do not regret one day I've had the opportunity to see my first grandson born, to spend time with my daughter during her pregnancy, seeing him born, able to babysit him sometimes when needed.

The research administrator further stated that:

Another is just trying to balance life, work, and family. And so, and a third challenge would be trying to bring about positive change.

Respondent 4 indicated that the inability to find a balance between work and personal life is a key reason that drove her to quit her former position. While speaking about this experience, the respondent appeared to be imagining what could have been because her voice and demeanor showed that if it were up to her, she could have done both. While family is important, Respondent 4 indicated that it should not have to be a zero-sum game when women in leadership positions also desire to spend time with their families. The research administrator is happy with her current position because it enables her to work and still find time for family. Respondent 5 also alluded to the importance of finding a balance between family and career by stating that:

I prepared for this senior level position by working extremely hard, maintaining a strong open relationship with students and colleagues as well as remaining true to self, God and family.

The respondent was very categorical on the importance of family because she considered family to be a key reason why she had achieved career progression and success. Given that she believes that family has been integral to her success, it is unimaginable that she would sacrifice family to achieve career progression. The results of the study indicate that work-life balance might be important for both men and women.
However, career women experience more significant challenges with regard to attaining work-life balance because they are considered homemakers in society. Furthermore, as alluded to by some of the respondents, women tend to be naturally drawn to care for their families. For instance, in the case of Respondent 4, she was not willing to miss important family events such as the birth of a grandchild. The instinct to nurture thus means that career women are more likely to seek work-life balance in their jobs compared to men. The major challenge is that most jobs and careers do not provide such an allowance. A lot of women are, therefore, forced to choose between pursuing career success or family needs. Making such a choice is not often easy and this is the key challenge that most women of color seeking to pursue leadership positions face.

4.2.4 Sub-theme: lack of respect

Another major challenge that was identified from the responses collected is lack of respect. Many career women experience humiliation and the lack of respect mainly because of their gender. In a workplace dominated by men, women are regarded as a gender that does not belong in leadership positions. The humiliation and disrespect directed toward women in the workplace and in leadership positions have negative psychological effects because they can lead to stress. Moreover, they make it difficult for female leaders to discharge their duties effectively. Respondent 4 stated that:

So, I would say one big challenge is just being respected and being viewed in the same light as a man.

The research administrator felt that most women undergo a lot of humiliation in their areas of work merely because of their gender. In her many years as a career woman in academia, she had been disrespected and her qualifications invalidated because of her gender. Instead of people focusing on her skills and competencies, many people focus on
her gender and assume that just because she is a woman, she is incapable of performing at the same level or even better than men. Respondent 4 further stated that the lack of respect and constant humiliation that women of color face in the workplace and in positions of leadership is attributed to racial stereotypes. The respondent claimed that:

And you just have to adjust and just have that balance and just be able to demonstrate that you're not angry black woman, but you're still competent and you speak coherently, and you have what it takes to get the job done. And so, you don't have to be the angry black woman. But you still need to get your point across. You know, you still need to be aggressive and you still need to put your foot down.

The views shared by Respondent 4 concerning the perception that women of color are always angry indicates that they are considered less capable of rational thought and objective leadership because they are seen to be guided by emotions. Women of color in leadership positions thus have to avoid displaying any semblance of anger to eliminate the notion that they are not capable of providing effective leadership. The label contributes to the forfeiture of respect because many of the things that they engage in or the decisions that they arrive at are misconstrued to be driven by anger. Respondent 2 made similar claims by suggesting that gender and racial stereotypes hinder women of color from being afforded the respect that they deserve due to their skills and competencies. The respondent who still harbors ambitions for leadership and career progression stated that:

Very few women, and fewer of color have been selected to serve in administrative roles because of this chauvinistic behavior.

The participant also intimated that African American women are disrespected but that does not show they are less competent. Respondent 2 also stated that:
Women of color are looked to less when serving in essential roles in higher education. This does not mean we are less qualified but instead just not afforded the opportunity to serve.

