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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

MASTERING THE VOID: THE SECRET SAUCE OF BLACK FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN
THE IVORY TOWER

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

LaSchanda Johnson

June, 2024

Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATION

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Almighty Heavenly Father, from whom all my blessings flow. The scripture reminds us, “To whom much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48). It is solely by God’s grace, His protection, sustenance, and encouragement, that I have reached this pivotal moment in my life. I firmly believe that for every task undertaken, every obstacle faced, and every trial endured, there lies a reward. Each journey, regardless of its path, holds its unique significance.

This dissertation is a tribute to my tribe of family and dear friends who have been my unwavering support system throughout this journey. I dedicate this work to:

- My husband, for his selflessness and boundless love. Thank you for your understanding, for being there during the late nights, early mornings, and through the family events we missed.
- My son, the driving force behind my endeavors. Your presence has given me the strength and determination to become who I am today. Being your mother is a blessing I cherish, and I share this accomplishment with you.
- My family, for their overwhelming support. To my mother, whose commitment to education has always been a guiding light, leading and encouraging me at every step.
- My sister, for bestowing upon me the invaluable gift of education through a Pepperdine scholarship and for always lending a listening ear.
- My cousins, for passing on the torch and reminding me of my inner strength.
- My nephews, Kamryn Stone, and Tyler Carter, my guardian angels, whose lights shine brilliantly from the heavens above.

- My ancestors for bestowing upon me the gift of dreaming far beyond the bounds of my wildest imagination.
- My dear friends and sisters, thank you for your endless support. Thank you for drying my tears, keeping the laughter alive, offering non-stop prayers, and constantly motivating me through pop-up visits, phone calls, social media posts, and text messages. Your support has been indispensable.

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ABSTRACT

This scholarly inquiry delved into the enduring disparity of gender representation within leadership roles, a phenomenon persisting despite women's remarkable progress in education and professional realms in the last 50 years. Concentrating on tertiary education, this study examined the scant presence of females, with a particular emphasis on Black females, in elite leadership roles. Its primary objective is to discern and corroborate the leadership aptitudes that have been instrumental in propelling the careers of Black female administrators in tertiary educational institutions. Employing a refined Delphi methodology, this research shared insights from the career trajectories and developmental experiences of Black females who have risen to prominent positions, including chancellors, presidents, vice presidents, provosts, deans, and department heads. This investigation was anchored in the framework of intersectionality, acknowledging the distinct difficulties Black females encounter in tertiary environments. It sought to bridge a significant void in the current academic discourse by scrutinizing the impact of leadership abilities, professional development, and pivotal factors on the career advancement of Black females in leading academic administrative roles. An exhaustive literature review led to the identification of 53 critical elements, subsequently integrated into a questionnaire. This questionnaire, employing a 7-point Likert scale, was used by experts to assess the importance of factors in supporting the advancement of Black women administrators in tertiary settings. The results provided insight into effective methodologies and vital competencies identified by Black females occupying senior executive positions. This research enriches the scholarly dialogue on gender and racial inequities in leadership, offering methods for organizations looking to bolster diversity and inclusivity in upper-level academic administration. By spotlighting the methodologies of triumphant Black female leaders, this study aspires to motivate and steer future

cohorts, laying the groundwork for a more balanced representation in leadership roles within the domain of tertiary education.

Keywords: post-secondary institutions, career advancement, professional development, Black women, and leadership

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem

Background

The composition of faculty within tertiary institutions remains a subject of considerable interest and ongoing discourse, as Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) highlighted in their study. This area of focus is crucial in grasping the dynamics of academia and the broader implications for educational quality, diversity, and institutional development. Since the 1960s, spurred by the Civil Rights Movement, there has been an emphasis on fostering equity in higher learning establishments (Taylor et al., 2010). The demographic landscape of the United States (U.S.) is undergoing a significant transformation. Taylor et al. (2010) projected that by the year 2050, individuals identifying as people of color will constitute most of the U.S. populace. The transition highlights the imperative of comprehending and valuing diversity across all societal domains. The existence of Black females as leaders in American post-secondary institutions is notably limited. Pioneering studies by Howard-Vital (1989) and later by Wolfe and Dilworth (2015) have highlighted this disparity. Moreover, Valverde's (2003) study supported this observation, showing that Black females hold fewer leadership roles in universities than their white counterparts. This trend necessitates a deeper exploration of the systemic barriers and possible approaches to cultivating a more inclusive environment in academic leadership.

Post-secondary institutions form the foundational pillars of tertiary educational establishments (Snyder et al., 2018). The educational system is a gateway for a substantial student populace, facilitating access to advanced learning and professional opportunities. Shults (2001) underscored the dynamic nature of these institutions, noting the evolving demographics in the student population and among faculty and staff. This evolution reflects broader societal shifts

and emphasizes the importance of these institutions in mirroring and responding to the changing fabric of the community they serve.

While tertiary institutions are witnessing an uptick in the student body, a discrepancy remains evident when examining the composition of their faculty and administration (American Association of Community Colleges [AACCC], 2018; Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Gasman et al., 2015; Walsh-Smith, 2019). Whites hold about 87% of executive roles in tertiary education, in contrast to 6% shared by Black men and women (Walsh-Smith, 2019). At Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Black presidents constituted over 27%, in contrast to White presidents at 46% (Gasman et al., 2015). Additionally, while women comprised 70% of the pupil populace at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), they barely retain 30% of the HBCU presidential roles (Gasman & Commodore, 2014). The AACCC in 2018 provided data regarding enrollment patterns in higher education institutions. In 2016, approximately 12.1 million students sought educational opportunities across the nation's academic landscape. Specifically, they registered in more than 1,100 community and technical colleges and 4,500 universities. Eagan and Garvey (2015) highlighted this incongruence, pointing out that the faculty and administrative ranks remain relatively homogenous.

This disparity raises pertinent questions about representation, inclusivity, and the potential implications for the academic environment and student outcomes (Teague, 2015). It underscores the need for post-secondary establishments to critically assess their hiring and promotion procedures, ensuring they reflect and respond to their diverse communities. A. E. Smith (2015) indicated that these institutions accommodate many students and have strengthened their commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion. However, Pluviose (2006) pointed out that administrative demographics have remained consistent even as student demographics

change. This circumstance accentuates the imperative to augment diversity across faculty and executive positions in the tertiary landscape. The data suggest a lack of Black individuals in positions of leadership, irrespective of gender. For instance, the existence of Black personnel in post-secondary institutions paints an alarming image. A study from the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (JBHE; 2006) mentioned that the percentage of full-time faculty at these tertiary establishments identified as Black, encompassing both male and female scholars, is only 5%. In a study from 2019, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that 6% of the scholars identify as black, representing both male and female identities. Such statistic accentuates the stark under-representation of Black scholars in academia, which can have implications for mentorship, representation, and the overall academic experience for Black students.

Furthermore, the leadership landscape within community colleges also reveals disparities in representation (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Hague and Okpala (2017) highlight that in 2006, although women comprised 23% of community college presidencies, a substantial proportion of these leaders were white. This data suggests that while there has been some progress in gender representation in community college presidencies, racial and ethnic diversity remains challenging. As per the American Council on Education (ACE), Black females constituted 9% of college presidents (ACE, 2017a). By 2018, about 16,000 Black women had occupied managerial roles at various universities. White individuals held 180,000 positions, and Black men had more than 9,000 roles (McFarland et al., 2018). The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR, 2022) disclosed that while females have significant representation in specific academic domains, it does not equate to a balanced presence in leadership positions, particularly for Black women. The data underscores a multi-layered

challenge: not only is there a gender disparity in roles of leadership, but within that gendered context, Black women face additional underrepresentation. This layered underrepresentation is indicative of systemic barriers that intersect gender and race, and it calls for a comprehensive approach to address the disparities and promote a more inclusive leadership landscape in higher education establishments. These trends accentuate the imperative of persistent endeavors to champion diversity and inclusivity throughout all echelons of higher learning establishments.

S. Jackson and Harris (2007) illuminated the leadership terrain in higher education, revealing a persistent gap that disproportionately impacts Black females. This leadership void is not merely a statistical worry but has profound implications for the daily experiences and career trajectories of Black female scholars and leaders. P. L. Logan (2006) delved deeper into this issue, pinpointing specific challenges Black women face during administrative recruitment processes. These challenges are not merely coincidental but are rooted in deep-seated biases that permeate the institutional fabric.

In the context of an ever-evolving economic landscape and a rich tapestry of cultural diversity, fully leveraging the potential of all academic community members becomes even more pronounced (Finkelstein et al., 2016). Nohria and Khurana (2010) emphasize this, arguing that for colleges and universities to thrive, they must effectively harness their human capital. This involves acknowledging and proactively tackling the obstacles hindering specific demographics, such as Black females, from rising to leadership roles.

Further, hooks (1984) provided a poignant perspective on the complexities Black females face in their career journeys. Beyond the general challenges associated with career advancement, Black women confront distinct barriers linked to their ethnicity and sex identities (Collins, 1990, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). This dual-layered challenge accentuates the imperative for tertiary

education to embrace a more intersectional approach towards cultivating diversity and inclusivity in administrative leadership (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Historical Context

Education has perennially been pivotal in fostering success within the Black community (Teague, 2015). Through her unwavering commitment and tenacity, Mary Jane Patterson became a beacon of inspiration, surmounting challenges and shattering barriers for subsequent generations. Littlefield (1997) underscores the historical significance of a pioneering achievement in higher education: the accolade of becoming the first Black female to attain a bachelor's degree, a milestone accomplished at Oberlin College. The educational establishment, characterized by a primarily Caucasian demographic in Ohio, was a noteworthy landmark in her progression. The commencement of the 20th century marked a significant milestone, with the notable achievement of 225 Black women granted bachelor's degrees, paving the way for further achievements (Littlefield, 1997).

The motivation for this academic endeavor extended beyond individual progress. According to Howard-Vital (1989), an underlying drive existed that was influential in this context. Black women pursued education to promote racial advancement. The fundamental conviction was profound: by acquiring knowledge and skills, these women could make substantial contributions to the betterment of the Black community. The degrees obtained by individuals were not just indicative of personal achievements but also represented optimism, empowerment, and the capacity for significant societal transformation.

Since the 19th century, Black females have maintained a significant and impactful presence in American institutions (Littlefield, 1997). Charlotte Hawkins Brown, a pioneering figure in education, emerged as a remarkable exemplar of Black female leadership (Branch,

2011). She assumed the role of an instructor and undertook the notable initiative of establishing the Palmer Memorial Institute, a distinguished preparatory school catering to the educational needs of Blacks residing in the southern regions of America (Branch, 2011; Bush et al., 2010). Mary McLeod Bethune, an esteemed trailblazer, achieved the honor of being the inaugural Black female to occupy a government leadership role in Washington, D.C. Another Black female named Anna Julia Cooper, distinguished herself as an activist, educator, and lecturer; these women championed the enhancement of their educational pursuits, laying the foundation for the academic advancement of numerous individuals (Branch, 2011). Despite their continued efforts and those of many other Black women, there is still a lack of representation of Black females in prominent leadership roles at American schools and tertiary institutions (Bates, 2007; Bush et al., 2010; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Even as these women climbed to leadership roles, they navigated cultural and social hurdles. Teague (2015) observed that while women's inherent strength positions them as creative, competitive, and adept leaders, they still confront barriers to their progression. For Black women, racial equality took precedence, but women's rights followed closely. The era of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution spotlighted numerous women's movements.

Historical periods have propelled women's rights forward (Littlefield, 1997). Key legislative landmarks in America have significantly spurred women's rights. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 marked a momentous step forward, mandating equal remuneration for similar roles regardless of gender and addressing wage imbalances focused on gender (Bates, 2007). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 broadened rights protection through Title VI and VII, which were incredibly transformative in eradicating barriers tied to race, religion, sex, and national origin (Howard-Vital, 1989; Simmons-Reed et al., 2023; Tatum, 2007; Teague, 2015). This legislation notably

influenced Black women in academia, confronting racial and gender discrimination and fostering a more inclusive educational setting (Branch, 2011; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Teague, 2015).

Additionally, legislative measures were introduced to safeguard the rights of pregnant women and women with families, recognizing the unique challenges they face and ensuring they are not subjected to discrimination based on their familial status (Littlefield, 1997). The Education Act of 1965 marked a turning point (Cain, 2016; Howard-Vital, 1989; Littlefield, 1997). As Teague (2015) observed, this legislation spurred a profound transformation by enabling the integration of Black students into formerly segregated universities. This integration diversified the student body and set the stage for a more inclusive and equitable higher education landscape. Collectively, these legislative milestones underscore the relentless efforts of activists, policymakers, and advocates in championing women's rights and dismantling barriers to equality.

The oversight in failing to acknowledge the particular difficulties encountered by women of color within the broader women's rights movement was recognized by many feminist reformers and activists (Howard-Vital, 1989). These pivotal women of color were instrumental in highlighting the forefront of multifaceted struggles that intersected race, culture, and gender (Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). To be truly influential and representative, these activists emphasized that the women's movement needed to be welcoming to all women and their diverse experiences (Poloma, 2014). They highlighted the importance of understanding that women's rights were not a monolithic issue but were deeply intertwined with other social, cultural, and economic factors (Ryan et al., 2016). The collaboration and merging of

efforts from women across diverse backgrounds, cultural, racial, or socio-economic, enriched the movement.

However, even with such strides, Teague (2015) and Noble (1956) noted the persistent gap in senior academic roles for Black women. Colleges and universities can gain extensively from a diverse leadership in strengthening the administrators, faculty, and recruitment and retention of students and faculty (Poloma, 2014), mirroring student demographics in administrative demographics (Van Wormer et al., 2011), enabling students to envision themselves in leadership roles and fostering their growth as empathetic and open-minded individuals (Poloma, 2014); addressing and refuting pre-existing stereotypes or norms prevalent among students, faculty, and administrators (DeSante, 2013) and enhancing communication and cognitive approaches, benefiting both the academic community and the broader population the institutions serve (Teague, 2015). Teague (2015) added that if Black women face challenges transitioning into higher education leadership roles, it might impact the qualified women and the institutions they serve.

Duggar (2001) and J. C. Williams (2005) mentioned the limited visibility of females and individuals of color making significant strides in academia. Views against women are rooted in past and present societal inequalities (Ransford & Miller, 1983). Research indicates that the journey to leadership for women in post-secondary is laden with numerous socio-cultural obstacles. Giscombe and Jones (2004) elucidate that women's leadership aspirations are frequently met with societal barriers that manifest as entrenched behavioral norms, challenges to their gender congruity in leadership roles, and prevailing stereotypes that question their capabilities.

For Black women, the journey becomes even more complex (M. B. Smith et al., 2018). Battle and Doswell (2004) highlighted the academic hurdles confronting Black women, which hinder their educational progression and stymie their professional progress. These challenges, firmly grounded in both gender and racial biases, function as formidable hurdles to their leadership ambitions in post-secondary establishments (A. E. Smith, 2015; N. M. West, 2020). Acknowledging the complete potential of a woman, particularly a Black female, in post-secondary leadership is a sustained endeavor rather than a quick acknowledgment. It necessitates a profound grasp of their multi-layered hurdles and a commitment to dismantling these barriers. Fostering this urgency, institutions can actively work towards dismantling the barriers, whether metaphorical glass ceilings or more entrenched concrete walls that have historically obstructed Black women's ascent to leadership roles (Mitchell, 2018; Pace, 2018).

Researchers advise more dialogue on race to foster empathy and promote a deeper understanding of individuals who work in post-secondary institutions, particularly in a field like education (Ausbrooks & Benn, 2012). Notably, the discussion of race fills holes around the collective self-awareness of the nation (A. Howard et al., 2016). The systematic categorization of Black women as “women” or “African American” has resulted in a tendency to draw parallels between White females and Black males. It is crucial to avoid oversimplification or negating Black women's unique experiences and viewpoints (Britton, 2013; S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Dunn et al., 2014). Black females experience distinct forms of discrimination and marginalization that are unique to their intersectional identity, which differ from the challenges encountered by White females and Black males (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The values, beliefs, and experiences of those in power have frequently shaped educational systems' development and curricula formulation, perpetuating systemic injustices against those of color (Dunn et al., 2014; A. Howard et al., 2016). Recent studies (BlackChen, 2015; Britton, 2013; Dunn et al., 2014; C. Lewis, 2016; Ryan et al., 2016; Wilder et al., 2013) point to a reduction in Black folks assuming top administrative leadership positions in higher instruction establishments. As of 2014, Black females' enrollment in colleges and universities exceeded that of any other racial or ethnic demographic. Only 6% of the 236,000 African American women in this category during this time held positions in higher levels of leadership or administration; the vast majority held secretarial/clerical jobs, followed by faculty (Beckwith et al., 2016; A. Howard et al., 2016; Wallace et al., 2014; Wilder et al., 2013).

Wilder et al. (2013) and Wallace et al. (2014) posit that the lower the academic or administrative status, the fewer representatives. As a result, fewer Black administrators can relate to Black students' cultural context, affecting more than just Black professionals' experiences (C. Lewis, 2016). If students do not stick around, neither do their tuition funds, which might adversely affect recruiting and retention and the institution's bottom line. In the U.S., institutional metrics often reveal discrepancies in retention figures. Students of color, predominantly Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous individuals, exhibit lower retention rates compared to their Caucasian counterparts. As per the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's 2019 fall report, Black pupils' graduation rate in 6 years was roughly 38%, while it was around 64% for white students (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). Scholars such as Blockett et al. (2016), Griffin and Muñiz (2011), and Rusher (1996) highlighted the pressing concern of the knowingly underrepresented presence of Black female leaders in tertiary environments. Even the sincere endeavors of institutions to enhance diversity by conducting intensive recruitment campaigns

mainly focusing on attracting and retaining persons of color remain a concerning lack of an extensive surge in the quantity of Black female executives. In all fields of post-secondary establishments, White men remain the preferred demographic regardless of the recruitment strategy (Lindsay, 2010). Despite the insufficient presence of duly qualified Black females in post-secondary institutions, few hold administrative positions (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Rusher, 1996).