The claims made by Respondent 2 indicate that women of color are not given the respect that they deserve in the workplace even if they have the qualifications and competencies required to take on bigger responsibilities. The results show that their gender and race play a key role in the absence of respect for them.

The results show that women of color will continue to find it difficult to overcome the constant lack of respect that they experience in the workplace because the challenge has to be addressed at an institutional and societal level. There must be a cultural change such that women become more respected in society and then in the workplace.

4.2.5 Sub-theme: lack of mentorship

The study findings also indicate that the lack of mentorship is a major challenge that women of color in leadership positions face. Leadership, especially in big institutions such universities and colleges, is usually characterized by complex and unique challenges. Individuals thrust in such leadership positions, therefore, often require mentors to excel in their duties and responsibilities. The research determines that many black women in leadership positions do not have experienced people to mentor them. Respondent 3, a senior level administrator at a state university, acknowledged this challenge. She stated that:

And that’s a good pipeline to get into some of the challenges, as you know, like we spoke about mentorship and some of the professional development opportunities in some realms, they say that those could be some of the challenges that women of color face in their progression to these kinds of roles.

The respondent appeared to be worried about the future of black women in leadership
because she saw the lack of mentorship for women that are already serving in leadership positions to be a major challenge that women of color face especially with regard to their ability to deliver in their roles and realize career progression. Mentorship is not only reserved for those aspiring for leadership positions but also those that are already serving in such positions. Respondent 1 also made similar claims by stating that:

Women of color in leadership positions require mentors. I don’t think that anyone is ever prepared enough for leadership roles and the challenges associated with them. However, for women of color, there are only few of such mentors.

These results indicate that women of color can perform better in their roles when they have mentors to help them navigate the challenges of leadership. The shortage of suitable mentors for women of color means that many of them will find it difficult to secure leadership positions or deliver effectively in their roles.

4.3 Theme: Hindrances to Accessing Leadership Positions

The results of the study also showed that there are several factors that hinder women of color from accessing leadership positions. The challenges are specifically attributed to women of color due to a combination of gender and race issues. Tenents of discourse can be linked to this theme as well. The dominant discourse of gender in this themed explored the commonalities of the respondents’ perceptions of being marginalized in their roles as African American women in leadership. The issues are summarized in the figure below. However, only the major barriers to leadership for women of color are examined. Figure 5 is a summary of the hindrances to accessing positions of leadership.

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4.3.1 Sub-theme: Gender and ethnic stereotypes

The results of the study indicate that women of color have generally been overlooked for leadership positions due to their gender and race. One of the key issues is the notion of the angry black woman where women of color are portrayed to be typically angry individuals that cannot lead through rationality and objectivity. Respondent 2 talked about her first senior level position at the decennial mark in her career. She faced many challenges during her appointment as a dean especially given that she was the first black female in the history of the college to ever served in the role. She stated:

I embarked upon my first senior level position at the decennial mark in my career. As an African American female, I faced many challenges during my appointment as Dean. The first being selected as the first black female in the history of the college to ever serves in the role. Along with that came building trust with various stakeholders at the college.

The participant explained that gaining stakeholder trust was difficult because
many of them expected her to fail because of her gender and ethnicity. The senior level administrator argued that many times she was told to calm down in a patronizing manner by male colleagues because she was often perceived to be angry. The respondent genuinely believed that without these stereotypes, she could be serving in a more senior role at this stage in her career. Respondent 4 also made similar claims by stating that:

I can’t exactly describe it but there is a perception in the workplace that women of color are not competent enough to serve in senior leadership positions. We are viewed to be generally lacking in leadership qualities. However, men of color are viewed more favorably, a factor that makes me wonder whether our gender has anything to do with it. We can’t just seem to shake off the perception of the angry black woman.

The claims made by the Respondent 4 were rather odd given that she had served in senior leadership positions in the academic sector prior to retirement. However, the respondent clarified that she often had to fight harder than her male counterparts or more than necessary to prove that she was capable and deserving of leadership roles. She argued that black women should not be subjected to unfair assessment criteria that do not concentrate on their competencies or skills. Respondent 1 argued that due to a culture that considers women to be inferior to men, gender stereotypes had emerged within the work environment to the detriment of the career ambitions of women. The CEO stated that:

Well, I think what I think is the leadership culture. Let me treat heritage, too. But I would say that that. I hear women, obviously. It is. It has been a culture where that the leadership will be every level has been predominantly male.

Respondent 3 also complained about the adverse effects of a bad culture on the career progression of women of color. According to Zhu & Engels (2014); Muya & Wesonga (2012) and Tierney (1988), culture refers to the values and beliefs of a society. Respondent 3 argued that male dominance in leadership positions has been created by
cultural and political factors. According to the senior-level administrator:

When you have male dominated boards making decisions that clearly impacts. Politically created. You probably could even go back and look at the political landscape or the political leadership. So, looking at the data, political leaders in the state, it’s probably going to be one that reflects more of a male dominated culture, and so when you have basically male dominance and all of those levels, you have male dominance serving on the boards. You have male dominance in the legislature, which appoints or makes recommendations for appointments to those boards.

These findings indicate that many African American women deserving of leadership positions miss out on important career development opportunities due to gender and racial stereotypes. Jackson and O’Callaghan (2009) used the term ‘glass ceiling’ to refer to the barriers created by cultural, social, economic and political factors with regard to the career progression of women. Carli and Eagly (2001) argued that due to gendered stereotypes, leadership in the workplace is considered the preserve of men. Lockwood (2004), on the other hand, established that many organizational cultures create an environment that limits the access of women to leadership positions. Sczesny (2003) adds that due to gender stereotypes, women may not receive support and fair assessments for their leadership approaches. Nguyen (2013) also argued that the most predominant barrier that hinders women from ascending to the administrative positions in organizations of higher learning is the prejudiced attitude that women face. Unless these stereotypes are addressed, women of color will continue to have limited opportunities to access leadership positions. Women face discrimination in the workplace with regard to career development due to gender stereotypes. Heilman (2001) argued that stereotypical assumptions about the gender differences
between men and women hinder women from attaining senior leadership positions because men are often assumed to be rational and thus make good leaders. Female leaders are often viewed as sensitive, caring, compassionate, responsive, democratic, participative and nurturing (Fisher & Koch, 2001). Additionally, feminine leadership approaches are usually described as collaborative, inclusive, democratic and participative (Northouse, 2010). Most women leaders are also transformational (Traub, 2011). Such ‘soft’ approaches to leadership are usually viewed to be ineffective especially when the individual at the helm should be viewed as someone that commands authority. The assumption that women lead through emotions has created the perception that they are weak and cannot, therefore, be trusted with senior leadership positions. According to Silverman (2010), it will be difficult to see a significant increase in the number of women in leadership positions unless these stereotypes are eliminated. In spite of the lack of significant growth in the number of female leaders, women were predicted to make up 51.2% of the rise in total labor force growth between 2008 and 2018 (U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau, 2010). The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (2015) report claimed that workplace segregation continues across various industries in the United States including in industries such as medicine and engineering.

Gender and racial stereotypes thus function as key barriers to women and more so women of color accessing leadership positions and achieving career growth. Women of color are experiencing discrimination with regard to leadership in the academic sector due to their gender and race. Many organizations of higher learning are not equipped
well enough to have African American women in senior positions of leadership. In the process, many in the academic sector do not comprehend how women of color in management and leadership positions can benefit universities and colleges (Horsford, 2012). Women can bring leadership approaches that are important for improving the performance of organizations in contemporary society (Herrera, Duncan, Green & Skaggs, 2012). Gender and racial stereotypes, therefore, hinder universities and colleges from benefiting from the talents of African American women in senior leadership positions.