Research shows that women encounter significant challenges when securing a high-ranking administrative role in higher learning establishments, such as discrimination, marginalization, and sexism (Mitchell, 2018; O'Bryant, 2015; Overstreet, 2019). Additionally, Black women face stereotypes and endure negative undertones (Heilman, 2012; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Tan, 2016; Tatum, 2007; Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014); double jeopardy: sexism and racism, which impede their professional progression (Beckwith et al., 2016; Johnson-Jones, 2009; Mitchell, 2018; Sandler, 1991). Scholars noted that Black women are invisible and conspicuous owing to their ethnic group and sex (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Gardner et al., 2014; C. Lewis, 2016). In terms of statistical representation, they are quantified (visible) yet often disregarded (invisible) in matters of intelligence or academic prowess (Bradley, 2005; S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Hamilton, 2004; Kellerman & Rhode, 2017; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Additionally, scholars have extensively documented challenges and barriers Black females encounter as college leaders (Holder et al., 2015; Ribeiro, 2016); glass ceiling components such as intersectionality, double bind, and sticky floor components, and the value of mentoring, professional development, and positionality plays in overcoming these barriers and challenges (Beckwith et al., 2016; Bystydzienski et al., 2017; Cook & Glass, 2013; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Gasman et al., 2015; Glass & Cook, 2016;

Hancock et al., 2017; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Ryan et al., 2016; Sheridan et al., 2015). In addition, cross-cultural or cross-race mentorship is growing in popularity, which is especially significant given that White males hold most senior-level positions (Dahlvig, 2010). Studies revealed a disproportionate prevalence of White males in tertiary educational leadership, particularly those between the ages of 60 and 64; only 30% of women presidents and 9% of Black Women (ACE, 2017b). The presented statistics reflect the noticeable absence of diversity among individuals assigned to essential roles within the broad spectrum of higher education. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2008) acknowledged the presence of conflicts, paradoxes, and opportunities stemming from disparities in ethnicity, sex, and societal background. However, they contend that these challenges, when navigated effectively, enrich the dynamics between the mentor and mentee.

Although the demographic makeup of American society has evolved, there has been no equivalent change in the literary canon and academic scholarship that examines and affirms the lives and intellectual achievements made by individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). In higher learning establishments nationwide, Black females occupy a disproportionate number of leadership roles (Alexander, 2010; Coleman, 2012; Howard-Vital, 1989; Johns, 2013; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Not many Black women serve as college presidents, even though many competent, enthusiastic, and accomplished Black women work in the education sector (Grogan, 1996; McFarlin et al., 1999). Scholars, such as Edwards-Wilson (1998), have called attention to the need for more thorough exploration studies centered on Black female experiences, difficulties, and contributions in leadership roles within the academic world and have emphasized the rarity of study in this area. Since all people of color are examined

collectively, there is a shortage of studies investigating Black female experiences, achievements, successes, and challenges (Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

Problem Statement

Historically, conventional leadership views have been built on masculine norms and characteristics. These gendered expectations and prejudices have shaped how academic leadership is seen and assessed. As a result, female leadership, particularly Black women's leadership, is frequently disregarded, underestimated, or sidelined (Britton, 2013; R. Hall et al., 2007; T. A. Jones, 2013). Like many other disciplines, academia has been sluggish in acknowledging and embracing the diverse leadership styles that women, including Black women, can bring to the table (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). A pressing imperative exists to expand the parameters encompassing styles, approaches, and perspectives that can accommodate women leaders' distinctive experiences and strengths (Alexander, 2010; Dunn et al., 2014). Research studies of Black women typically concentrate on shortcomings and flaws, while the literature on Black leaders generally centers on males (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Women, regardless of their racial background, have historically been underrepresented in positions of power, mainly due to practices and standards that have traditionally been centered around male perspectives and experiences. This partially accounts for the limited presence of women in scholarly investigations, which has affected the creation of leadership theories, models, and practices (Dunn et al., 2014).

The absenteeism of females in leadership roles within post-secondary establishments is a well-documented concern, as highlighted by Dahlvig and Longman (2014). This disparity becomes particularly pronounced in post-secondary establishments, where the number of females in administrative roles varies from the growing female student population. Guramatunhu-

Mudiwa (2015) underscored this discrepancy, noting that while the enrollment of female students has seen a significant surge, the advancement of female faculty members within these institutions has yet to keep pace. This imbalance has broader implications beyond mere representation. Kelch-Oliver et al. (2013) emphasized the decline in mentorship opportunities for female pupils and personnel members. The sparse representation of female leaders curtails the avenues for young ladies to identify role models and mentors within their academic environments. Such mentorship relationships are pivotal in guiding and supporting young women as they navigate their educational careers.

Moreover, the significance of diverse leadership transcends mere representation. Dezo and Ross (2012) argued that when leadership roles are male-dominated, institutions miss the richness of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and talents that women offer. Heterogeneity in executive roles is not solely about equity; it is fundamental to organizations' comprehensive development and prosperity.

Research from Harvard in 1986 underscores a significantly limited amount of Black female leaders within post-secondary environments (S. R. Logan, 2019; Rosette et al., 2016). Although there is an expanding collection of work on Black female professional development, it does not adequately address this gap. Hannum et al. (2015) noted the extensive research on female leadership in post-secondary institutions, encompassing hurdles women face in securing leadership positions, insights from current female leaders, gender's impact on leadership styles, and strategies to promote this cause. However, historical literature on professional development often overlooks or fails to mention Black females and females of color (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Johnson-Bailey and Tisdell (1998) noted that limited research focuses on

diversity in women's professional growth. Most research on this subject has been obtained from White-focused studies.

Despite the forward momentum in promoting Black women's inclusion in leadership within educational settings, it is crucial to understand that mere professional progress does not equate to genuine demographic equity in top-tier administrative roles in post-secondary institutions (Platt & Fanning, 2023). Black women's leadership in post-secondary institutions is primarily concentrated in female institutions, 2-year colleges, and HBCUs, as concurred by A. Howard and Gagliardi (2018), Croom et al. (2017), S. Davis and Brown (2017), and Stripling (2017). The precise measures to facilitate women's advancement still need to be discovered. Studies indicate that females face a metaphorical glass ceiling in their career progression (Bracey, 2017; Bono et al., 2017; S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Although there are several ideas around this phenomenon, only some explain how it impacts women in groups. The glass ceiling, a hurdle often faced by females in leadership, has been the highlight for academic scholars trying to get a clear picture of the strategies and factors that have enabled some people to shatter it (Barnes, 2017; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1990).

With so few Black females in leadership and management roles, ambitious Black females have few prospects of acquiring effective leadership counsel and assistance (Carter & Rossi, 2019). The scarcity of data complicates understanding the previous training, career trajectories, experiences, and perceived barriers faced by Black female leaders holding senior titles such as director or above (Foster, 2015). These senior titles encompass roles like chancellor, president, vice president, provost, dean, director, or department chair in post-secondary institutions. The uncommonness of Black females in college leadership roles and university presidencies makes it

particularly challenging for emerging Black female leaders to find role models that have fruitfully navigated racial and gender obstacles.

Purpose

Black females frequently navigate the intricate nexus of racial and gender oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Nevertheless, against these challenges and while inspiring upcoming leaders, Black women are reshaping the leadership paradigm within higher education institutions (Foster, 2015). Black women in academia are addressing pressing issues and advancing knowledge in numerous fields by bringing their diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise (Hannum et al., 2015). They are significantly advancing research, education, mentoring, and community involvement. Through their efforts, they dismantle accepted leadership ideas and establish the foundation for inclusive and equitable learning spaces.

The inaugural target of this Delphi investigation was to elucidate the pivotal characteristics and efficacious tactics that have notably contributed to the achievement of top senior positions by Black women within academic institutions. This research sought to authenticate and underscore the importance of these best practices in catalyzing future accomplishments and progress. A holistic understanding necessitated examining career progression from the viewpoints of Black women who traveled this journey.

In addition, this study conceptualized career advancement as the culmination of leadership insight and professional development that Black females harnessed to conquer distinguished leadership roles in post-secondary organizations. Although other research studies explore career progression and professional maturity among women, understanding how leadership competencies have helped shape women's career routes in senior leadership roles still needs to be attained. This exploration offered profound insights into the nuanced intersections of

ethnicity and sex within the context of post-secondary institutions, a pivotal professional and cultural domain in America. By exploring the distinct viewpoints of Black females, this study posed the following research questions.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following two research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: What are the critical factors in a successful leadership design for Black women's professional advancement and success in Higher education institutions?
- RQ2: Can these critical factors be used to develop a theoretical framework for understanding Black women's professional advancement and success in leadership positions within Higher education institutions?

Significance of the Study

This study was relevant as it emphasized a traditionally overlooked demographic in leadership capacities within post-secondary systems: Black or African American females. By examining their experiences, strategies, and competencies, the study sought to illuminate the mechanisms and practices instrumental in their rise to leadership. The implications of this study were multifaceted, addressing both the advancement of Black female leaders and the overarching ramifications for the entirety of the post-secondary systems.

- **Highlighting the Underrepresented:** As R. Hall et al. (2007) suggest, the dedication of Black female leaders to academia has often been overlooked. This research seeks to rectify this oversight by shedding light on their experiences, challenges, and successes. Doing so offers a free space for these females to highlight their views and viewpoints, which have historically been marginalized.

- **Empowerment and Inspiration:** The research study results can inspire and motivate upcoming generations of females from the African Diaspora. By showcasing the pathways and tactics employed by successful Black women leaders, the research can empower and encourage more Black females to seek and reach leadership roles in academia and beyond.
- **Impact on Student Achievement:** Pitts (2007) observes that personnel of color significantly impact the academic achievements of pupils of color. By serving as mentors, role models, and advocates, they can dramatically affect students' educational trajectories. Therefore, promoting Black women to leadership roles can have a cascading positive effect on pupil triumph.
- **Influencing Policy and Decision-Making:** The research can inform policymaking at institutional and regulatory levels. Emphasizing the significance and contributions of Black women leaders can champion more inclusive recruitment and advancement strategies, underscoring the crucial role of diverse representation in leadership positions.
- **Contributions to Psychology and Leadership Studies:** This research enhances psychology and leadership studies by providing perspectives from female leaders. Their expert views on strategies and skills offer insights for guiding future research and practical applications.
- **Filling Knowledge Gaps:** This research tackles an absence in the literature, centering on the journeys and hurdles Black females confront as they secure and uphold leadership positions in tertiary institutions. Addressing this enhances the holistic comprehension of leadership interplay within academic environments.

- **Shaping Future Leadership Demographics:** This revelation holds implications extending beyond academic boundaries. The study possesses the potential to mold the future leadership milieu in tertiary education by guiding policies that support and mentor Black female leaders, thereby advocating for a more balanced gender representation.

In conclusion, this research study can potentially drive transformative change within higher learning establishments. By spotlighting the narratives and insights of Black female leaders, it advocates for inclusivity, diversity, and equitability in leadership, which can yield extensive positive effects on the entire academic community.

Assumptions of the Study

This modified Delphi study spotlights the senior-level college and university administrators based in or currently living in the U.S. The initial assumption posited that participants would offer sincere feedback and maintain respect for others providing input (Charlton, 2004). Furthermore, these participants bring a range of viewpoints on leadership positions in tertiary institutions and the pathways available for advancement. The expectation is that these panelists provide beneficial insights into strategies and effective procedures for Black females who desire senior roles. The research framework posits that a panel of experts might possess a more profound collective understanding of a phenomenon than a single expert (Steurer, 2011).

Furthermore, the anticipation is that the modified Delphi approach will competently address and examine the research questions, leading to significant results. When researching Black females as leaders in post-secondary institutions through a modified Delphi study, the research study operates under several assumptions. The proponents of this research paradigm

recognize that pooling the expertise of various experts, informed by diverse experiences, can produce richer solutions, projections, and insights on a given topic than a limited number of experts working individually (Sobaih et al., 2012). The study assumes that the chosen experts have profound knowledge of the subject matter. The study also trusts that the experts will fully participate in every survey phase, sharing their genuine insights.

The Delphi method's inherent anonymity is hoped to foster candid feedback (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Gathering individual responses rather than group dialogues eliminates peer influence on the findings. The survey tools aim to represent the perspectives of these experts genuinely. While the aspiration is to find a unified viewpoint among the experts, the researcher assumes that this shared perspective can be applied more broadly, even cautiously. As the iterative feedback process continues, it is believed that the replies will gradually refine and align, leading to a collective comprehension. Given the core of Black women, it is commanding that the experts acknowledge the unique cultural and institutional obstacles they encounter as Black females strive to reach leadership within post-secondary institutions.

Limitations of the Study

This study is solely centered on Black female leaders' perspectives. Its scope is confined to Black women senior executives in American post-secondary institutions who have risen to leadership positions. These females should not be perceived as a singular entity, as they might not encapsulate the views and viewpoints of Black female leaders in tertiary establishments globally. In this modified Delphi study, the only participants are females of African descent with prior or present experience in roles such as director, dean, superintendent, chancellor, president, vice president, provost, or department chair in higher education establishments. Other limitations include:

- **Sample Size and Consent:** The study's design, which emphasizes participant ease and confidentiality, might inadvertently limit the sample size (A. West, 2011). By giving participants the option to decline participation, there is a potential risk of not securing a sufficiently diverse or representative sample. Due to its constrained sample size, the study's outcomes might need more generalizability, potentially reducing their relevance to wider contexts or varied populations.
- **Participant Fatigue and Attrition:** Delphi studies can be demanding for participants because of their iterative nature. Spanning multiple rounds, they require participants to engage repeatedly over time. Skulmoski et al. (2007) note that this can lead to fatigue, where contributors might feel overwhelmed or lose interest. Attrition, where participants drop out of the study before completion, is another concern. While the survey attempted to mitigate this by limiting the process to three rounds, the risk remains. Attrition can impact the richness and diversity of data, potentially skewing results.
- **Participant Honesty:** Any study's integrity hinges on its participants' honesty. Skulmoski et al. (2007) highlight that ensuring genuine responses is a perennial challenge in research. While the online survey distribution might offer convenience and speed, it needs to address the potential issue of participants providing consistent responses directly. The absence of direct, in-person interaction in online surveys might lead to a reduced sense of accountability, potentially intensifying this issue.

Definition of Terms

- *Academia:* Academic institutions are frequently organized into systems or networks, including multiple individual institutions governed by a centralized structure.

- Typically, these systems facilitate collaboration, resource sharing, and coordination between member institutions (Ehrenberg, 2004).
- *African American/ Black*: The term “Black” refers to a broad spectrum of identities and experiences within the African diaspora. This comprises people of African origin, African immigrants, Afro-Caribbeans, and those who identify as mixed-race with African ancestry (Bodomo, 2013). This research study used “African American” and “Black” interchangeably.
 - *Community college, technical college, and 2-year college* are all terms that will be used interchangeably to refer to institutions that confer associate degrees, professions, or certifications (Shults, 2001).
 - *Diversity*: When there are many different types of people in a given group, organization, or society, it is said to be diverse. Age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, political beliefs, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, race, and cultural backgrounds (Eckel & King, 2007).
 - *Doctoral Granting Institutions*: The postsecondary institutions in America that give doctorates in research must be accredited at the higher education level by a body authorized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).
 - *Double Oppression*: Black and female (S. Davis & Brown, 2017).
 - *Historically Black College and University*: A higher learning institution established before 1964 to educate Black American individuals (NCES, 2019).
 - *Hegemonic*: Power a dominant group has over society, culture, ideas, or money (Sagaria, 2002).

- *Higher Education Institutions*: Colleges and Universities in America, including Community Colleges, PWIs, MSI, and HBCUs.
- *Leadership* inspires, motivates, and guides others toward a common objective or vision. The capacity to lead or manage a team of individuals, a whole business, or other entities (Harvard, 1986).
- *Minority Serving Institution*: In America, the term Minority Serving Institution (MSI) refers to higher education institutions where the student body comprises over 50% from one or multiple minority groups (Gasman & Conrad, 2013).
- *People of Color*: Non-White and non-European individuals. African Americans, Asians, Latinos, Middle Easterners, Multiracial Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders (Alvarez et al., 2016; Franklin et al., 2006).
- *Post-secondary institutions refer to educational institutions that provide education beyond the secondary level, typically after high school. They are used interchangeably with the terms higher education institutions, establishments, organizations, and systems.*
- *Predominantly White Institution (PWI)*: In this study, PWI refers to colleges and universities where White students comprise at least 50% of the student body (Gasman & Conrad, 2013).
- *Racism*: Conscious and unconscious acts that result in marginalization and injury to people of color in various ways, as well as societal norms that promote White supremacy and keep the existing conditions for people of color.

- *Senior-level position*: The term “senior-level position” will be interchangeably used with headings such as director, dean, department chair, vice-president, president, chancellor, provost, and superintendent.
- *Sexism*: Discrimination based on a person’s gender or sexuality is directed mainly toward girls and women (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Weber & Wade, 1995).
- *Tertiary education* encompasses all formal education beyond the secondary level, incorporating colleges, public and private universities, technical training institutes, and vocational institutes. This definition extends to various institutions offering advanced educational opportunities (Schrader-King, 2021).
- *Underrepresented* refers to a group or community whose representation in a particular context or environment is less than their proportion in a country's or region's total population. (Snyder et al., 2018; Turner, 2002).

Chapter Summary

Organizations still need to work on managing diversity successfully, especially at high levels of leadership. Despite advancements in promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives in many workplaces, there still needs to be done to ensure that diversity is not only present at all levels of leadership but is also effectively leveraged and represented. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) define diversity as individual variations and commonalities. Due to their underrepresentation in leadership and management positions, Black females have restricted access to leadership guidance and assistance. The need for more representation can impede access to vital networks, mentors, and resources for professional advancement and development. Faced with these obstacles, numerous Black women have taken proactive measures to seek additional tools and resources to attain leadership positions. They may use their tenacity, resilience, and

resourcefulness to navigate their career paths and acquire the necessary skills and support. This research probed into the optimal strategies and pivotal competencies that facilitated the success of Black females ascending to prominent senior roles in higher learning administrations.

This chapter delved into the problem and purpose statements, illuminating the multifaceted dynamics influencing the journey of Black females as they seek senior executive roles in post-secondary institutions. An extensive analysis of the selected methodology for this study was also presented. The significance of this research and the reasoning behind choosing a modified Delphi design as the methodological framework was also discussed. Moreover, the guiding research questions and pertinent gender studies theories were presented. This chapter outlined essential definitions, assumptions, the study's scope, and limitations. Notably, terms such as “African American” and “Black,” as well as “position” and “role,” were used interchangeably throughout this research. This decision stemmed from their interchangeable use in the literature and by study participants, and this research adhered to that convention.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Effective leadership is essential in today's academic landscape (Townsend, 2019). The ACE (2017a) emphasized that the progression of post-secondary education hinged on the collaborative endeavors of inclusive and adaptable leaders worldwide. Leaders in tertiary education are primarily responsible for navigating institutions through technological challenges, updating curricula, and ensuring sustained relevance for upcoming generations (Hannum et al., 2015; Townsend, 2019). Leaders possessing the essential understanding, adaptability, and motivation are imperative for undertaking such significant responsibilities (Teague, 2015).

As emphasized by Jackson-Dean (2014), conducting a literature review is a crucial aspect of research. This chapter offered a detailed examination of the literature, focusing on Black females' historical and present-day experiences in leadership roles. It gathers material from reputable academic sources, substantiating the research's credibility and authenticity. Utilizing reputable literary sources is crucial for enhancing the credibility and reliability of scholarly investigations (Pace, 2018; M. B. Smith et al., 2018; N. M. West, 2020). Exploration in education concentrating on the African diaspora within post-secondary institutions has undoubtedly seen considerable growth, as noted by Turi et al. in 2022. However, Collins (2015), Wolfe and Dilworth (2015), and Wright (2014) all observed that the existing literature primarily relies on qualitative research methods, focusing on two main areas: (a) student retention and (b) the perspectives of academic faculty. This discussion lacked a comprehensive study of Black females' ascent into leadership within educational environments (Viscione, 2022).

The phantom of variety in administration must be more superficial and yield concrete advantages for institutions, faculties, leadership, and the student population (Viscione, 2022). A varied leadership composition enhances the academic environment by including multicultural

elements and aligning with a broader globalized social framework (S. Jones, 2014; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). According to Guillory (2001), the leadership of an institution has a fundamental societal obligation to respond to the evolving demographics of America. The literature review identified specific thematic areas that focus on the sociocultural dynamics influencing the progression and achievements of Black females in leadership:

- Gender and Leadership (Argyris, 1998; Bass, 1990; Hannum et al., 2015; Jackson-Dean, 2014; Lumby & Azaola, 2014; Vardiman, 2002)
- Females in Leadership (Alter, 2014; Elassar, 2020; Lawrence, 2017; B. Robnett, 1996; R. D. Robnett & Anderson, 2017; Rosener, 1990; Sacks, 1988)
- Black Females in Leadership (S. Jones, 2014; Kaba, 2017; C. Lewis, 2016; McGlynn, 2014; Warner & Corley, 2017; Zahneis, 2018)
- Females in Higher Education (Chamberlain, 1991; P. Parker, 2015; Schwartz, 1997)
- Black Females in Higher Education (Croom et al., 2017; Espinosa et al., 2019; Garner, 2010; Littlefield, 1997; Perkins, 1993; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008)
- Black Female Leaders Best Practices and Strategies (AACC, 2018; Amah, 2017; C. Hill et al., 2016; List & Sorcinelli, 2018; Marcus, 2016)

The literature suggests that to grasp the hurdles and ambitions of Black females comprehensively, it is necessary to engage with theories that are grounded in their distinct socio-cultural and personal backgrounds, as these diverge significantly from those who do not experience the combined effects of racial and gender inequality (Grijalva, 2018; Hamilton, 2004; Kelly et al., 2019). Therefore, this review employed the theoretical frameworks of Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory (CLT), Black Feminist Thought Theory (BFT), and Critical Race

Theory (CRT) to develop a deep comprehension of the complex sociocultural hurdles encountered by Black women.

Identifying Black women's distinct views and viewpoints about their peers is essential (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Ramdeo, 2023). This facilitates the process of investigating the perspectives of individuals, recognizing the challenges they face, and understanding their resilience and strategies for attaining leadership positions in tertiary learning. To achieve clarity, in this review of literature, the researcher employed "African American" and "Black;" "higher education" and "colleges and universities" and "post-secondary;" and "tertiary education" "women" and "females" synonymously.

Theoretical Frameworks

According to Ravitch and Riggan (2012), the theoretical framework plays an essential role in research by providing a foundation that outlines the research objective and methods. The frameworks of this study provide a robust context for grasping theories that elucidate the factors underlying the research problem. They assist researchers in data interpretation, underscore the rationale for the study, and highlight existing knowledge gaps. Theories encompass ideas, frameworks, models, methods, and answers for examining behaviors, findings, results, or actions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2012). The literature study explores a range of frameworks that are pertinent to the research. These frameworks embrace several aspects, including race, gender, leadership, challenges, strategies for overcoming challenges, and the path toward achieving successful careers.

This study is fundamentally grounded in a diverse array of academic literature. The work of Sojourner Truth, particularly her notable speech "Ain't I A Woman," is pivotal in the genesis and evolution of Black feminist thought, as highlighted in Rosser-Mims' (2010) analysis. The

truth is that contributions are seminal in both the establishment of the Black feminist movement and the articulation of its core principles (Lawrence, 2017). In a parallel vein, the scholarly contributions of Dr. Patricia Hill Collins, a professor of notable distinction, have been instrumental in furthering the empowerment of Black women (R. D. Robnett & Anderson, 2017). Her extensive research and numerous publications, notably in 1986, 1990, and 2000, have given a comprehensive framework for exploring and developing Black feminist thought, enriching the academic discourse in this field (Binder et al., 2018). At its core, it examines leadership concepts, paying particular attention to the insights provided by Black Feminist Thought, which is structured around three central themes (Collins, 1990, 2009). In addition, this research highlights the impact of CRT on universities and the individuals within them. Howard-Hamilton (2003) notes that although several mainstream theories are often perceived as universal, they frequently overlook the concept of multifaceted identities.

The study integrates the Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory (CLT), which offers insight into how different cultures endorse various attributes and behaviors in their leaders (Grove, 2005). According to Grove (2005), Robert J. House developed CLT as part of the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) study. This extensive research project, initiated by House in the 1990s, involved over 200 researchers and focused on understanding how culture influences leadership and organizational practices across various nations and societies. This theoretical framework acknowledges that different cultures might hold varied views on what constitutes effective leadership. Such an understanding is necessary when considering leadership's global nature today. A significant portion of scholarly research, including work by Gasman et al. (2015), concentrates on the representation and experiences of Black women in academic leadership. The objective is to enhance understanding of the complex

interactions among leadership, cultural, racial, and gender factors in higher education. This goal is achieved by exploring the distinct challenges Black females encounter and the competencies they employ to achieve success.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Thought Theory (BFT)

This investigation is anchored in the theoretical underpinnings of CRT and BFT. Patricia Hill Collins was instrumental in formalizing BFT, emphasizing the distinct experiences of Black females, especially in contrast to women of other racial backgrounds (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Perkins, 1993; Sharp et al., 2022). Further enriching the discourse, Stanley (2009) posited that BFT should also consider different dimensions of identity, like class and sexuality.

The academic framework CRT was formulated during the 1970s by legal theorists Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman. Initially developed within the legal domain, CRT has since been embraced within education to recognize and evaluate disparities (Crenshaw, 1989; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Gasman et al., 2015). This theoretical framework explores how ethnicity and privilege cross to shape and perpetuate socioeconomic disparities across various groups (Hiraldo, 2010).

These theories act as analytical prisms, offering a holistic framework to probe the intricate interchange of ethnicity, sex, and power dynamics within the scope of the study (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Delgado, 1995; Gasman et al., 2015; Hiraldo, 2010; Mali & Nash, 2021; L. Parker & Lynn, 2002; Perkins, 1993). Abrams and Moio (2009) argued that CRT and BFT investigate power relations when oppression is systemic. Howard-Hamilton (2003) underscores the inherent difficulty in utilizing conventional theoretical frameworks to adequately capture Black women's multifaceted identities and roles, necessitating more tailored approaches. CRT and BFT have emerged as viable frameworks to meet Black

females' distinctive needs and experiences in tertiary establishments. These frameworks have demonstrated their value as practical tools in dissecting and understanding the multifaceted experiences of Black females. This has been accentuated by academicians like Lennon et al. (2013) and Madsen (2012), further emphasizing their paramount importance and relevance in researching this specific group.

In education, CRT provides multiple perspectives for understanding how race and racism manifest in educational institutions (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT emphasizes examining educational policies, practices, and curricula to identify how they perpetuate or challenge racial inequalities. It also emphasizes the criticality of incorporating the opinions and experiences of underrepresented racial groups in educational studies and a diverse range of viewpoints in developing inclusive educational strategies. CRT is widely used to explain the continuing educational disparities faced by populations of color (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

BFT posits that traditional feminist theories often overlook the actual experiences and viewpoints of Black females (Henley et al., 1998). According to research, Patricia Hill-Collins' foundational text first published in 1990, was the foundation for integrating BFT into this study's theoretical framework (S. Davis & Brown, 2017). This oversight can be ascribed to the complex interplay of ethnicity, sex, and other character facets that uniquely shape individual experiences (Collins, 1990). BFT underscores the necessity to identify and examine the interconnected power structures influencing Black women's lives. It illuminates the historical sidelining and exclusion of Black females in post-secondary institutions, highlighting the compounded challenges they often confront due to both racial prejudice and gender bias (Carver-Moore, 2022; S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Solórzano et al., 2000). This intersectional oppression points to limited

opportunities for advancement, unequal treatment, and the erasure of their valuable contributions.

CRT and BFT address the prevalent notion that people live in a society without races and the everyday reality of racism (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Collins, 2015). Solórzano et al. (2000) explain that these theoretical frames integrate the phenomenon of individuals from various backgrounds, reflecting the diversity in the real world. It is interesting to note that BFT contains features that repeat many of the fundamental principles of CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2005). This exploration draws on components of BFT and CRT as Black female administrators in post-secondary environments may assist in establishing competencies for women with similar traits to climb to senior executive leadership roles.

Black Feminist Thought Theory. BFT acknowledges that the uniqueness of a Black female experience is distinct and cannot be fully captured or represented through the lens of feminism or race theory alone (Boykin, 2022; Collins, 2022). Scholarly literature recognizes Black women's diverse backgrounds, cultural contexts, and histories, including those from various regions such as Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian, Black British, and Nigerian (Collins, 1986, 2015). BFT builds on the feminist movement and theory, notably by rejecting the idea that all women face the same issues (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Evans-Winters & Love, 2015).

Emerging in the 1970s, Black feminism and BFT highlighted struggles faced by Black females due to their interconnecting uniqueness as Black and female, a phenomenon often termed "double jeopardy" (Collins, 1990; Grant & Simmons, 2008; N. M. West, 2020). Central to BFT is understanding how the combination of sexism, classism, and racism impacts the realities of Black women's lives (Moore, 2018). According to BFT, these oppressive structures are not independent but mutually reinforce one another (Collins, 1990).

Additionally, the necessity of Black women actively defining and evaluating themselves in ways that challenge negative stereotypes and promote positive self-images is emphasized by BFT (Collins, 2022). BFT believes mainstream narratives and representations frequently propagate harmful stereotypes and devalue Black females' experiences and identities (Wheeler, 2002). The main finding of BFT is that consciousness is influenced by several factors related to a person's or community's distinguishing position in culture and history (Simmons-Reed et al., 2023). BFT will aid in the direction of this study because the participants' ethnicity, gender, cultural setting, socioeconomic status, and experiences are all crucial factors in this research study. Collins (1986) argued that BFT provides an intellectual background when analyzing Black women. BFT and practice complement one another. Collins (2009) and Seth (2023) emphasized that BFT, positioned as a critical social theory, equips Black females to challenge overlapping oppressions. Collins characterizes vital social theory as a lens to understanding how BFT addresses social and economic inequities (Acuff, 2018).

Black women have consistently reconceptualized their identities, creating a unique perspective on self and societal structures (Collins, 2009). Intellectuals among them, both inside and outside academia, are cornerstones of Black feminism (Moore, 2018). These women, drawing from their unique lived experiences and the narratives of their peers, contribute to academia and activism with a singular lens (Anderson, 2023). Their scholarship synthesizes insights from various disciplines and the lived realities of being at the juncture of ethnicity and gender. This informed awareness results in a collective Black females' viewpoint, adding depth and nuance to broader academic discussions.

Critical Race Theory. Gasman et al. (2015) and Hiraldo (2010) explained that CRT encompasses five fundamental concepts. These ideas serve as the foundational tenets of CRT and are widely acknowledged within scholarly discourse.

- Counter-storytelling is a method that empowers people from marginalized backgrounds to articulate and disseminate their narratives and lived experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gasman et al., 2015; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).
- The concept of the permanence of racism refers to the enduring and persistent existence of racist views, philosophy, and actions across the United States of America (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).
- The conceptualization of whiteness as property delves into the realities of white privilege and the resultant power dynamics that emerge from this societal advantage. (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Gasman et al., 2015; Harris, 1993; Hiraldo, 2010).
- Interest convergence refers to the notion that civil rights legislation in America predominantly advantages those of white ethnic background (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gasman et al., 2015; Hiraldo, 2010).
- The critique of liberalism posits that conventional conceptions of equality and the principle of legal neutrality frequently fail to acknowledge the persistent influence of racism adequately (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Gasman et al., 2015).

The objective of this exploration is in alignment with the principles of CRT. Researchers Crenshaw et al. (1995), Delgado and Stefancic (2001), and Jean-Marie et al. (2009) highlighted obstacles Black women might encounter because of being marginalized or owing to the

misunderstandings perpetuated by influential individuals on the lasting impact of racial discrimination in American history (Villalpando & Bernal, 2002). The acknowledgment of the influence of racism within social structures provides insight into the constrained advancements seen by Black females in positions of leadership in America (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). The notion of “whiteness as property” elucidates the inherent freedoms afforded to those of white racial background, juxtaposed with the constrained opportunities for leadership positions experienced by individuals belonging to racial minority groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

CRT provides significant perspectives into the historical and sociological circumstances that contributed to the marginalization and underestimation of racism (L. Parker & Lynn, 2002). Additionally, it offers contextual information on the potential impact of persistent racism on the recruitment, advancement, and retention strategies employed for women belonging to racial minority groups. Moreover, the idea of “sameness” or “color-blindness” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) leads to hesitancy in acknowledging and catering to the varied requirements of different groups inside institutions.

CRT is a theoretical lens that facilitates exploring and addressing questions linked to the presence and opportunities for Black female leaders within higher educational institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Significantly, CRT recognizes the intersecting obstacles Black females encounter from both racial and gender-based prejudices (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). A specific understanding is essential for identifying the complexities of their professional career paths.

CRT Criticism. Various criticisms have emerged within the scholarly field of CRT, frequently originating from unforeseen origins (López & Sleeter, 2023). Notably, Randall Kennedy, a Black scholar and colleague of Derrick Bell at Harvard University, emerged as an

early detractor of CRT (E. Reed et al., 2022). Delgado (2016) elaborated on three primary focal points of CRT. Kennedy initially posited that competence acquisition cannot be exclusively ascribed to one's racial identity.

Moreover, Kennedy challenged CRT's premise that literary works produced by individuals of color lacked representation, asserting that substantial evidence is available to substantiate their inclusion. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) believed that the under-recognition of academic contributions made by persons of color in academia may be linked to a perceived devaluation of their work. Delgado and Stefancic added that Kennedy's criticisms of CRT were greeted with opposing viewpoints, as critics said his perspective was outdated and failed to consider contextual elements.

Despite receiving support from several scholars in understanding racism in teacher education (Han & Laughter, 2019), curriculum (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012), discipline (Hines-Datiri & Carter Andrews, 2020), school funding (Alemán, 2007), and many others, CRT has encountered criticism from diverse audiences (Belsha et al., 2021; Dixson & Rousseau, 2016; Farag, 2023). Belsha et al. (2021) argued that apprehensions surrounding CRT were pivotal in mobilizing white suburban voters during the 2021 off-year elections. Alfonseca (2022) notes that political figures have utilized opposition to CRT as a cornerstone of their platforms, leading to enacting laws against the theory. This political stance has been echoed in the public sphere, where citizens, often influenced by exaggerated media portrayals, have actively participated in educational board meetings to express their concerns about the perceived risk of liberal educators indoctrinating students, as highlighted by Scott (2022). Ramjug (2021) explains that a significant portion of the public's understanding of CRT stems more from media commentators and political figures than educators and scholars. This claim is supported by a December 2021 poll conducted

by Northeastern University, which revealed that 70% of respondents lacked knowledge about CRT (Ramjug, 2021).

Leadership Theory

This study sought to investigate the progression of leadership theories, centering on its contemporary interpretations and implementations, particularly concerning female leadership figures, specifically Black female executives in tertiary educational settings. Since the early 20th century, as highlighted by Tierney (1986), leadership concepts have experienced notable shifts. These evolutions shape the foundational principles guiding individuals' and organizations' strategies and actions. While some theories shed light on women's participation in leadership, others may not adequately connect leadership definitions to the representation of females in such roles. This discussion will briefly trace the history of leadership theory and introduce the concept of CLT.

Evolution and Progression of Leadership Theory

Leadership remains a multifaceted and intricate subject of study (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Its significance has only amplified in our contemporary, rapidly evolving, interconnected world. Numerous scholars have offered varied definitions and conceptual frameworks regarding leadership. As conceptualized by Stogdill (1950), leadership is an influential process aiming at a specific objective crucial in steering a group toward a predefined goal. This sentiment is echoed by Kouzes and Posner (1995), who articulated leadership to inspire others toward shared aspirations. Maxwell (1993), more succinctly, related leadership directly to influence.