4.3.2 Lack of mentorship and sisterhood

The results of the study show that the lack of mentorship and sisterhood among women of color is also a major barrier to women ascending to senior leadership positions in institutions of higher learning. The study shows that mentorship plays a pivotal role in equipping women with the skills and competencies required to become effective leaders. Additionally, mentorship motivates women of color to pursue leadership opportunities in institutions of higher learning. Respondent 1 offered insights into the absence of mentorship as a barrier to women of color ascending to senior leadership positions by stating that:

I believe women of color could do with serious mentors to prepare them for leadership positions in institutions of higher learning. The lack of mentors makes it difficult for African American women to believe that they can become senior leaders of institutions of higher learning and find success.

The participant also stated that she was worried that the current crop of minority women in academia lacked the necessary mentorship required to see them succeed in the 21st century workplace. The respondent appeared optimistic that the situation would improve
because there has been an increase in minority women in management and leadership positions in universities and colleges. However, she is worried that without women that have been in such leadership positions mentoring the younger generation, the situation would not improve significantly. The tone of the respondent, on the other hand, showed that she regrets that she has not used her position and experience to extensively help women of color to become more effective leaders. The inaction of women of color experienced in leadership with regard to mentoring the younger generation of African American women for future leadership positions functions as a major barrier to leadership. Similar claims were made by Respondent 4 who shared her story concerning the challenges that African American women face with regard to leadership in institutions of higher learning. Female scholars of color face various challenges in the workplace that also hinder them from ascending to senior leadership positions. Respondent 4 claimed that the lack of sisterhood among African American female academicians is one of the biggest impediments to women of color ascending to positions of leadership in institutions of higher learning. She claimed that the least support in her years of service have come from black women, when she was expecting the majority of support from the women. She stated that:

It is far worse when it’s just women. And that’s what troubles me the most, because I can tell you in all of my years of serving in administrative posts, the least support came from black women. And that was the most disheartening because I felt as though it should have come from them the most.

The claims made by the participant indicate that minority women lack sisterhood, a factor that has also limited access to mentors for younger African American women hoping to become future leaders of institutions of higher learning. The lack
of unity also makes it difficult for minority women to push for a common goal that would lead to an increase in their number in positions of leadership.

4.3.3 Sub-theme: family commitment

The findings of the research indicate that family commitment is also a barrier to women of color ascending to leadership positions in institutions of higher learning. Many women find it difficult to find a balance between family needs and career ambitions. In a lot of instances, women of color will sacrifice career ambition for family time. Respondent 4 stated that that the absence of a work-life balance caused by the conflict between family commitments and the desire to attain career goals was one of the main reasons why she quit her job in the academic sector even though she served in a leadership position as a senior associate vice chancellor for academic affairs. The respondent who is currently serving as a research administrator for a federally funded project stated that:

And I was really torn between work and family and just having to make that hard decision of choosing family. So, I decided to retire. But I don't regret it because it's been great. I do not regret one day I've had the opportunity to see my first grandson born, to spend time with my daughter during her pregnancy, seeing him born, able to babysit him sometimes when needed.

The response provided by the participant shows that she chose family needs over the pursuit of career goals. Based on the claims made by the respondent, many women of color working in HBCUs appear to experience a similar problem. Respondent 1 also agreed that family commitments and gendered roles in society have played a key role in preventing women of color from pursuing senior leadership opportunities in HBCUs. The Respondent stated that:

The black woman has a lot of family responsibilities that hinder her
from fully attaining her potential as a career individual. A lot of women somehow tone down their career ambitions to attend to family commitments.

Respondent 1 also alluded to the notion that women of color may experience the sense of family duty more than their white counterparts, a factor that significantly limits their ability to achieve career success within the realm of academia. Unless women of color find a way to balance family commitments and career goals, many of them will continue to sacrifice their leadership ambitions to attend to family commitments.