Historically, leadership discourses of the 18th and 19th centuries, constructed by male scholars, overlooked women's leadership potential (Teague, 2015). This era linked leadership with masculine traits like dominance, evidenced by terminologies like the “Great Man Theory,”

suggesting some individuals innately impact societal evolutions (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). The Great Man Theory, predominately linked to Thomas Carlyle's works, emerged as a response to the need for leadership during the volatile era of the Napoleonic Wars (Cherry, 2023). This theory posits that specific individuals inherently possess traits predisposing them to effective leadership, encapsulating the concept that leadership is an innate quality rather than a skill developed over time (Carlyle, 1893). Additionally, it implies that such individuals naturally rise to positions of authority when situations demand their innate leadership qualities. The phrase “great man” reflects the historical context of the theory, where leadership, particularly in military contexts, was predominantly viewed as a masculine attribute (Spector, 2016).

Leadership perspectives experienced a change in thinking in the mid-20th century, moving from inherent traits to a belief in developing leadership competencies (NAACP, 2002). This shift highlighted the relevance of human relations, situational contexts, and individual initiatives in leadership outcomes. However, women's representation remained limited despite evolving frameworks (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). As leadership theories matured, styles like autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire became dominant. Bass (1990) observed that while autocratic and laissez-faire styles leaned towards traditionally masculine traits, democratic leadership embraced qualities often linked with women, such as empathy.

Jean-Marie et al. (2009) mentioned that the 1970s literature highlighted gender disparities in leadership, with a spotlight on the experiences of white women. However, researchers refuted significant gendered distinctions in leadership approaches, positing similar leadership attributes across genders (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). During this period, transformational and transactional leadership models emerged. Fennell (2021) differentiated them by highlighting the reciprocal nature of transactional leadership, contrasting it with the inspirational objective of

transformational leadership. Interestingly, women displayed a proclivity for the transformational style, emphasizing mentorship and compassion (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003), although their representation as leaders lagged behind men (C. Hill et al., 2016). Patwardhan et al. (2021), investigating the advertising industry's leadership across the U.S., U.K., and Australia, noted that top leaders emphasized individual focus, collaboration, and foresight, underscoring people skills' role in leadership.

Leadership discussions have evolved to encompass multifaceted diversity dimensions, including age, race, and more (Turi et al., 2022). These elements often reflect cultural frameworks underpinning societal norms when examined through various theoretical lenses. In this context, the Cultural Endorsed Leadership Theory (CLT) developed by Robert House emerges as an apt tool to explore leadership's multifaceted nature (Moore, 2018).

Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory (CLT)

The framework known as the CLT identifies six critical aspects of leadership. These dimensions are derived from examining behaviors and attributes associated with effective leadership practices (Grove, 2005). The Culturally Endorsed Leadership Theory (CLT) extends the foundational tenets of the Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) by integrating sociocultural variables to formulate an optimal leadership paradigm (Moore, 2018). The initial component, the Charismatic/Value-Based dimension, highlights a leader's ability to inspire and encourage individuals by upholding basic principles—the factor of Team-Oriented places emphasis on the alignment of individuals within a team towards a shared aim. In participation, leaders proactively engage people in planning and making decisions. The facet known as Humane-Oriented emphasizes qualities such as empathy, compassion, and supportive leadership techniques (Grove, 2005). The Autonomous component encompasses the qualities of independence and self-

sufficiency in executing leadership duties. Lastly, House et al. (2013) point out that the component of self-protection emphasizes the significance of guaranteeing the security and welfare of the collective and its constituents.

The association enhanced its conceptual structure, rendering it especially suitable for comprehending the phenomenon of global leadership (House et al., 2013). Researchers established a correlation between these dimensions and fundamental leadership qualities, including vision, teamwork, honesty, and modesty. The prevalent diversification trend within post-secondary institutions accentuates the relevance of the CLT paradigm to this research. The educational sector in America reflects the demographic changes occurring in the country, highlighting the necessity for inclusive leadership models that adapt to these changes (Eckel & King, 2007). Under the leadership of President Barack Obama's tenure, there was a notable focus on promoting diversity throughout higher education institutions. H. L Johnson (2017) suggests that these institutions were motivated to cultivate more accommodating settings for individuals from diverse backgrounds, demonstrating a national dedication to diversity and inclusion. The burgeoning diversity within educational settings demands an encompassing educational approach that acknowledges and values all involved distinct characteristics and experiences. In this context, CLT provides a perspective that enhances our comprehension of leadership in post-secondary, mainly when guiding diverse populations (Gasman et al., 2015).

Tertiary Education in the United States (Historical Overview)

The landscape of tertiary learning underwent a significant transformation with the introduction of the Morrill Act of 1862 (Hofstadter & Hardy, 1953). This legislation empowered states with federal lands; the sales proceeds would be invested in creating and maintaining public higher educational institutions. These institutions emphasized applied arts and sciences,

underscoring a democratic ethos in education. While this was a significant stride, the era was marred by racial segregation. Original land-grant universities in the southern region notably excluded Black students, with only Mississippi and Kentucky marginally adhering to the “separate but equal” provision of the act (Brubacher & Rudy, 2017). In a redemptive move, the Second Morrill Act of 1890 sought to rectify this by providing for universities catering to Black students and advocating for non-discriminatory admissions (Chamberlain, 1991; Cohen et al., 2014; Cowley, 1961; Lucas, 1996; Reese, 2021).

The growth of public land-grant institutions and state universities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries catalyzed female enrollment in tertiary education (Chamberlain, 1991). However, certain academic domains remained inaccessible to women. With the formal adoption of the 19th Amendment in 1920, societal perceptions of females began to evolve (Lucas, 1996), paving the way for their foray into disciplines traditionally reserved for men. These land-grant colleges emerged as beacons of opportunity for many women, mainly from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, offering diverse academic and vocational courses (Chamberlain, 1991). Land-grant colleges aimed to expand the scope of educational offerings by incorporating applied subjects into the curriculum while simultaneously broadening social access to higher education.

The early 20th century witnessed significant progress in American education with the establishment of the community college system (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2022). A notable shift occurred in the latter part of the second half of the 20th century as women began to surpass men in college enrollments. This trend has persisted, as indicated by data from AAUW in 2022.

While women have secured doctorates at increasing rates since the 2000s, their representation in high-ranking academic and administrative capacities still needs to be improved (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Even with notable advancements, the progression of female leaders in academia has been incremental (Meza-Mejia et al., 2023). Gagliardi et al. mentioned that female college presidents increased to 30% in 2016. Moreover, persistent concerns like the gender wage gap, underrepresentation in key sectors, and the limited presence of female leaders continue to be significant (Baird, 2023).

Today, the American higher education landscape comprises over 5,900 public, private, and for-profit institutions (NCES, 2022). With ongoing debates concerning costs, the value of degrees, and the influence of online education, the progress of post-secondary establishments in America remains an active dialogue (Sanders, 2020).

University

The recorded history of American post-secondary institutions presents a multifaceted account of shifting cultural values, the expansion of educational establishments, and, particularly, the progressive transformation of female roles and rights (P. Parker, 2015). The convergence of the growth of American colleges with the increasing participation of women inside these establishments offers valuable perspectives on broader societal transformations.

The inception of post-secondary institutions in America dates back to the colonial period (Kober & Rentner, 2020). Established in 1636, Harvard University stood as the inaugural establishment for higher learning in America, predominantly concentrating on educating and preparing ministers (Rudolph & Thelin, 1990). The commencement of Harvard's scholarly endeavors coincided with the initiation of similar activities by other esteemed establishments, namely Yale in 1701, Princeton in 1746, and Columbia in 1754. During this formative period, it

was evident that higher education was predominantly reserved for males, reflecting a prevailing cultural norm. The notion of female scholars was remote, if only partially nonexistent.

Scholarly literature mentions that the academic scene in America saw significant transformations during the 19th century (Beckwith et al., 2016). Oberlin College, founded in 1833 in Ohio, exemplified this transition by becoming renowned as the pioneer educational institution in America to adopt a co-educational model and confer degrees upon women. Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, established in 1837, was a significant symbol of optimism and potential, selecting a model for subsequent women's institutions (Solomon, 1985).

The 20th century brought about notable societal transformations (Chamberlain, 1991). Land-grant colleges and regular schools, which served as precursors to modern-day public universities, saw significant growth (Chamberlain, 1991). Nevertheless, a noticeable pattern was maintained, whereby women, despite their increased presence in higher education institutions, were frequently confined to fields of study, particularly those related to teaching and home economics. The enactment of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which granted voting rights, was evidence of the changing socioeconomic paradigms. The increasing respect and recognition experienced by women catalyzed increased female participation in formerly male-dominated sectors.

Following World War II, the American tertiary education system underwent substantial alterations (Graff, 2016; Pace, 2018). The implementation of the GI Bill in the post-war era led to an unprecedented surge in college accessibility (Duree & Ebbers, 2012). The legislative action discussed in this context focused on providing benefits to male veterans. Beyond its direct beneficiaries, the GI Bill was pivotal in fostering broader inclusivity within higher education (Graff, 2016). The transformative 1960s and 1970s, marked by influential grassroots initiatives

like the civil rights and women's labor movements, saw a huge uptick in women seeking advanced education. Notably, prestigious higher education institutions, including Harvard and Yale, expanded their admissions to welcome female students. Moreover, implementing Title IX in 1972 was pivotal since it established the ban on gender-based discrimination in educational initiatives supported by federal funding.

As the millennium dawned, women demonstrated a significant trajectory, reaching and exceeding parity with men in college enrollment (Evelyn, 2001). Data from the 1999-2000 academic year, as the NCES reported, indicates that females constituted 57% of all bachelor's degrees awarded in America (Snyder, 2002).

Although the 21st century has observed notable advancements in women's academic achievements, it is evident that more progress will be made in this ongoing journey (Pace, 2018). An apparent and significant discrepancy continues within the upper levels of educational leadership (Kelly et al., 2017). Although women make up many students, their presence in high-level academic and administrative positions is significantly reduced.

The multifaceted landscape of post-secondary establishments, characterized by its complex patterns of institutional development, gender relations, and societal advancements, highlights the convoluted path of women's academic experiences (Kelly et al., 2017). The progression of women at American institutions, transitioning from a marginalized presence during the colonial era to constituting much of the student body in contemporary times, serves as a source of inspiration and offers valuable lessons.

Community College

As Cohen et al. (2014) outlined, community colleges are non-profit institutions providing associate degrees in arts or sciences. While terms such as 'community college' and '2-year

college' are often used synonymously, terms like 'technical institute' or 'vocational' denote a specialized academic focus. The inaugural community college, Joliet Junior College (JJC), founded in 1901, aimed to offer affordable postsecondary education and pathways to 4-year institutions (Evelyn, 2001). The 20th century saw a boom in community college establishments, with over 450 institutions appearing during the 1960s and 1970s alone (Evelyn, 2001; Palmer, 1996).

Enrollment in these colleges surged from 500,000 to over 2 million between 1960 and 1970, reaching approximately 12 million by 2016 (AACC, 2018). By 2010, these institutions had initiated partnerships with secondary educational establishments to enhance student readiness for university-level coursework. Of these enrollees, 56% are female, with 13% identifying as Black female students.

Community colleges are pivotal in U.S. education (Shults, 2001). Enrolling nearly half of all U.S. college students, they cater to diverse student populations and offer opportunities for underrepresented groups (Duree & Ebbers, 2012). With a broad demographic spectrum, administrators face the challenge of catering to diverse needs and ensuring student success (AACC, 2016; Taylor et al., 2010).

However, despite a diverse student body, administrative demographics at these institutions need to catch up (Adedoyin, 2022). The faculty's racial diversity remains limited. From 1993 to 2013, the presence of faculty of color grew by only 4% (Kelly et al., 2017). On the other hand, women have seen significant representation in community colleges, with over half of the full-time faculty and senior roles occupied by them, surpassing tertiary institutions (Cohen et al., 2014).

Academics underscore the significance of diversity in post-secondary leadership (Bensimon, 2018). Women and faculty of diverse backgrounds enhance academic outcomes and experiences, acting as advocates and mentors. Administrative support from women is preferred, especially for Black female students, highlighting the increasing need for female administrators (Chesler et al., 2005).

Females in Leadership (Historical Overview)

Women's leadership positions across various industries have gradually been recognized in recent scholarly conversations and historical assessments (Solal & Snellman, 2019). The viewpoints encompass a broad spectrum, from monarchical systems to presidential governance, small-scale enterprises to Fortune 500 corporations, and grassroots movements to prominent educational establishments (A. E. Smith, 2015).

The contributions of some remarkable women have enriched the records of leadership throughout history (Aronson, 2020). These include the astute statesmanship demonstrated by Maria Theresa of Austria, the pioneering ideas espoused by Mary Wollstonecraft, the regal influence wielded by Queen Victoria, and the avant-garde fashion legacy established by Coco Chanel. Eleanor Roosevelt, Indira Gandhi, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Michelle Obama, and Oprah Winfrey are notable figures who have shown enduring legacies that have served as guiding lights for future women.

The 21st century witnessed a notable diversification and heightened recognition of female leadership, exemplified by prominent figures such as Kamala Harris, the inaugural Black female, and subcontinental Vice President of America (Gangavkar, 2020). Additionally, Ursula Burns, the inaugural Black female to hold the title of CEO at a Fortune 500 company (Xerox), and Karen Bass, a highly influential U.S. Representative known for her advocacy for societal

equity, further underscore this trend (D. Johnson & Rehavi, 2019). The existing body of literature indicates that there may be discernible variations between leadership styles exhibited by women and those traditionally associated with masculinity. According to Rosenthal (1990), female leaders tend to prioritize the needs of others and effectively transform them into corporate goals. Harrison and Murray (2017) posited that individuals' distinct socialization experiences and everyday life experiences form the foundation for the evolution of such leadership attributes.

Therefore, this analysis examines five historical movements: From 1840 to 1920, the suffragist movement campaigned for the enfranchisement of females and their right to participate in the electoral process (Lawrence, 2017). The civil rights movement, active between 1950 and 1970, aimed to dismantle racial segregation and discrimination, striving for equal rights and opportunities for every individual, irrespective of race (R. D. Robnett & Anderson, 2017). The feminist movement of the 1990s to 2000 focused on advancing women's rights and promoting gender equality across many facets of society (S. Freeman et al., 2016). The Times Up and Me-Too movement, which emerged in 2006 and persists today, addresses the widespread issues of sexual misconduct and violence, seeking to raise awareness and promote accountability (Mendes et al., 2018). Lastly, the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM), initiated in 2013 and is ongoing, confronts deep-rooted racism and aggression against Black individuals, advocating for justice, equality, and an end to racial oppression (Rickford, 2015).

- Empowering her through the ballot (1848-1920) signaled the start of organized endeavors for female rights in the U.S. Figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony advocated for broader societal recognition and gender equality, fundamentally reshaping societal perceptions (Chambers, 2012).

- **Civil Rights and Women (1950s-1960s):** Although often overshadowed by male counterparts, women like Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Ella Baker pushed the boundaries of racial justice and inclusivity. Research suggests that their efforts not only supported the broader Civil Rights Movement but also underscored the essential role of women within it (B. Robnett, 1996).
- **Feminism and Women (1990–2000):** Witnessed a resurgence in women’s rights advocacy, concentrating on various societal and workplace inequalities (S. Freeman et al., 2016).
- **The Times Up Initiative and Me-Too Movement (2006-Current):** Both Initiatives against workplace sexual harassment gained momentum globally during this period, with numerous female celebrities and activists at the helm, highlighting the pervasive issues women face in various sectors (Mendes et al., 2018).
- **Black Lives Matter Movement (2013-Current):** Established by three women, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors, this movement is centered on the rights and dignity of Black individuals and raises awareness of systemic racial discrimination and violence (Rickford, 2015).

Women's leadership's historical and present development may be attributed to enduring strength, strategic foresight, and flexibility (Hannum et al., 2015). Women's contributions, which encompass activities such as nation-building and movement-building, serve as evidence of the considerable impact that women have had in constructing narratives on a worldwide scale (Barnes, 2017). These pioneering women established positions for themselves and expanded the concept of leadership, impacting world history.

Empowering Her Through the Ballot

The suffragist movement gained prominence in the middle of the 18th and early 19th centuries, profoundly influencing societal perceptions and legal frameworks related to women's rights (Lawrence, 2017). This movement's contributions were instrumental in catalyzing shifts in public opinion and legislative measures, underscoring its enduring impact on advancing gender equality. During this transformative period, several notable figures emerged, each contributing uniquely to the cause of women's rights. Elizabeth Stanton distinguished herself as a fervent advocate for women's rights. Lucretia Mott recognized for her eloquent preaching, combined her religious convictions with activism (Lawrence, 2017; Wellman, 1991). Mary McClintock was unwavering in her advocacy for women's rights, consistently championing their cause. While primarily known as an abolitionist, Martha Wright also lent her voice to the suffragist movement. Lastly, Jane Hunt's activism was particularly noteworthy within the Quaker community, as she worked diligently to further women's rights (Wellman, 1991).

In 1848, the Seneca Falls Convention, attended by an estimated 300 individuals, marked the inaugural gathering focusing exclusively on the status of women. This convention's intent was multifaceted: exploring the existing societal position of women and charting future pathways to bolster their social, civil, and religious rights. The outcomes of this assembly included the proposal of 11 resolutions, each endorsing equal rights for women under the law (Wellman, 1991).

Literature noted that persistent advocacy spanning 72 years, characterized by demonstrations, organized marches, and the establishment of women's rights groups, bore fruit in ratifying the 19th Amendment in 1920, following its approval by the U.S. Senate in 1919 (Wellman, 1991). Although the amendment's ratification is frequently celebrated as a milestone

in advancing gender equality within the U.S. democratic framework, it is crucial to distinguish between policy and practice. Although the amendment granted all women the right to vote, in theory, this privilege was disproportionately accessible. Scholars add that White women primarily benefited, while women of color, due to the prevailing societal prejudices and disenfranchising tactics targeted at people of color, faced substantial challenges when attempting to register and vote (Lawrence, 2017). This disparity underscores the broader complexities within the suffragist movement and the continued fight for universal enfranchisement.

Advocacy for women's rights is a key driving force in scholarly discussions regarding cultivating female leadership within businesses and enterprises (C. Hill et al., 2016; Pierli et al., 2022). Researchers mentioned that early in the 20th century, this campaign focused on obtaining women's voting rights, which gave women the authority to speak out against discriminatory employment practices (Flexner & Fitzpatrick, 1996). Important groups, like the National Women's Trade Union League, aggressively promoted equal opportunities for women and better working conditions. Beyond its core goal of enfranchisement, the suffrage campaign successfully provided a forum for women to articulate their grievances, mobilize support, and strive for greater representation in leadership areas (DuBois, 1998).

Civil Rights and Women

In American historical discourse, the Civil Rights Movement stands as a pivotal epoch that sought to confront and resolve deeply ingrained societal problems, including concerns related to race, ethnicity, bias, and institutionalized segregation (R. D. Robnett & Anderson, 2017). Scholarly literature suggests that this era prominently features the essential contributions made by Black women despite their comparatively little recognition concerning their male

counterparts (Alter, 2014; Barnes, 2017; Cho et al., 2013; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Remedios & Snyder, 2015; R. D. Robnett & Anderson, 2017).

Ella Baker was acknowledged by the U.S. National Park Service in 2019 for her enduring dedication to activism, specifically emphasizing her leadership role in the student movement. Diane Nash, a prominent individual, played a pivotal role in organizing the Nashville sit-ins and Selma marches. In addition, Rosa Parks catalyzed the commencement of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a critical event that endured for 10 years. Amid these events, Coretta Scott King and her peers effectively oversaw many activities, including the organization and execution of protests and nonviolent demonstrations, often without receiving much recognition from the public (R. D. Robnett & Anderson, 2017). B. Robnett (1996) explained that despite the tremendous media coverage obtained, the efforts made by several women to the success of the movement needed to be adequately recorded. Additionally, R. D. Robnett and Anderson (2017) wrote that individuals of all genders recognized and valued the significant impact of the Civil Rights Movement during their investigation.

B. Robnett (1996) shed attention on a conspicuous pattern: the omission of Black women from narratives concerning leadership positions in social movements. R. D. Robnett and Anderson (2017) expanded upon this concept by introducing the phrase “bridge leaders” to describe the significant responsibilities fulfilled by Black women. These individuals adeptly link the goals of social movements to community interests and overarching strategies. Within the “free space” conceptual framework outlined by S. M. Evans and Boyte (1986), women oversaw daily operations and tasks. Etzioni (1965) posited the concept of the “dual leadership” method, which emphasized informal leadership. In the present paradigm, a leader possesses the capacity to exert influence on their followers in the absence of any explicit or official position of

authority. Rather than emphasizing formal designations or copious accolades, the core of this notion centers on the importance of possessing the capacity to inspire and influence decisions and others.

Sacks (1988) introduced an alternate viewpoint. The research findings indicated that several women held roles comparable to leadership capacities despite needing formal recognition as leaders. Dorothy Height's contributions in the 1960s and 1970s stand as a notable exemplar. Despite significant contributions to both movements, Civil Rights and women's liberation, she was repeatedly subjected to marginalization. Alter (2014) restated this viewpoint, highlighting the significant role played by Height in Dr. King's Washington March despite her exclusion from the roster of speakers among male figures. Sacks (1988) explains that authentic leadership extends beyond mere acknowledgment and formal designations, encompassing human attributes and the capacity to motivate individuals.

Feminism and Women. According to Marx Ferree (2006), feminism can be defined as an active ideology that aims to confront and oppose the existing societal hierarchy that subordinates women to men. Laughlin et al. (2010) employ the term 'waves' to conceptualize the successive stages of evolution within the feminist movement throughout history. The initial phases of feminism in America., which emerged around the Industrial Revolution age, clearly focused on the issues faced by white women, thereby overlooking the distinct obstacles experienced by women of diverse backgrounds (Lawrence, 2017).

The findings of Laughlin et al. (2010) mentioned that the latter part of the 1960s to the mid-1980s, known as the second wave of feminism, was primarily characterized by the prevailing influence of white women's narratives in shaping policies and ideas. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the ensuing shift was identified as the third phase, characterized by its inclusive

nature. The work attracted a broader demographic, encompassing younger persons of various genders and a range of feminist perspectives that accounted for age, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexuality (Lawrence, 2017). Lawrence (2017) underscored the significance of incorporating inclusion as a fundamental aspect of feminism's progression beyond a gender-focused dialogue and embracing an intersectional perspective.

According to Gardner et al. (2014), the arrival of the “fourth wave” of feminism may be attributed to technological advancements and the proliferation of social media outlets. This phenomenon has significantly transformed the collaborative efforts, discourse, and knowledge exchange among contemporary feminists. However, the expansion of the movement has encountered several criticisms. In research conducted by Elassar (2020), the concept of invisibility was examined about its impact on Black women, spotlighting on the unique challenges and narratives they experience. Despite the challenges posed by racism and gender inequality, many Black women often experience exclusion from discussions in the feminist movement.

Lawrence (2017) argued the importance of adopting an inclusive form of feminism to bring about profound societal changes. The central aim is not to prioritize one narrative over another but to recognize the array of perspectives present. Scholarly literature demonstrates that the advocacy for women's rights encompasses several perspectives and dimensions. The examples contain the challenges encountered by Jewish and Italian women who migrated to engage in the textile industry, the endeavors undertaken by Black women to combat violence during the latter part of the 19th century, and the advocacy for freedom exhibited by young Hispanic women (Ruiz, 2008). Additionally, during the 20th century, young white women emerged with a genuine desire to comprehend the lives and viewpoints of females across diverse

social and cultural backgrounds. This development marked a significant shift in developing an inclusive kind of feminism encompassing individuals from all backgrounds (Ruiz, 2008). The Women's March in 2017 demonstrated this fresh and expansive perspective on women's rights (Lawrence, 2017).

The Times Up and Me-Too Movement. Tarana Burke's "Me Too" campaign, launched in 2006, marked a significant turning point in the battle against sexual harassment and assault (Alaggia & Wang, 2020). The initiative's primary objective was to aid those who encountered unwelcome approaches or physical contact, focusing on marginalized populations often receiving little attention, such as women of color or individuals of lower socioeconomic status (Hebert, 2018). The movement had a significant surge in popularity on the Internet in 2017. The actress utilized social media to encourage others to express solidarity by employing the phrase "me too" if they had encountered such challenges. Consequently, there was a substantial influx of 12 million postings within a day. This occurrence marked a significant milestone in the ongoing worldwide discourse surrounding this specific matter (Alaggia & Wang, 2020; Hebert, 2018).

The "Time's Up" initiative was launched in November 2017 following the Me Too initiative (Hillstrom, 2018). A group of more than one hundred women in the film and television industry initiated a collective effort in response to the pervasive issue of unwelcome approaches within Hollywood. The authors also desired to aid women in various occupations with comparable workplace challenges. Prominent individuals such as Shonda Rhimes, Ava DuVernay, and Reese Witherspoon spearheaded this initiative. The message was disseminated on significant occasions, such as the Golden Globe Awards. The individuals donned black attire

to demonstrate their unity and employed the hashtag #WhyWeWearBlack to illustrate their rationale.

Notably, despite the absence of a central leader, both organizations exerted a significant impact (Lawrence, 2017). In contrast, a multitude of diverse groups collaborated in unison. The objectives pursued were establishing novel legislation, addressing issues about unwelcome advancements, and providing support for marginalized communities, including those of color and those identifying with the LGBTQ community. According to Sacks (1988), comprehending these collectives without distinct leaders entails recognizing that genuine leadership fosters collaboration among individuals rather than only holding a formal position.

Black Lives Matter Movement. The BLM movement materialized in 2012 in the wake of the exoneration of a patrol volunteer involved in the fatal shooting of an unarmed 17-year-old Black youth (Tedeneke, 2016). Three well-known community activist-Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse emerged, each with distinct backgrounds encompassing areas such as housing rights, police-related concerns, and immigrant rights. The participants convened to discuss the systemic devaluation of Black lives, particularly in encounters with law enforcement (Ruffin, 2015). The movement saw significant growth after one of its members disseminated compelling social media communication. The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter transcended its initial digital manifestation and had a broader significance. According to Tedeneke (2016), the organization expanded significantly, establishing 23 branches across several locations, including America, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Throughout history, leaders from the Black community have frequently exhibited profound emotions in response to the unjust treatment they have endured. According to Bass (1990), these leaders employ their collective experiences and a desire to connect with others.

These leaders use leadership strategies influenced by the knowledge and values acquired from their familial and cultural backgrounds. Rosser-Mims (2010) also emphasizes individuals' commitment to the success of their organization.

When discussing BLM, the predominant focus is often directed at the challenges encountered by Black males in their interactions with law enforcement (Tedeneke, 2016). However, the extent of discourse in the discussion regarding the adversities Black women endure is akin to other under-represented groups. The omission of this narrative segment perhaps serves as an illustrative example of the prevalent tendency to overlook Black women's difficulties, as hooks (1984) discussed. Although, indeed, a significant proportion of individuals linked to the BLM movement are male, it is vital to acknowledge that Black females' and girls, too, are also susceptible to similar instances of unjust treatment by law enforcement authorities.

Crenshaw (2005) provided compelling justifications for adopting a comprehensive perspective on social issues that simultaneously encompass all facets of an individual's identity. The researcher discussed the various obstacles to race, gender, socioeconomic position, personal preferences, and geographical origins. Examining the interconnections between different aspects of an individual's identity becomes crucial, particularly when considering the leadership roles assumed by Black women. Adopting this cognitive framework, as Ruffin (2015) advocates, facilitates increased engagement and comprehensive understanding among women's rights movement participants. The BLM movement advocates for this notion, placing emphasis not just on racial matters but also on the pursuit of universal human rights.

Present Status of Females in Leadership

The acceptance of female leaders' potential and achievements has changed noticeably in recent years despite long-standing social systems that historically rewarded male leadership

(Eagly & Karau, 2002; Granovetter, 2018). According to L. N. Johnson and Thomas (2012), these systems have sidelined the experiences of women, namely women, across various social and cultural spectrums, resulting in a perceived sluggishness and lack of change in the advancement of gender equality. Furthermore, a discernible disparity exists in the representation of men and women leaders across industries (Lennon et al., 2013). The existence of such discrepancies, despite female leaders' achievements and untapped potential, underscores the imperative for more research and comprehension.

The 2017 Center for American Progress report stated that females represent over 50% of the American populace. Moreover, it has been emphasized by Warner and Corley (2017) that women comprise 60% of those who are awarded undergraduate and master's degrees. In addition, they possess a majority share of 52% in professional-level professions. Nevertheless, this portrayal experiences a substantial decline when examining the highest levels of authority. Within the cohort of Fortune 500 businesses, a mere 6% are led by chief executive officers who identify as female (C. Hill et al., 2016). In the legal domain, a notable disparity exists whereby women comprise a mere 18% of equity partners. The region known as Silicon Valley has a similar pattern, as a significant proportion of the leading 150 publicly traded technology businesses lack female executives in leadership positions (Warner & Corley, 2017).

The representation is particularly striking for females from racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds (Soares, 2015). Hannum et al. (2015) indicate that the quantity of females from Asian, Black, or Hispanic backgrounds in board seats within the top 500 businesses is deficient, with a meager 3% or less. Soares (2015) explains that the proportion of individuals holding executive positions in these organizations is slightly higher but still around 4%. The presence of factual data highlighting the exceptional performance of female leaders shows a noticeable

disparity in the availability of chances, compensation, and access to leadership roles for females (C. Hill et al., 2016). This section has illuminated the current state of female leadership across several industries, offering valuable perspectives on the gender dynamics within the leadership domain. Subsequent sections will delve deeper into the portrayal and achievements of Black females in diverse fields.

Females in Higher Education Leadership

The leadership disparity is evident across diverse sectors, including preeminent corporations, technological enterprises, governmental entities, and, notably, the higher education domain, which predominantly bestows degrees upon women (Beckwith et al., 2016; Gasman et al., 2015; Kellerman & Rhode, 2017; C. Lewis, 2016; Mitchell, 2018). Institutions dedicated to advanced learning serve as crucibles for rigorous intellectual discourse, novel theoretical frameworks, and solutions to contemporary global challenges (Croom et al., 2017; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Such academic establishments facilitate the emergence of national leadership figures and pioneering research and augment the nation's social capital (Overstreet, 2019). Given their profound impact, these institutions undeniably mold the socio-cultural fabric of contemporary American society (Aguirre, 2000). Gender imbalances within the academia's leadership echelons could inadvertently skew societal perceptions regarding gender egalitarianism in leadership roles (Huang et al., 2019; Zambrana et al., 2015). This discourse critically appraises the present scenario of female leadership within tertiary establishments.

There has been a discernible uptrend in females attaining higher educational qualifications (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). This surge is primarily attributed to the escalating enrollment of women from various cultural and social spectrums at institutions of tertiary education, motivated by prospects of enhanced remuneration

(Lennon et al., 2013). Despite the progress made in educational achievements, empirical evidence indicates that female leaders in the academic sphere face an enduring salary gap compared to their male counterparts. Empirical evidence underscores an alarmingly static gender wage gap spanning nearly two decades (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017). Furthermore, examining positional demographics within the academic arena reveals a stark overrepresentation of women, accounting for almost 90%, in administrative and secretarial roles (Allan, 2011). The limited prospects for vertical progression from these roles have engendered the term 'sticky floor,' a phenomenon analogous to the more universally recognized 'glass ceiling' (Allan, 2011; Miller, 2009). Gangone (2016) elucidates the latter as a symbolic representation of the “covert, systemic impediments” obstructing the ascension of competent women from attaining top leadership positions. Additionally, an empirical subset of female professionals transcending these lower-tier roles has reported facing peer censure, mainly centered around traditional gendered expectations and professional decorum (Iverson, 2009).

Black Females in Higher Education Leadership. Female representation is common in today's post-secondary institutions (C. Lewis, 2016). Black women ascend the professional ladder in the 21st century, and their participation in top leadership positions remains restricted despite evident enthusiasm (Alexander-Floyd, 2010). NCES reported in 2009 that Black females held less than 6% of executive-level positions in tertiary institutions in the U.S., including chancellors, vice-chancellors, presidents, vice presidents of administration, student services or academic affairs, provosts, deans, and directors (Hinton, 2012). According to data from the academic year 2015-2016, 60% of leaders at 2-year colleges were females, while a quarter of all leaders were classified as Black or Hispanic. Given the large student populations at the universities, this lack of representation becomes apparent (Muldrow, 2013). Furthermore, Tatum

(2007) asserted that current educational leadership requires persons skilled at creating productive partnerships across many cultures and ideas.

Empirical research indicates that women remain underrepresented across all tiers of higher education (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Cook & Glass, 2014; Llorens et al., 2021; Shepard, 2017). According to research, they encounter significant hurdles in their progress, particularly in senior management positions. Structural hurdles, institutional practices, and processes have been recognized as factors impeding Black females' advancement to leadership positions. The limited image of females in leadership roles might make it problematic for young females to visualize themselves in similar capacities, dissuading them from aspiring to such roles (Candia-Bailey, 2016; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The scarcity of Black females in leadership affects their self-worth, self-esteem, and belief in their abilities (Blockett et al., 2016; Crites et al., 2015). Recognition of the potential influence people may have on the workplace and broader institutional culture has been stressed in literature (Crites et al., 2015; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Black women face challenges from stereotypes and a lack of representation (BlackChen, 2015; Blockett et al., 2016; Semela & Cochrane, 2019). Their contributions and perspectives are often sidelined or undervalued, as S. Jones (2014) and Candia-Bailey (2016) highlighted. Women belonging to racial and ethnic groups, particularly those who categorize themselves as Black, face unique manifestations of prejudice and bias that are different from the hurdles encountered by White women and males from minority racial backgrounds (C. Hill et al., 2016). Scholarly research warns against oversimplifying women's experiences, emphasizing that gender and ethnicity are essential in defining individual experiences.

Researchers argue that Black females encounter problems firmly ingrained in workplace culture (Blockett et al., 2016; Croom et al., 2017; Hannum et al., 2015). Wolfe and Dilworth

(2015) pinpointed notable barriers impeding the progress of Black females to upper-level positions within post-secondary establishments. Obstacles like the ‘glass cliff’ or ‘glass ceiling’ biases both overt and implicit, and enduring gender stereotypes remained deterrents to women’s upward mobility (Ryan et al., 2016). Tan (2016) explains that the concrete ceiling is more applicable to Black women. Despite long-standing attempts, progress has been slow in America's historical discrimination of females and their participation as leaders. Haslam et al. (2015) cite issues such as lower pay, sluggish career advancements, low productivity, and a constant absence of promotions within businesses.

Discrimination in academia and blatant exclusions have frequently kept women out of leadership (Adu-Yeboah et al., 2021; Chance, 2021; S. R. Logan, 2019; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Similarly, Hannum et al. (2015) investigated the benefits and drawbacks of female leaders' experiences, discovering certain impediments. These included unfair expectations relative to male peers, limited possibilities, feelings of loneliness, and time obligations that were demanding. Researchers continue to add that the problems for women in leadership generally revolve around recruiting methods, job allocations, and a substantial lack of mentorship and advancement opportunities (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; Espinosa et al., 2019; Teague, 2015). Teague (2015) also highlights a unique problem for Black women: the added strain of navigating both gender and racial biases. The interweaving of sex and race creates diverse narratives for women, with Black women experiencing distinct obstacles. Literature mentions that Black female leaders commonly have their talents questioned and wield less influence (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

Systemic Barriers for Black Females in Higher Education

Historical context and years of sustained effort illuminate women's structural challenges in the United States, especially in governance roles (Diehl, 2014). The current research indicates that females encounter obstacles throughout their professional careers. According to studies, exclusionary behaviors and discriminatory actions have consistently pushed women out of academic leadership ranks (Gardner et al., 2014; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; McCluney & Rabelo, 2018; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Hannum et al. (2015) noted that examining both positive and negative components of female leadership experiences revealed obstacles such as unrealistic expectations contrary to male leaders, limited opportunities and encouragement, feelings of isolation, and demanding schedules.