4.4 Theme: Women of Color in Leadership Positions and Overcoming the Glass Ceiling

The study established that having women of color in key leadership positions in HBCUs motivates other African American women to pursue career goals and ascend to senior leadership roles. According to Fumasoli & Stensaker (2013), the increase in the number of female staff in universities shows that it is possible to achieve gender parity with regard to leadership in institutions of higher learning. This theme also linked tenets of agency discourse ad power. The tenant of power contextualizes the notion that power is used a resource that should be distributed equally amongst men and women, therefore alluding to power an intersectional relations. The figure below shows some of the means through which women of color in leadership positions help to overcome the glass ceiling.
Figure 6. A summary of how women of color can break the glass ceiling

Respondent 1 touched on the progress achieved so far concerning increasing the number of women in leadership positions in institutions of higher learning by stating that:

I mean, that we don't look back 10 years from now and see the same small number of women progressing, that we have a much broader leadership role, that women have the opportunity to be here, because the leadership structure at every level has advanced even with more women.

Respondent 5 also made similar claims by stating that women of color ascending to leadership positions and succeeding in their roles pave the way for others that have similar leadership ambitions. She stated that:

As a black woman, you need to appreciate the challenges that our gender and race faces. When you are privileged to hold a leadership position, perform effectively and excel bearing in mind that you hold the key to career progression and success for many black women in the field of academia. How you perform will determine whether more women of color receive such opportunities. Show that you are as good as any man and deliver to the best of your ability.
These findings indicate that when women of color perform exceptionally well in their leadership roles and create opportunities for the younger generation to achieve career success because they help to eliminate the negative perceptions associated with African American women more so in the workplace. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1993) and Ilgen and Youtz (1986) determined that actual disparities in the performance of men and women in the workplace that show that men are better leaders reinforce the notion that men make better leaders than women. Similar claims are also made by Markham et al. (1985), Stewart and Gudykunst (1982) and Cox and Nkomo (1992) who determine that women have to demonstrate their ability to deliver in their roles to legitimize their claims for equality. According to Mohajeri et al. (2015), women are sometimes posted to low skills positions because of the assumption that they cannot deliver at the same level as men. Women must thus prove that they can perform as well as men or even better to justify their inclusion in senior leadership positions. Many organizations will thus find no reason to overlook African American women for leadership roles. Hoel (2008) argued that because women have proven themselves over time that they can deliver in the workplace, most organizations are increasingly looking to increase the number of women in key leadership positions. Governments are also creating laws and regulations to compel organizations to increase the number of women in key positions of management and leadership (De Anca, 2008; Terjesen & Singh, 2008). Overall, women in management and leadership positions have a unique opportunity to break the glass ceiling and pave the way for more minority women to achieve career progression and ascend to senior positions of management and leadership universities and colleges.
4.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter identifies and analyses key themes based on the responses provided by the study participants. The data analysis process resulted in three major themes and several sub-themes that have been analyzed in this chapter to provide key insights into the issue of leadership in HBCUs with regard to women of color. The thematic analysis shows that women of color face several challenges and barriers to leadership. However, those already in leadership positions can break the glass ceiling and increase leadership opportunities for the younger generation by demonstrating that they are competent enough.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Study Overview

The study is a phenomenological case study about the factors that are critical to women of color with regard to career progression. The research is founded on the fact that there is an adverse underrepresentation of women of color in executive positions in higher learning institutions. It was noted that there is a pervasive lack of or African American women in senior leadership positions in spite of the efforts made to curb gender and racial inequality. Therefore, to understand societal sexism and racism, studying the experiences of women of color is vital. Further, in spite of the HBCUs being established before the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with its main focus being to serve the educational needs of the African American culture, these institutions still delineate the same lack of diversity in the senior level of leadership. Women still lag behind their male counterparts in higher education with the minority, such as African American women facing multiple hurdles in any effort, they make towards obtaining administration positions in these institutions. Also, higher education institutions have failed to sufficiently address the problems affecting African American women in the acquisition of administrative positions in institutions of higher learning despite the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The Feminine Poststructuralist Theory used examine this phenomenon sought to address the research problem through the lens of the lived experiences of women of color who serve in executive level leadership positions at HBCUs. In the course of gathering data from this purposeful sample, the outcomes were able to identify the tenets of agency, discourse, and power through the themes that emerged from their responses. Each of the
participants freely verbalized and asserted their capacity for their choice to pursue these roles and responsibilities. Within this theory, discourse was able to be conveyed conceived as a set of beliefs and understandings, reinforced through daily practices of each participants, which frame a particular understanding of their dismay with the barriers they are faced with every day. And in spite of those cultural barriers, the respondents were able to express their experiences through the power that they believe should be fluid and held by everyone regardless of gender.

The research was able to identify several inequalities that women of color face in academia and which was examined in this research; they include student assessments, successful acquisition of grants, authorship of peer revised articles, different income levels for those in the same positions, and promotions of junior employees among others. However, solving these gender issues facing African American women, experience a major setback due to two major issues. The first is that they are multifaceted besides being very complicated to understand. Secondly, the organizational culture, which favors and preserves male tradition, dominance, and practices, has discomfited every effort made by activists and women of color to increase their number in academic institutions’ leadership roles. However, all these issues simply narrow down to gender bias.

With regard to the above overview, it is evident that the underrepresentation of women, especially the minority such as those of the African American origin in higher education’s senior administrative positions, is no longer a documented reality but rather common knowledge. This is more pronounced when race and gender of the women of color are factored in. The study intended to address these issues through a trifold phenomenological case study by first identifying the contributing factors that limit the
advancement and progress of women of color in higher education administrative roles. Secondly, by illuminating the multiple barriers of entry into campus administrations faced by minority women. Lastly, by understanding foreseeable challenges for minority females seeking to fill such positions in the future. Three research questions were formulated to address the research problem. They were:

1) What challenges confront African American women who occupy leadership roles in the academe?

2) What are the prevalent barriers preventing African American women from attempting to obtain leadership roles as it pertains to the organizational culture at HBCUs?

3) How does the advancement of African American women in leadership roles assist with overcoming obstacles presented by the glass ceiling?

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

An analysis of studies in the literature review raised major issues that the research intended to explore. The literature review brought out some major challenges that face women of color in the effort to ascend to a senior position in institutions of higher learning. The main challenges identified included stereotyping, gender role assignments, and cultural responsibilities. However, for African American women, it was noted that the magnitude of their challenges in obtaining senior positions within higher learning institutions increased twofold due to their race and gender. Equally, it was also observed that a majority of the studies examined in the literature review reported that African American women became more resilient, due to the challenges, while serving in higher education institutions that were predominantly white with regard to administrative
positions. Consequently, they preach and serve with respect and equality, an aspect that has earned them high regards and praise.

The analysis of research in the literature review raised the need for remodeling of the organizational cultures in higher education institutions as the key strategy that will see an increase in African American women in administrative positions. The studies showcased that almost all institutions of higher learning have developed an organization culture and assumption that education is mainly dominated by men, and this has been a major reason why most women of color, even though qualified, face gender prejudice in their attempt to ascend to senior administrative positions. Therefore, gender balance and equality, especially for African American women, should be spearheaded by the institutions of higher learning.

To address the research gaps observed in the literature review, this research interviewed consenting participants and identified 4 major themes which were perception of "Black" women leadership; perceived comparative advantages of qualified administrators between male and female; the role of organizational culture in black women's promotion; and lastly barriers women of color face during promotion in the HBCU institutions of higher education. The themes were coded into leadership and women, administrators, culture, and color respectively.

With regard to the theme of perception of women in leadership, the responses from the interviewees showed that women of color in higher learning institutions’ administrative positions ceased to encourage nor support the upcoming women of color who try to ascend to senior leadership positions in higher education colleges and universities. Therefore, lack of peer support and encouragement from the successful
African American women in administrative positions in institutions of higher learning is a major predicament that contributes to the low number of women of color aspiring to attain senior leadership positions in HBCUs. Even though the participants aired the significance of gender and racial balance in a leadership position within higher learning institutions, they noted that their male counterparts of African American origin fared well compared to women. This affirms the twofold challenges facing the women of color as they seek senior administrative positions because of their gender, apart from their color or race.