Teague (2015) underscored several challenges women leaders face, encompassing issues linked to recruiting, task allocations, and a pronounced need for more mentorship, training, and hands-on experience. For women of color, a salient challenge, pointed out by Teague, is the intricate task of navigating the intertwined biases of ethnicity and gender. The research indicates that Black female leaders frequently find themselves on the periphery, with their competencies doubted and their influence curtailed (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; C. Lewis, 2016). Prior investigations have demonstrated that the experiences of white females are significantly distinct from those of females of color, primarily linked to multifaceted intricacies associated with race. Hannum et al. (2015) and O'Bryant (2015) contribute further understanding to the enduring phenomenon of white male domination in leadership, characterized by top-down leadership approaches and structured communication patterns. Regardless of their chosen industry, White (1990) argues that females must be willing to take chances, be supported by committed advocates, and establish connections with influential networks and mentors. White elaborates

that combining technical and social competencies can produce these results. Technical skill mastery demonstrates expertise and sensible decision-making, whereas social skill reflects the capacity to collaborate effectively and lead a team. This discussion highlights the ongoing challenges for Black females as they strive for leadership roles and career progression.

Sticky Floors

“Sticky floors” is a term used in organizational research and sociology to describe a phenomenon in which individuals, especially women and marginalized groups, encounter obstacles in advancing beyond entry-level or lower positions within an organizational hierarchy (Barnes, 2017; Carli & Eagly, 2016). The phrase gained prominence when Marilyn Loden popularized it in New York at the Women's Exposition. The chosen terminology was deemed appropriate, given that the central discourse centered on women's self-perception and its purported influence on their capacity to attain leadership roles.

Catherine White Berheide used the phrase “sticky floor concept” in a 1992 research that explored the lived experiences of females employed in lower-wage government positions (Shabsough et al., 2021). The research findings indicate that women occupying entry-level administrative positions face substantial barriers to advancing their careers in several fields, including academics, medicine, law, and athletics. A significant percentage of women in government jobs were in lower-paying occupations, starkly contrasting their male equivalents (C. Johnson et al., 2014). The “sticky floor phenomenon” is characterized by D. R. Davis and Maldonado (2015) as a hidden barrier founded in organizational attitudes and prejudices that prevents talented women from advancing. This concept complements the idea of the “glass ceiling,” which refers to the unseen obstacles these groups face when striving to achieve upper management or executive roles (Barnes, 2017). To fully grasp how gender dynamics influence

power structures within universities, it's essential to consider the concept of “sticky floors.” The “sticky floors” metaphor illustrates the obstacles women encounter to advance from the lowest levels of an organization (Tan, 2016). This metaphor highlights the phenomenon where women are overrepresented in precarious and lower-level posts within the academic hierarchy, which poses a considerable obstacle to their career progression (O’Keefe & Courtois, 2019).

Researchers observed that women of color have further challenges when it comes to negotiating gender norms, handling societal attitudes linked to their ethnic identity, resolving cultural discrepancies, and accessing limited mentorship opportunities (Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hague & Okpala, 2017; L. H. Hill & Wheat, 2017; Tan, 2016). According to Barnes (2017) and Tan (2016), whether the barriers are subjective or objective, they can result in disillusionment and reduced motivation.

Intersectionality

The word “intersectionality” originates from the Black Feminist and Anti-discrimination movements. It refers to the distinct experiences of Black females that differentiate them from both the Feminist and Black Civil Rights movements, as noted by Cho et al. (2013) and Remedios and Snyder (2015). Black women encounter prejudices because they have both Black and female social categories (Remedios & Snyder, 2015). These biases have placed them at a notable disadvantage in recruitment and promotion.

Barnes (2017) introduced the metaphor “concrete ceiling” to illustrate the tangible barriers Black women confront in leadership aspirations, diverging from the conventional “glass ceiling” notion. Barnes (2017), like Remedios and Snyder (2015), contends that these women, frequently seen as forceful or aggressive, are exposed to more scrutiny owing to their conspicuous presence as a minority. Similar prejudices against Black women in employment and

promotion and their exclusion from organizations were discovered by D. Hall et al. (2018).

Black women typically turned to spirituality, support from female friends, and adaptation tactics to integrate into predominately non-Black environments to handle these issues.

The mixture of race and gender in post-secondary institutions has created questions about Black women's leadership capacities, producing prejudices that limit their access to leadership posts (S. Jones, 2014). Hyppolite (2019) explained that being a woman of African descent does not violate the Constitution. Acknowledging and appreciating Black women's multidimensional identities, educational institutions may create diversity, influence policy formation, improve workplace climates, and raise visibility and access to top-tier jobs (Strayhorn, 2017).

Nonetheless, problems exist in the form of inequitable practices and regulations as Black women in academia manage the combined hurdles of glass ceilings and sticky floors. It is significant for post-secondary institutions to acknowledge and address these difficulties while being aware of the persistent racial and gender biases within the academic domain (Barnes, 2017; Knaus, 2014).

Such elements create imbalanced structures that curtail the chances for Black females to rise to leadership (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Scholars mentioned that these women must navigate such unequal terrains to attain senior leadership positions and close extant disparities (Binder et al., 2018). These challenges are exacerbated when there are additional dimensions of inequality compared to “sticky floors” (Loya, 2015; Strayhorn, 2017).

Double-Bind

Crenshaw (1989) and Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) mentioned that Black female leaders are frequently pioneers, representing both their race and gender in places where both are underrepresented. Selzer et al. (2017) describe this situation as the “double bind,” adding that such prejudices might hinder women's access to resources and recognition, limiting their

presence in high-level leadership roles. Access to informal networks, absence of professional development chances, insufficient management experience, and racial background were highlighted as the main perceived challenges to such a presidency in 2002, including 43 Black female presidents from both HBCUs and PWIs (S. Jackson & Harris, 2007). Clay (1998) recognized the possibility of an established network among women, sometimes called an “old girl’s” network, as a valuable resource. Which frequently excludes Black females.

According to the literature, Black female leaders frequently form support networks to overcome the simultaneous hurdles of sexism and racism (Adamu, 2023; Burkinshaw et al., 2018). This technique can help reduce feelings of isolation and difficulty navigating unfamiliar institutional settings (Clay, 1998). Despite some advances, women continue to be excluded from historically male-centric networks, which restricts their access to crucial information and resources necessary for job progression.

Stereotypes

Academics define stereotypes as traits ascribed to specific groups based on cultural background, age, racial identity, gender, religion, and other inherent attributes (Berk, 2017; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Collins, 1986; Crites et al., 2015; Feagin, 2014; C. Hill et al., 2016; Howard-Baptiste, 2014; Mena & Vaccaro, 2017; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Shepard, 2017; N. M. West, 2020). These stereotypes generalize characteristics to an entire group, even if they may not accurately reflect every individual within that group. According to Carli and Eagly (2013), “academic discourse” is utilized to clarify the contrasting experiences encountered by Black women relative to females from other social and cultural spectrums. Black females are frequently depicted as aggressive and confrontational in societal portrayals. In contrast, research indicates that when White women display similar behaviors, they are often perceived as appealing and

refined (Hague & Okpala, 2017; A. Howard et al., 2016; S. Jackson & Harris, 2005; Wallace et al., 2014). An investigation in 2016 encompassed 180 professional women from diverse ethnicities, including Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Hispanic backgrounds (Rosette et al., 2016). These participants were tasked with identifying the dominant traits typically linked with each racial group. Rosette et al. (2016) found that a significant number of participants, of which 53% were White women, associated Black women with characteristics like anger, loudness, and exuberance. The research further revealed that both Black and Asian women encountered biases related to their competence and assertiveness, potentially impeding their ascent to leadership roles.

The widespread dissemination of adverse depictions of Black females in America is embedded in deep historical antecedents, tracing back approximately 400 years (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2003). Historically ingrained stereotypes like “angry Black woman,” “sapphire,” and “jezebel” have influenced popular attitudes of Black women. These ideas stem from the representation of the “mammy” persona, who is frequently portrayed as lacking intelligence, being invisible, and self-sacrificing (Carli & Eagly, 2011; Howard-Baptiste, 2014). Sapphires are typically depicted as dominant, talkative, and irritable, whereas jezebels are frequently described as overtly sexual or objects of desire (Feagin, 2014). Such erroneous depictions continue to confront Black women in America, historically serving as a basis for inequitable treatment, as highlighted by Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2003). J. A. Lewis and Neville (2015), add that Black women operate with heightened awareness, knowing that their expressions and behaviors are read against the backdrop of these stereotypes, resulting in devaluation and increased marginalization.

Researchers suggest that Black women develop strategies to combat unfavorable perceptions inside academic institutions (Mohr & Purdie-Vaughns, 2015). According to Crites et al. (2015), the strain that arises from juggling these positions can have substantial consequences for Black women, particularly in professional contexts. Such pressures can result in psychological difficulties, such as social misunderstandings and changed self-perceptions (Henry et al., 2012). Despite attempts to expand diversity and change demographics, Black women continue to face challenges with accurate representation, proper recognition in leadership, and visibility (Howard-Baptiste, 2014).

Glass Ceilings

The “glass ceiling” metaphorically represents the unseen obstacles impeding females and individuals of color from rising to top-level leadership roles within post-secondary institutions (Education Sub-Sahara Africa [ESSA], 2021; J. Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009; Teelken et al., 2019; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Generally, these obstacles are not anchored in official organizational policies. Instead, they result from profoundly rooted cultural prejudices, prevalent institutional norms, and ingrained practices. The idea of the “glass ceiling” has presented obstacles for females pursuing leadership positions typically dominated by males. Existing research suggests that females and persons from understated cultural or ethnic backgrounds face many challenges in their career advancement, mainly when aiming for top-level leadership roles. These challenges arise from a blend of covert and overt discriminatory behaviors in investigations conducted by J. Jackson (2014) and Patton and Haynes (2014). The dominant leadership framework frequently associates effective leadership with characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015), creating an obstacle that impedes the advancement of women.

The glass ceiling obstructs women's advancement, leading to organizational decisions that can damage females' career growth, as Onyango et al. (2016) emphasized. Securing leadership roles in tertiary education poses a significant challenge for women, particularly Black females, despite their qualifications or experience. Nevertheless, numerous women have successfully busted through the "glass ceiling" to achieve senior leadership positions, as noted by Ryan et al. (2016).

In 2014, women occupied approximately 47% of professional and corporate roles. Their presence in influential and authoritative positions remained uneven (Branson et al., 2014; P. Parker, 2015). Women who become CEOs or hold the highest position in their respective companies are well-positioned for increased exposure, possibly leading to more possibilities (Onyango et al., 2016). Organizational culture and marginalization are central to this Delphi study. These selected aspects shed light on the multifaceted obstacles preventing women, especially Black women, from dismantling these invisible barriers. As highlighted by D. R. Davis and Maldonado (2015), previous research emphasizes both marginalization and organizational culture as critical factors in the ongoing struggle against the phenomena of the glass ceiling.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture, characterized by a collective framework of values, perceptions, and routines, significantly shapes the conduct of individuals in a company, embodying its fundamental principles, vision, norms, and customary practices (Tierney, 1986). This culture is instrumental in determining women's opportunities for managerial advancement. Wilkof and Schneer (1995) studied organizations known for championing women, spanning sectors like cosmetics, office equipment, and telecommunications. They pinpointed characteristics of

inclusivity-promoting companies: a robust commitment to diversity, inclusive language use, policies aiding women in balancing family and work, and a diverse managerial team. The researchers underscored the tangible benefits companies reap from fostering diversity.

According to Cox and Blake (1991), mentoring, institutional strategies, and networking opportunities are very important for female professionals in their organizational contexts. The effectiveness of these factors may only be limited if organizations explicitly demonstrate their commitment to improving diversity initiatives (Kalev et al., 2006). Critical evaluation of concepts that may lack strong foundations in rigorous academic frameworks is essential, and the efficiency of various initiatives designed to enhance diversity has yet to be well investigated.

Smith and Joseph (2010), in “Workplace Challenges in Corporate America,” undertook a comprehensive examination of challenges faced in work environments, centering their research on females of color, particularly Black females. The study examines the influence of company culture, instances of discrimination, and investments in human capital on the working experiences of Black female leaders and other marginal groups in comparison to White individuals, encompassing both males and females. The study utilizes existing scholarly research to explain how the intersection of race and sex can lead to disparate outcomes among employees, contingent upon their self-identification and colleagues’ perceptions (Naples, 1993). The literature implies that organizations include inherent racial connotations, establishing a connection with Acker’s (1998) argument that organizational structures are essentially influenced by gender, therefore perpetuating gender inequalities. The viewpoint expressed in this statement resonates with the insights of Britton and Logan (2008), who contend that organizational environments are rife with gender biases. According to their viewpoint, organizations and professions are influenced by a cultural environment shaped by gender,

resulting in the continuation and reinforcement of gender-related dynamics through their policies and practices.

Marginalization

The literature highlights a significant and troubling pattern of marginalization experienced by Black women and other scholars from under-represented backgrounds in post-secondary institutions (Barrett et al., 2014; Berk, 2017; Collins, 2009). Beckwith et al. (2016) shed light on the sentiments of social isolation and intellectual sidelining these academic scholars face. While often subtle, such marginalization can manifest in ways that may be easily dismissed or glossed over, thereby perpetuating the issue. Barrett et al. (2014) further amplifies this concern by noting the frequent occurrences of discriminatory actions and marginalization experienced by Black women, irrespective of their standing in the academic community. This observation underscores the interplay of ethnicity and gender, which can amplify the magnitude and repercussions of educational exclusion.

In critically examining these challenges, Collins (2009) argues that a nuanced understanding of patriarchal systems provides African American women with an analytical toolkit to navigate and confront these adversities more effectively. In scholarly work, Sue (2010) introduces the term “ethnic microaggression,” conceptualized by specialists from psychiatry and psychology at Harvard University. As supported by Berk (2017) and Sue (2010) alike, this term encapsulates the subtle, often unconscious, verbal and non-verbal interactions that stand as daily affronts to Blacks and other ethnic minorities. These microaggressions, coupled with broader marginalization, contribute to an environment that can be hostile and damaging, particularly for Black females and other under-represented individuals in the academic community. Challenges encompassing marginalization, systemic inequality, and the intricate balance of personal and

professional identities persistently plague higher education institutions (Dickens & Chavez, 2018).

Concrete Ceiling

The challenges females of color face in educational settings can be effectively described using the “concrete ceiling” metaphor (Beckett, 2020; Catalyst, 1999; Kendall et al., 2021). While the glass ceiling denotes unseen barriers that are potentially breakable, the concrete ceiling suggests a more challenging hindrance. For women of color, this metaphor resonates deeply due to the dual biases they face based on ethnicity and sex. The concrete ceiling metaphor underscores the multifaceted hurdles arising from the intersection of ethnicity and sex. While the glass ceiling suggests a singular, albeit powerful, transparent barrier that all women face, the concrete ceiling encompasses the uniquely dense and often insurmountable obstacles experienced by females of color. These obstacles arise from the intersecting biases of sexism and racism. Clay (1998) identified significant disparities faced by Black females of color in comparison to Black females from other regions around the world. The substantial barriers Black women face have led some to describe these challenges as a *concrete wall*, a term that conveys a more formidable obstacle than the glass ceiling (Beckett, 2020). This metaphor underscores the severity of the hurdles faced by Black females, which are compounded by both race and sex biases. Additionally, different terminology, such as “concrete ceiling” or “Black ceiling,” have been employed to describe this phenomenon (Catalyst, 1999; Sepand, 2015).

The sentiment expressed by Clay (1998) is in concordance with the findings of Giscombe and Jones (2004), who introduced the phrase “concrete ceiling” to underscore the binary challenges of sexism and racial biases faced by women of diverse backgrounds in their mission for leadership titles. The combination of various biases culminates in a collective that

experiences amplified consequences stemming from social preconceptions, biases, and discriminatory practices.

Prejudices are deeply ingrained in racist ideologies and discriminatory attitudes, exert a significant impact on employment practices, and have a profound influence on the perception and treatment of employees (Tan, 2016). The pivotal role of ethnicity and sex in influencing the possibilities and advancement available to Black women today was underscored in research conducted by LeanIn (2022). These women frequently experience limited professional advancement and discriminatory practices based on both their ethnic and sexual attributes. Additionally, many Black females view their obstacles as a “concrete ceiling,” implying that overcoming these obstacles on an individual level is exceedingly difficult. The metaphorical concept of a “concrete ceiling” effectively symbolizes Black women’s formidable obstacles in their endeavors (Sepand, 2015). The journey to fully comprehend the benefits of female professionals achieving and maintaining leadership positions in post-secondary institutions has been gradual and intricate. There exists a pressing need to address elements impeding this progress. Addressing these challenges could potentially create pathways and remove obstacles, particularly for Black women aiming to assume leadership roles.

Promotion. Historically, women from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds have been confined to lower-ranking administrative and secretarial positions within the academic domain (Ibarra et al., 2013). Even with higher educational achievements, their presence in leadership roles remains excessively low, aptly summarized by the phrase that the higher there is, the fewer there are in leadership roles (H. L. Johnson, 2017). Their progression within institutional hierarchies is slower than their male peers and is obstructed by rigid barriers culminating from a combination of ethnic and gender prejudices (M. J. Davidson & Burke, 2004).

The concrete ceiling metaphor, more rigid than the glass ceiling, encapsulates these women's complex challenges (Beckett, 2020; Sepand, 2015). This representation underscores the compounded barriers they face, which are often more formidable and multifaceted than those represented by the more commonly referenced glass ceiling. These challenges range from deeply entrenched institutionalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism (Gangone, 2016) to more covert practices like intentionally keeping them stagnant in their current roles or biased performance review processes. Lennon et al. (2013) pointed out that the remedy requires institutions to adopt clear, performance-based promotion criteria to ensure transparency and fairness.

It is crucial to understand that the concrete ceiling does more than merely limit advancement; it signifies a profound system of obstructions that require intersectional solutions (Beckett, 2020). Holding women of color back due to their efficiency in current roles or potential loss of departmental knowledge, for instance, exemplifies the concrete ceiling in action (Tan, 2016). Such practices not only hinder individual growth but also deprive institutions of diverse leadership perspectives, thereby impacting the overall advancement of academia.