On the second theme of comparative advantages of qualified administrators between male and female, results from the interviews affirmed that there is a direct relationship between women facing challenges in acquiring administrative positions in institutions of higher learning and the organizational culture, which defines men as more dominant in education. The interviewees raised concerns over the privileges accorded to men in similar positions in higher learning institutions. They also raised concerns regarding the dominance of men over women in leadership positions in HBCUs. Some of the female participants also identified their mentors, in their pursuit of higher position within the institution of higher learning, as male. These responses are in line with the issues raised in the first theme because it becomes more evident that the African American women in administrative positions eye their male counterparts, which is an indication that they also believe in the organizational culture of male dominance in education. The responses also affirm that women of color in higher learning institutions show little concern in supporting and encouraging their fellow women of color to seek senior positions in higher learning institutions; this is because
men, as opposed to women are idolized as mentors.

From the theme concerning the role of organizational culture in black women’s promotion, the results from the interviews show a mixed perception. Some of the interviewees noted that there was a tremendous increase in leadership roles, whereas others reported that even though there is an increase in the roles, women were posted to low skilled positions compared to their male counterparts. This translated to poor pay, but more responsibilities. Besides, some responded women were left out when the universities offered training for skill enhancement. These results show that due to organization culture perceives men as more prominent in education; women face discrimination due to their gender in issues such as acquiring higher positions, promotions, and skill enhancement opportunities.

The last theme examined the barriers women of the color face during promotions at HBCU institutions of higher learning. The results indicated that a majority of the women reported that they are always discriminated as inferior to men with regard to efficiency in managerial skills due to their gender. It was also reported that a majority of the few women who have managed to ascend to senior administrative positions in institutions of higher learning did so through ‘connections’ or rather preferential recruitment due to relationship with the executive or board that governs recruitment of new staff in the HBCUs.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research should consider exploring a larger study setting. This study only examined the challenges facing women of color in acquiring senior leadership positions in Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). However, there are
other women of color working in higher learning institutions that are not HBCUs and face similar challenges. Examining a broader setting will allow the results of the study to be generalizable or transferrable to other populations and also enhance external validity.

2. Future studies should also explore the study using a higher level of evidence research designs that will allow for probabilistic sampling techniques. Probabilistic sampling techniques will reduce sampling bias as well as contain researcher’s biases during thematic analysis (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Charmaz, 2008).

1. Future studies should use the challenges established in this study to examine the most effective intervention strategies that can be used to boost gender and racial equality for African American women seeking a senior administrative position in institutions of higher learning.

5.4 Policy Recommendations for Diversity and Inclusion

1. Institutions of higher education, specifically HBCUs should create Diversity and Inclusion offices to establish workplace equity and collaborative efforts of support and respectful environments that fosters professional growth and development for all employees.

2. Institute a mentorship program for aspiring leaders, which will allow the barrier of mentorship and job accessibility to ultimately be diminished as an attributing factor.

The main issues identified as major challenges in allowing African-American women to ascend to senior administrative position in institutions of higher learning and
which should be taken into account during policy formulation for diversity and inclusion are race and gender, organizational culture that offers more privilege to males as education giants, stereotyping, gender bias in role assignments, and cultural responsibilities, and lastly lack of encouragement and motivation from successful African American women who have acquired administrative positions. The policies should target organizational culture in institutions of higher learning by changing the perception that women are inferior when it comes to education and leadership. This can be done by formulating policies that require an African American woman to lead a top administrative post that is highly regarded as male dominant in institutions of higher learning. Measures should also be put in place to ensure that women are treated with equality in terms of role assignment and should not be demeaned due to their cultural responsibilities. A policy should be formulated to institute an organization of women in leadership positions in higher learning institutions; this will offer them a platform to encourage one another. Further research should be conducted to validate these proposals and also come up with a more comprehensive, holistic approach to address all the problems established in this study.

5.5 Contribution of the Study

This study is a major contribution to the body of literature. There is no study that has been done before to examine the challenges facing women of color in their efforts to seek senior leadership positions in institutions of higher learning, particularly HBCUs; in this regard, this study draws major concerns and will be a foundation of future studies on the subject. Further, it will prompt more sophisticated researches on the subject. Another major significance of the study is that it offers more insights into the possibility of the
promotion of multicultural leadership in institutions of higher learning. This highlights another prospective area for study, which could boost the quality of education in higher learning institutions, especially with the advent of globalization. Further, it offers limelight to the gender and racial challenges facing women of color.