Representation in Leadership Roles. The metaphor of the concrete ceiling is pertinent when discussing representation in leadership roles (Beckett, 2020). Despite the rise in diversity across various sectors, Black females and females of color remain notably understated in high-ranking leadership seats (Barnes, 2017). Even though many organizations recognize the value of diversity in lower and middle management, the upper echelons of leadership continue to lack racial and gender diversity (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). This disparity can be attributed to several factors:

- **Bias and Stereotyping:** Preconceived notions about leadership often align with traditionally masculine and Eurocentric ideals. Women of color may not fit these

stereotypical molds, leading to their potential and capabilities being underestimated Gallant (2014).

- **Lack of Role Models:** With few females of color as leaders, emerging leaders from similar backgrounds often need more mentorship and guidance, making their upward journey more challenging (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015).
- **Network Access:** Crucial opportunities often come through informal networks. Due to historical and systemic exclusion, women of color may find themselves outside these influential circles (Barnes, 2017).
- **Cultural Misunderstandings:** Variations in communication methods, cultural standards, and values might result in misunderstandings, inadvertently marginalizing women from diverse backgrounds (Crenshaw, 1989).

As a metaphor and reality, the concrete ceiling is a significant factor in organizational dynamics because it highlights a grave disparity in leadership representation. Organizations that fail to break this ceiling miss out on diverse perspectives, which can drive innovation, foster inclusivity, and resonate with a broader client base (Rosette et al., 2016). Additionally, such disparities can demotivate and disengage employees who see limited opportunities for advancement, leading to potential talent loss (Hannum et al., 2015). Thus, acknowledging and actively working against the concrete ceiling is an ethical imperative for organizational success and sustainability.

Lack of Mentorship and Sponsorship

Mentorship and sponsorship are pivotal tools for professional growth, acting as bridges to overcome barriers and reach career aspirations (A. E. Smith, 2015). For Black women, these mechanisms of support, unfortunately, remain inaccessible due to an amalgamation of systemic,

cultural, and organizational challenges. Research notes that it is necessary to differentiate between mentorship and sponsorship, as each serves a distinct purpose. According to Harvard Business Review (Ibarra et al., 2013), mentorship encompasses guidance, advice, and holistic support. A mentor, often a seasoned professional, imparts wisdom and insights, facilitating a mentee's personal and professional evolution.

In contrast, sponsorship delves deeper. Sponsors are more than just advisors; they are advocates. They champion the advancement of their sponsee within an organization, recommending them for pivotal roles and tasks. Unlike mentors, sponsors actively risk their reputations to elevate the individual they believe in.

Black women grapple with substantial hurdles when seeking vital resources, with a pronounced absence of representation in senior roles being a primary concern (Barkhuizen et al., 2022; Kramer, 2020). LeanIn's (2022) Women in the Workplace study underscores the limited presence of females, especially Black females, in academia and the American corporate sector. This dearth of representation curtails the availability of potential mentors or advocates who can genuinely grasp and resonate with the unique challenges Black women face (Grant, 2012). Beyond affecting mentorship opportunities, this underrepresentation is a reminder of the enduring barriers awaiting dismantlement.

Further compounding this issue is deeply rooted biases and misconceptions. Implicit biases, subtle yet insidious, can permeate decision-making processes, leading senior leaders to unconsciously sideline Black women for mentorship or sponsorship engagements (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). Stereotypes about Black females' competencies and aspirations can impede their professional growth. Moreover, stereotypical beliefs, such as viewing Black women as overly assertive or not fitting the traditional leadership mold, can hamper their access to these career-

boosting relationships (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). The human tendency towards relatability and comfort is another layer of this complexity. According to research by Marte (2019) from the Center for Talent Innovation, people are naturally inclined to mentor or sponsor those with whom they identify or share commonalities, a phenomenon termed affinity bias. Consequently, if the senior stratum of an organization skews towards a particular demographic, this can inadvertently lead to homogenous mentoring and sponsorship patterns (A. E. Smith, 2015).

According to Cox and Blake (1991), the significance of structured mentorship and sponsorship must be identified in organizations that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recognizing the importance of organizational culture is necessary. In the absence of such structured support, Black females frequently find themselves traversing the maze of professional solo, magnifying disparities. LinkedIn's (2022) study posited that structured mentorship initiatives can transform the playing field.

The repercussions of this mentorship and sponsorship void are multifaceted (A. E. Smith, 2015). Individually, Black women may find their growth stunted, missing essential feedback, opportunities, and advocacy. Organizationally, the lack of varied voices in leadership roles can hamper innovation and broader perspectives (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Organizations must adopt a proactive stance to address this profound gap, prioritizing inclusivity and diversity. This commitment involves token gestures and holistic strategies, from structured mentorship programs to continuous diversity training. Through concerted efforts, the professional landscape can be reshaped to ensure that Black females can access the mentorship and sponsorship they deserve.

Glass Cliffs

The “glass cliff” concept extends the well-known “glass ceiling” paradigm (Hollis, 2016). This term describes scenarios where women, having overcome career advancement barriers, are subsequently placed in precarious leadership roles that might jeopardize their success. Ryan et al. (2016) coined this phrase to highlight instances in which women are chosen for leadership during organizational crises. Their study on FTSE 100 companies revealed a trend: declining firms were likelier to appoint women to their boards. This finding underscores the challenges women face even after breaking the glass ceiling. Scholars suggest that women are more aware of the inherent hazards of such positions, whereas men frequently minimize these issues, attributing them to non-gender-specific reasons (Bruckmüller et al., 2014). Peterson (2016) expanded on this notion, arguing that it applies to women in academia assigned to less prestigious and less remunerative roles.

The tendency to send women to high-risk jobs, or “glass cliff assignments,” may be seen across numerous industries (A. E. Smith, 2015). Gallant (2014), on the other hand, claims that gendered conceptions of leadership positions are still prevalent in academic contexts. Ryan et al. (2016) discovered that Black females frequently assume leadership roles during periods with an elevated risk of adverse outcomes. Given the increased scrutiny, the consequences of being allocated to such responsibilities might jeopardize a woman's chances for subsequent leadership roles (Bruckmüller et al., 2014).

A 2013 study looked into the career growth of females of color and White women who held CEO roles in Fortune 500 companies over 15 years, as McGee (2018) and McGirt (2017) reported. This research employed three evaluative metrics: the glass cliff, diversity among decision-makers, and the rescue effect, as conceptualized by Cook and Glass (2013, 2014). The

findings demonstrated that women from diverse backgrounds were frequently elevated during difficult periods, and they typically lacked the autonomy and support needed to negotiate their leadership responsibilities effectively (Cook & Glass, 2013). Moreover, when subjected to the “rescue effect” known as “the savior effect,” the phenomenon where a male successor is appointed after a woman or individual of color vacates a role, these women typically had briefer tenures. This reduced duration in leadership positions consequently limited their chances to showcase their leadership competencies (Cook & Glass, 2014; Ryan et al., 2016). A. E. Smith (2015) suggests that boards strategically place women in these positions, allowing them to ascribe organizational shortcomings to these female leaders rather than hastening the search for a male replacement. On the other hand, women may be drawn to glass cliff jobs since they offer opportunities for leadership growth, success, and recognition (Gallant, 2014; A. E. Smith, 2015).

The term “glass cliff” describes the distinct obstacles females and females of color face in various settings (Beckett, 2020). These challenges are frequently discussed informally and rarely documented (Ryan et al., 2016). Given its complexities, obtaining empirical evidence on the glass cliff phenomena remains difficult since it involves many overt and covert behaviors, including biases and stereotypes related to ethnicity and sex.

Black Female Leaders Best Practices and Strategies

During the initial phases of industrialization, societal norms and expectations confined women to lower-ranking and supportive roles, with leadership opportunities scarce (Smelser, 1962). In the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries, changing attitudes propelled women to challenge these conventional norms and seek broader opportunities. The suffrage movement, culminating in the 19th Amendment in 1920, not only enfranchised women but also catalyzed broader societal shifts, encouraging their participation in leadership (Flexner & Fitzpatrick,

1996). Despite their forays into higher education and professions, discrimination persisted, with many doors to senior leadership shut tight. Significant milestones in female rights during the mid-20th century, comparable to the 1960s and 1970s feminist movements, championed female parity in work and leadership (J. Freeman, 2004). This era saw policies like affirmative action emerge, aiming to rectify gender imbalances.

The dawn of the 21st century heralded greater appreciation for women in leadership (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017; Madsen, 2012). The current discourse around leadership emphasizes inclusivity, valuing diverse inputs as catalysts for innovation (Hunt et al., 2015). A wealth of research started illuminating the multifaceted benefits of gender diversity in decision-making and organizational efficacy (Catalyst, 2012). Efforts to redress gender imbalances intensified with a proliferation of women's leadership programs, mentoring schemes, and networking events.

Airini et al. (2011) undertook a study across all eight New Zealand universities to discern the principal facilitators and barriers for women in leaders within post-secondary academic institutions, leveraging the researchers' own experiences at these institutions. The study highlighted five key areas:

- work connections, which include interactions with peers and senior executives as well as difficulties such as bullying and unsupportive coworkers,
- the total university environment, including policies, procedures, and their implementation,
- unwritten regulations that incorporate academic standards such as recognition for taking on extra obligations,
- proactivity, which addressed career planning and personal development, and

- personal occurrences or unanticipated life events that may influence their leadership path (Airini et al., 2011).

Their findings echoed prior research findings on the same topic. Hannum et al. (2015) highlighted pinpointing critical areas where institutions, especially those with decision-making capacities, can assist Black females who want to be leaders in post-secondary institutions. This section offers studies on both institutions and women aspiring to leadership positions. Mentorship, networking, and professional development opportunities are repeatedly highlighted as vital tools for Black females to reach and maintain leadership roles.

Mentorship

Mentoring is widely acknowledged as pivotal in women's career trajectories within post-secondary institutions (Ballenger, 2010; Catalyst, 2012; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hackett & Byars, 1996). According to Amah (2017), mentors participate in an indispensable role in the growth of prospective leaders, particularly those aspiring to ascend the professional ladder. For both students and professionals from varied cultural and ethnic origins, mentoring relationships are crucial to their success and retention, as identified by Gardner et al. (2014). Such ties, whether official or informal, are essential because influential mentors may actively advocate for their mentees (Ballenger, 2010). However, a problem occurs when women of color obtain mentors who need more significant power. According to Catalyst (2012), 62% of women of color thought the absence of a prominent mentor was a barrier to their achievement, compared to 39% of White women.

Mentoring is widely advocated for Black women to improve professional resilience. Mentoring can help Black women in education raise their understanding, build relationships, and increase their effectiveness in educational leadership roles (Grant, 2012). According to the

literature, women mentoring other women is essential (Brown, 2005). Hackett and Byars (1996) propose mentee-mentor collaborations with a little older woman rather than experienced executive mentors. According to Amah (2017), the connection quality between the two parties is the cornerstone of successful mentoring. Women mentoring other women can help enhance self-confidence, sharpen skills, navigate problems, and access resources (Searby et al., 2015).

Mentors are classified into three types by Ballenger (2010): psychosocial mentors, who provide emotional support; job-focused mentors, who offer career counseling; and peer mentors, who provide collegiality. Notably, women of color thrive when taught by numerous people (Ballenger, 2010; Catalyst, 2012). Researchers found that college presidents often had guidance from one to three mentors (Gamble & Turner, 2015), which supports the usefulness of mentorship. Similarly, 88% of successful female senior executives at colleges and universities in California and Arizona said they had mentors (Cullen & Luna, 1993). Such findings underscore the significance of mentorship for Black females and females of diverse backgrounds who are striving for leadership roles, as further highlighted by BlackChen (2015), Brown (2005), Grant (2012), Hackett and Byars (1996), and Hannum et al. (2015).

Kern (2015) performed a comprehensive research study on the demands of prospective female leaders, demonstrating that mentorship favors the trajectories of female leaders in colleges and universities. This opinion was reflected in a study of college presidents, which revealed a substantial relationship between mentorship and professional advancement. Notably, this link was significantly more vital when professional goals matched those of the mentors. Confidence, the capacity to motivate, and good communication were regarded as essential leadership attributes. According to Morley (2013), mentorship is a “winning formula” for female leaders. L. N. Johnson and Thomas (2012) proposed that when traditional mentorship is not

readily accessible, individuals should seek assistance from existing allies. The authors indicate that these connections may also offer valuable benefits.

Networking

Actively participating in networks may improve professional performance (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). Academic studies have underlined the significance of networking as a critical strategy for job advancement. Similarly, Schipani et al. (2009) point out the significance of networking for leadership growth, emphasizing its importance in delivering productive career growth. According to L. N. Johnson and Thomas (2012), networking works as a conduit, connecting relationships within and outside institutions to achieve success.

Examining networking through a gendered lens reveals distinct patterns. Van den Brink and Benschop (2014) who noted the different approaches men and women take to harness their professional networks. Women belonging to racial minority groups, particularly those of African descent, have a deep comprehension of their distinct placement within societal establishments. The phrase “outsider-within” was introduced by Collins (1986) to describe the paradoxical experience of individuals who possess a deep sense of belonging to a particular social context yet concurrently face marginalization or neglect within that same place. Despite their knowledge of their marginalization, Black women demonstrate a desire to integrate within the institutional framework and actively connect with peers on campus (L. N. Johnson & Thomas, 2012).

Scholars commonly define gatekeeping as employing either informal or formal networking methods in the context of the recruiting process. These can impede the selection of candidates, either accidentally or on purpose (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). Females often face difficulties accessing prestigious networks, especially when predominantly male gatekeepers guard these networks. This dynamic can further compound the barriers women

encounter in their professional advancement. This notion aligns with Van den Brink and Benschop's (2014) assertion that gender dynamics shape gatekeeping behaviors.

Researchers mention that affinity groups are formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues and actively seeking diverse leadership (L. N. Johnson & Thomas, 2012). Institutions are instrumental in addressing and narrowing the disparities related to ethnicity and sex in leadership positions within post-secondary institutions. They are open platforms for exchanging ideas, experiences, and criticism, establishing a climate of inclusion and cooperation. Scholarly literature indicates that opportunities for networking and mentorship are frequently embedded within organizational leadership development initiatives (Gardner et al., 2014). Maphalala and Mpfu (2017) add that social networks can facilitate the implementation of corporate strategies and visions. From a leadership perspective, these networks are essential in influencing and advocating for policies and procedures.

Professional Development

Research highlights the significance of institutions in cultivating inclusive settings that facilitate the success and integration of faculty members from diverse racial backgrounds into campus life (Gardner et al., 2014; Maphalala & Mpfu, 2017; A. E. Smith, 2015). This entails facilitating extensive networks in which professors and administrators may collaborate actively and provide reciprocal support (Eagan & Garvey, 2015). In their 2014 research, Gardner et al. (2014) delved into the specific organizational characteristics that impact the success of Black administrators within Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The researchers wrote that institutions are more likely to promote favorable results for administrators of color when they:

- establish a transparent and widely known process for recruiting and hiring a diverse staff,

- demonstrate a solid dedication to diversity, ensuring that this value is apparent in all university communications and incorporated into training sessions and
- provide an orientation program that familiarizes staff of color with the campus and the surrounding community.

Organizations should provide expanded resources for professional advancement to their employees of color, according to Gamble and Turner (2015). A. E. Smith (2015) emphasized giving Black females leadership opportunities and networking avenues early in their professional journeys. This is because a lack of professional growth at the outset may limit prospects for promotion. Early exposure to professional development was favorable in women's advancement to administrator roles (Hannum et al., 2015). Exposing females to executive roles early in their college careers is a successful technique. It not only familiarizes students with potential leadership responsibilities but also prepares them to strategically position themselves and be primed for these responsibilities in the future (S. McKenna, 2007).

In 2011, Tessens et al. researched the effectiveness and ideal elements of efforts for women's leadership development in the tertiary environment. The findings agreed on the necessity for such programs to improve skill sets. According to the findings, there are four critical areas for curricular material in women's leadership programs:

- Skills for managing encompass a range of competencies, including conflict resolution, negotiation skills, effective collaboration across different levels, team building, leadership proficiency, communication strategies, change management, enhancing internal communication channels, and cultivating social connections.
- Personal Skills: Recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses, realistic self-evaluation, boosting self-worth, charting the future course and formulating plans to

achieve it, seeking mentorship, emotional intelligence, striving for work-life balance, time optimization, network building, and competent decision-making are all covered in this domain.

- **Political Skills:** The capacity to understand and negotiate the complex political dynamics inside an organization, facilitating the implementation of changes in many situations, and possessing a comprehensive understanding of the governing systems within a university.
- **Operational Skills:** This category includes financial control, employee performance evaluation, work allocation, operational and strategic planning, and a general awareness of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).

Tessens et al. (2011) also discovered that research participants preferred unusual strategies, particularly valuing peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing opportunities. Such tools allow Black females and females of color to thrive on campus, foster more extensive networks among employees and administrators, and provide mutual support (Wilder et al., 2013). Gamble and Turner (2015) added that organizations would reap advantages from investing in the careers of Black females and females from diverse backgrounds.

Gaps in Literature

The analysis of the historical development of tertiary learning institutions in America highlights the deep-seated discriminatory practices that are firmly rooted in prejudices related to race and gender (Collins, 1986). Simultaneously, academic inquiries have shined light on the advancement of Black females within this industry, revealing notable gaps across several aspects. Consequently, early research initiatives frequently failed to adequately address or correctly depict the genuine realities of Black women (Crenshaw, 1991). According to Collins

(2000), a significant issue in researching the professional paths of Black females lies in the interplay of their racial and sex identities. Under the influence of prevailing cultural conventions, early studies tended to approach race and gender as separate and different entities (Crenshaw, 1991). The dichotomous attempt, which primarily centered on the collective experiences of females or the broader Black community, inevitably overlooked the intricate and distinct experiences specific to Black females. Their challenges, arising from the convergence of their ethnicity and gender characteristics, distinguish their experiences from those of White females or Black males (Collins, 1998).