5.6 Conclusion

It is also generally agreed upon that gender bias in the organizational culture of HBUCs is a reality. For organizations to be most effective, recognizing the importance of the collective and gaining a healthy balance between tasks, management, and relationships should become a priority (Shepherd & Smyth, 2012). From a theoretical perspective, the present findings suggest a need to reexamine role organizational culture in explaining gender bias in leadership. A major premise of this role is that leadership is still generally defined and practiced in masculine terms. HBCU leaders that are looking to move their institutions forward in more innovative and inclusive directions must adapt to the changing diversity climate within their organization and the higher education field.
APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

To: Roland Mitchell
   Educational Leadership

From: Dennis Landin
   Chair, Institutional Review Board

Date: August 23, 2019

Re: IRB# E11804

Title: The Road To The Presidency: A Case Study Of HBCU Organizational Culture And Its Impact On The Career Progression For Women Of Color


Review Date: 8/20/2019

Approved X Disapproved ________

Approval Date: 8/23/2019 Approval Expiration Date: 8/22/2022

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2b

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):________

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*.
2. Prior approval of any change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submission of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins): notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the health and psychological well-being of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.

SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This interview is divided into three (3) parts: 1) Career highlights
2) Organizational Culture 3) Challenges/Barriers to women of color.

Section One: Career highlights

1. What is the title of your current senior executive position?
2. How long have you worked in a Higher Education environment?
   a) 0-5 years       b) 5-10 years       c) 10-15 years
   d) 15 and above
3. How long did it take to reach a senior level position?
4. What is your personal philosophy on administrative leadership in higher education?
5. Tell me about the personal factors in your life journey that led you to pursue a career as an administrator?
6. How did you prepare yourself for a senior level position?
7. Has mentorship impacted your career in higher education administration?
8. What strategies have you utilized to successfully continue in your position, seek advancement to the next level, and motivate you to stay in administrative leadership roles in higher education?
9. What do you enjoy most about your job in higher Education?

Section Two: Organizational Culture

1. What words would you use to describe this organization?
2. How are employees here recognized for their results at this institution?
3. Do you feel that race and gender play a significant role in how you are perceived as a leader?
4. What would you say is the ideal pipeline, or career path, to senior-level administrative positions in higher education?
5. How would you categorize leadership positions in your department and/or your
institution as a whole?

6. Thinking about your institution and your leadership philosophy, describe which best exemplifies this organization’s attitude to its leadership?

7. Are there opportunities for professional development and if so, how are those opportunities disseminated to leaders?

Section Three: Challenges

1. What do you see as some of the biggest challenges of being a woman of color who is a senior- or executive-level administrator at this institution?
   1.a. How do you perceive it to be different than your non-African American female or counterparts?

2. What advice would you give one aspiring to a senior executive position?

3. Can you identify three factors in leadership that women of color can use to assist in ascending to the next level of their career?

4. How do you think the lack of other women of color at senior level positions have affected the advancement of your career?

5. What recommendations and advice do you have for changing the status quo for the leadership at this institution?
# APPENDIX C

## TABLE OF RESPONSES: WORD, LENGTH, COUNT, AND WEIGHTED PERCENTAGE

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Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/25073895


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VITA

Akai Crystal Smith, a native of Memphis Tennessee, migrated to Baton Rouge Louisiana with hopes of being a dentist and a famous choreographer. As little girl with a passion for dance, a heart to educate, and a desire to change the world, she persisted and obtained both a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Southern University and A& M College. She has served in several capacities of leadership in higher education, which made her decision to pursue a terminal degree in Educational Leadership from Louisiana State University an easy choice. Upon completion of her Doctor of Philosophy degree, she will continue the work in the higher education profession. Through her continuous contributions to the academy, and community outreach and civic engagement, aspirations of becoming an innovative change agent in higher education is soon to be her reality.