The limited presence of Black females in academic leaders further exacerbates the situation. With fewer Black women occupying prominent roles, there is a reduced pool of individuals who can champion or steer research focused on this specific group (Gamble & Turner, 2015). It also indicates that Black women may encounter restricted opportunities for mentoring and networking, which are essential for career advancement. Prejudice and stereotyping are persistent obstacles. Black women's professional journeys, from recruiting to performance evaluations, are frequently impacted by racial prejudices in academia (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). If research disregards these biases, it fails to acknowledge the distinct obstacles faced by Black females.

Research concentration and funding also exert a substantial effect. Suppose the prioritization of the advancement of Black females in post-secondary institutions is not acknowledged. In that case, it will reduce the probability of comprehensively devoting the necessary resources to examine the matter (S. Y. Evans, 2007). This can lead to a limited comprehension of the issue. The depth and integrity of data is crucial. There may be general data on gender or racial disparities, but it may not always address the genuine experiences of Black

females (Gamble & Turner, 2015). It is essential not to generalize the Black expertise due to its complexity, influenced by factors such as nationality and socioeconomic status. In addition, most academic literature focuses primarily on obstacles or challenges (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). It is also essential to recognize Black females' successes and resiliency strategies (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). This integrated approach provides a broader perspective of their academic trajectory.

Research methodology is critical. While quantitative approaches can provide trend overviews, they frequently omit the narratives and firsthand experiences fundamental to comprehending lived experiences. Therefore, methods such as the Delphi study can be advantageous (Linstone & Turoff, 2010). With its iterative cycles and expert feedback, the Delphi method can capture nuanced insights and provide a consensus addressing some of these gaps (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Understanding Black women's career advancement in tertiary institutions requires acknowledging and addressing research disparities. It is essential to take a comprehensive approach that incorporates methodologies and considers the interaction between ethnicity and gender (Collins, 1986).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 offered a historical examination of tertiary institutions, focusing on the interplay of joining leadership, racial paradigms, and the diverse experiences of Black females in leadership capacities within these educational environments. The literature highlighted that, even in the wake of policies like Affirmative Action and Equal Pay laws, Black women persistently encounter formidable obstacles in their quest for top-tier administrative roles. This examination seeks to probe further into Black women's journeys, achievements, challenges, and intrinsic strengths in post-secondary administration. Their tenacity and flexibility in leadership positions,

particularly within post-secondary systems, are interpreted as their ability to navigate and thrive amidst varied campus cultures.

The research centered on frameworks that delve into the difficulties confronted by Black females in tertiary institutions. In Chapter 2, various terms, like ceilings, glass ceilings, glass cliffs, and sticky floors, are discussed as metaphors representing the barriers that hinder the career advancement of Black females. Furthermore, this chapter summarized critical items (listed below) and recommended strategies for navigating these barriers. It emphasizes the prominence of adaptability, mentorship, endless professional growth, and the value of networking. Through a comprehensive review, this chapter highlighted the challenges Black females face and their strategies to surmount them.

A comprehensive review of the research methods utilized in the examination is provided in Chapter 3. It expounds upon the chosen study design, methods used, and the rationale behind the participant selection process. Furthermore, it provides insight into the protocols for ensuring data collection's safety, security, and ethical considerations. To guarantee the research's rigor, measures taken to preserve the study's integrity are explicitly described. Finally, this chapter underscores the researcher's commitment to minimizing personal biases, ensuring they do not influence the interpretation of the findings. Table 1 shows a summary of critical items and the corresponding references.

Table 1

Summary of Critical Items

Critical Items	References
Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.	Ballenger, 2010; Catalyst, 2012; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hackett & Byars, 1996

Critical Items	References
Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.	Amah, 2017
Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.	Gardner et al., 2014
Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.	Ballenger, 2010
Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.	Grant, 2012
Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.	Brown, 2005
Types of mentors:	Ballenger, 2010
- Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support.	Ballenger, 2010
- Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling.	Ballenger, 2010
- Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.	Ballenger, 2010
Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.	Kern, 2015
Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.	Morley, 2013
Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement.	Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014; Schipani et al., 2009
Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.	Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014
Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.	L. N. Johnson & Thomas, 2012
Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.	Gardner et al., 2014
Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015
Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	Gardner et al., 2014
Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.	Gardner et al., 2014
Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.	Gardner et al., 2014
Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers.	A. E. Smith, 2015

Critical Items	References
Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.	Tessens et al., 2011
Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.	Tessens et al., 2011
Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics.	Tessens et al., 2011
Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.	Tessens et al., 2011
Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development.	Tessens et al., 2011
Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.	A. E. Smith, 2015; Ibarra et al., 2013
Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.	Grant, 2012
Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.	LeanIn, 2022
Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015
Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.	Grant, 2012
Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.	LeanIn, 2022
Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.	Cox & Blake, 1991
Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015
Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.	Pizarro & Kohli, 2018

Critical Items	References
Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches of Black women.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures.	Grant, 2012
Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.	Cox & Blake, 1991
Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Professional identity: One's professional self and values.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in a career.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.	A. E. Smith, 2015; LeanIn, 2022
Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014
Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.	A. E. Smith, 2015; LeanIn, 2022
Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.	Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Marte, 2019

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter thoroughly overviewed this study's research approach and methodology. It reiterates the research's aims and guiding questions and elaborates on applying the Delphi technique for collecting data and interpretation. Within the framework of the Delphi technique, this chapter offered a concise overview of many vital aspects. These included selecting participants, the ethical issues about human subjects, the formation of research tools, the data collection and analysis protocols, and the acknowledgment of potential personal biases.

Restatement of the Research Question

Scholarly research concerning Black women in management is notably sparse. While existing literature delves into women's history and feminist perspectives, it often overlooks the crucial intersectionality of ethnicity and sex in shaping the leadership experiences of Black females (Bell, 1992; Waring, 2003). Current literature, though rich in women's history and feminist viewpoints, frequently neglects the pivotal interplay between ethnicity and sex that influences the leadership journeys of Black women.

Data reveals a significant racial and ethnic disparity in post-secondary education leadership. In 2006, it was reported that 88% of college presidents were White men, typically described as married individuals with Ph.D. degrees, serving in presidential roles for an average of 9 years (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007). Even though there has been a slight boost in Black women serving as presidents from 3.9% to 8.1% between 1986 and 2006 this improvement is marginal.

Notable advancements have been made in the 21st century, with individuals such as Dr. Shirley Jackson, Dr. Ruth Simmons, and Claudine Gay assuming presidencies at prestigious institutions, marking significant milestones for Black women in academia (Bartman, 2015;

Herszenhorn & Yuan, 2023; Simmons, 2015). However, despite the enduring presence of Black females in post-secondary leadership, scholarly research examining their distinct experiences and career paths remains scarce (J. Jackson, 2014).

This study intends to explore the complex realities met by a Black female in tertiary education, examining an array of elements that impact their career progression. These elements include networking, ongoing professional growth, mentorship opportunities, and obstacles like the glass ceiling and sticky floor effects. The objective is to thoroughly grasp the leadership trajectories of Black women in academic settings, addressing a significant research gap highlighted by H. L. Johnson (2017) and the Association for Colleges and Universities. The focus extends beyond merely recording experiences, aiming to unravel the intricate dynamics that either support or impede the rise of Black females to prominent roles in the academic field.

Research Questions

- RQ1: What are the critical factors in a successful leadership design for black women's professional advancement and success in Higher education institutions?
- RQ2: Can these critical factors be used to develop a theoretical framework for understanding Black women's professional advancement and success in leadership positions within Higher education institutions?

Research Design

The study utilized the Delphi process as its methodological framework to deepen understanding of the critical competencies and enabling factors that drive the professional growth of Black females to senior roles in tertiary institutions. The Delphi methodology, established in the early 1950s at a U.S. think tank named the RAND Corporation, as recorded by Dalkey and Helmer in 1963, was first designed to gather and synthesize the viewpoints of

experts methodically and structurally. The Delphi method is intended to structure group discussions, enabling a collective to tackle complex realities (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). These authors underscore the need for a systematic approach to achieve “structured group communication.” Such an approach should facilitate information and expertise sharing, assess group evaluations, provide avenues for individuals to broaden their viewpoints, and maintain confidentiality.

According to Bataller-Grau et al. (2019), the core purpose of its utilization was to provide predictions and facilitate decision-making, with a particular emphasis on military and defense planning scenarios. The Delphi approach has been extensively utilized across various domains, including business, healthcare, and the social sciences, to gather consensus or expert opinions on complex matters, make forecasts, and develop strategies (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). It has adapted and evolved to suit the specific needs of diverse industries and purposes.

The Delphi approach involves the participation of subject matter experts to determine optimal practices or reach an agreement on a specific topic (Donohoe et al., 2012). A consensus-building approach is especially advantageous in areas and domains where there is a need for more previous research. This approach facilitates the identification of categories that can provide insights into the issue at hand and offer direction for future research efforts (Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Skulmoski et al., 2007). The Delphi approach provides an excellent avenue for academics to study tactics and factors that promote the progression of Black females into leadership positions in post-secondary institutions. According to Linstone and Turoff (1975), this process enables gathering expert opinions, insights, and suggestions from persons with specialized knowledge and competence within a particular topic. Additionally, it aids in fostering a thorough comprehension of the obstacles and possibilities Black females encounter in

leadership within higher education. Ultimately, it furnishes empirically supported strategies to help their progress and success.

The Delphi method is a well-structured technique created to harness the collective expertise of a group of experts. Four fundamental characteristics are identified by Rowe and Wright (1999) as constituting the foundation of this method.

- **Anonymity:** It is vital to keep participants unaware of their fellow panelists' identities. This anonymity is pivotal as it creates an environment where individuals can express their views without worrying about criticism or undue peer influence.
- **Iteration:** Central to the Delphi method is the repetitive cycle of questions. This approach allows participants to reevaluate and adjust their viewpoints upon learning about the outcomes of other participants.
- **Controlled Feedback:** Provides an overview of the group's thinking and allows participants to refine their views in the context of the broader group's insights.
- **Statistical Aggregation:** To derive meaningful conclusions, the individual inputs from all participants are collectively analyzed using statistical methods. This aggregation offers a holistic view of the group's consensus or divergence.

Appropriateness of the Delphi Method

Seven characteristics of the Delphi method were detailed, presenting a structure for researchers to gauge its fit for distinct research initiatives, as described by Linstone and Turoff (1975). These characteristics serve as criteria for researchers to assess whether their study aligns with the Delphi method's strengths, thereby determining its suitability as a research methodology to use:

- **Problem Nature:** The Delphi method is appropriate for problems that are not amenable to exact analytical procedures but may be enhanced by aggregating subjective opinions from a panel of experts.
- **Participant Diversity:** When participants are tasked with examining large or intricate matters and exhibit a wide range of experiences or knowledge but also need a track record of successful communication.
- **Large Group Size:** Provides a structured option for collecting information when the quantity of participants exceeds the capacity for efficient direct exchanges.
- **Logistical Constraints:** Temporal and financial resources render regular group meetings impractical.
- **Group Communication Enhancement:** Augment direct meetings by supplementing them with a structured group communication process.
- **Anonymity Requirement:** In situations characterized by intense disagreements or political sensitivity, a refereed communication process is necessary, or anonymity is paramount.
- **Participant Diversity Maintenance:** Ensuring a diverse participant group is crucial for validating the Delphi method's outcomes, as highlighted by Linstone and Turoff (1975).

The Delphi method's characteristics provide a comprehensive framework that helps researchers evaluate its advantages and drawbacks for different research settings, aiding in informed decision-making regarding its applicability (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Given the study's requirement for a structured approach and theoretical foundation, the method was chosen, drawing considerable value from expert consensus. The study's objectives align with several

qualities identified by Linstone and Turoff (1975), addressing issues that are not easily analyzed but benefit from the collective subjective insights from a group of experts.

The challenge lies in identifying the crucial competencies and strategies Black women leverage to attain leadership roles in academia, a task underscored by existing literature, including Howard-Baptiste (2014). This analytically challenging identification process relies on subjective consensus, crucial for developing a coherent theoretical framework representing Black women's varied challenges and strategies in securing diverse leadership roles.

The research necessitates the participation of a larger group than feasible in traditional face-to-face settings, as pointed out by Linstone and Turoff (1975) and R. A. Green (2014). The latter also noted that avoiding direct interviews encourages participants to provide more honest and accurate information. It is vital to consider Black female leaders' diverse perspectives and expertise when exploring the barriers and strategies related to leadership attainment (BlackChen, 2015; Brown, 2005; Grant, 2012; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Hannum et al., 2015). Ensuring a wide range of experiences and strategies are represented validates the research findings, which is a logistically challenging task through in-person interactions.

The Delphi method has proven effective in research studies on higher education matters. For example, Cutler (2003) utilized a three-step Delphi process to pinpoint the traits of leaders who promote compassionate leadership. In a vein, Tran et al. (2020) applied the Delphi technique to examine the factors influencing the scholarly endeavors of Vietnamese faculty members, identifying 14 significant factors grouped under policy-related, capability-related, and networking-related categories. Similarly, Milan (2019) employed the Delphi approach in a thesis examining females' difficulties in school leadership positions. They agreed on 15 factors that shed light on the career prospects for assistant and vice principals. The Delphi technique is

valuable for anticipating future educational trends and identifying significant educational challenges, often highlighted by experienced educational leaders.

Procedures of the Delphi Process

The Delphi technique was first introduced by Dalkey and Helmer (1963) during their tenure at the Rand Corporation during the 1950s. It is a research strategy where a researcher or a team of researchers organize group discussions. The method utilized in this study involves assembling a panel of experts in the field. These experts are presented with questions, and their responses are then gathered and synthesized. The process also entails facilitating conversations among the experts to achieve agreement (Cole et al., 2013). Hasson et al. (2000) support this view, describing the Delphi method as a textual technique to establish consensus among specialists. Further studies carried out by Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) highlight the effectiveness of the Delphi method in areas such as forecasting, identifying and prioritizing issues, and developing concepts and frameworks.

The Delphi technique is characterized by several notable aspects, highlighted by P. L. Davidson (2013) and Fletcher and Marchidon (2014). These include the involvement of a panel of experts with knowledge of the field being studied, the aim of achieving an agreement on intricate issues, the utilization of three to four iterative rounds of questioning, and the guarantee of participant anonymity. The Delphi approach has been applied for research purposes over time. Turoff (1970) identified four critical applications of the Delphi approach: gathering of assumptions and information to generate alternative solutions to a problem, educating participants, reaching consensus, and establishing correlations between expert judgments in various disciplines (Clayton, 1997).

Furthermore, Turoff and Hiltz (1996) noted six comprehensive phases intrinsic to the Delphi process. These phases include issue formulation, option exposition, initial position determination, exploration and understanding of reasons for disagreements, evaluation of underlying rationales, and reevaluation. Upon clarifying the issue and deciding on the approach, the subsequent step in employing the Delphi method involves selecting and identifying participants.

Expert Panel

Delbecq et al. (1975) suggest that individuals selected for Delphi panels should be keenly interested in the pertinent issue and bring significant expertise or experience. The level of experience the panel members possess varies intrinsically, depending on the studied topic area. As a result, there needs to be more generally applicable standards for selecting experts, leading to an academic discussion on the most effective approaches for identifying and recruiting suitable persons to participate in Delphi panels (Hasson et al., 2000). K. M. Hill and Fowles (1975) noted a widespread tendency among researchers to select readily available panelists. These individuals usually have direct or indirect connections with researchers and possess a fundamental degree of expertise relevant to the study field. Powell (2003) further supported this discovery by highlighting a shared agreement among practitioners of the Delphi method, who recommend choosing experts based on their expertise and reputation within the relevant domain and their perceived trustworthiness within the target audience. Hasson et al. (2000) advised researchers to conceptualize experts as individuals who stand to be affected by alterations in policy that may emanate from the study's findings. A range of perspectives may be found in scholarly literature about selecting panelists. Several researchers endorse a process characterized by different viewpoints (Delbecq et al., 1975; Diamond et al., 2014; Doyle, 1993; Powell, 2003).

Clayton (1997), Dawson and Brucker (2001), Day and Bobeva (2005), and Hasson et al. (2000) posit that individuals empowered with the authority to make pivotal decisions based on the questionnaire outcomes demonstrate a more robust engagement in the Delphi activity.

Phases of Delphi

B. Green et al. (1999) describe the usual format of Delphi research as a series of iterative data-gathering rounds. Respondents are asked to articulate and improve their viewpoints on specific topics during these rounds through a continual iteration process. The authors say that typical Delphi research is generally divided into three unique rounds. In the Delphi method, experts initially share their views, subsequently indicate their concurrence or dissent with the presented opinions, and then reevaluate their stance, considering collective feedback from the group. This cyclical process aids experts in reaching a consensus or elucidating divergent views. Linstone and Turoff (1975) delineate this approach into four distinct phases.

- In the preliminary phase, there is a thorough examination of the topic in focus, where every participant offers pertinent information, they deem significant to the matter being discussed.
- The second phase fosters a collective understanding of the group's perception of the issue. This phase involves identifying the points of consensus and divergence among members of the group. If the second phase yields significant disagreements among participants, the third phase is initiated.
- The third phase thoroughly examines and assesses the root causes of disagreements, offering participants a framework to comprehend and harmonize divergent perspectives.

- The assessment stage is the fourth and concluding step of the Delphi research. This phase is initiated after the collected information has been analyzed and disseminated to panelists for review. After panelists have had the opportunity to review and reflect on the analyzed data, it is returned for final evaluation, marking the conclusion of the Delphi process.

Phase One. The inaugural stage of the Delphi procedure, as delineated by scholars including Delbecq et al. (1975), Linstone and Turoff (1975), and Mehnen et al. (2012), involves disseminating surveys to a curated panel of experts. These surveys are often supplemented with foundational summaries and assumptions (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). This phase, typically a month (Hasson et al., 2000), facilitates an early consensus among panelists on terminology and foundational assumptions, paving the way for smoother subsequent rounds.

Survey formulation can be approached in two primary ways: one that incorporates input from additional individuals and another that sources questions from extant literature (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The latter, which permits panelists to propose questions, counteracts potential biases in the initial survey development. Both Enzer (1975) and Jillson (1975) have offered methodologies to enhance the survey, with a predominant emphasis on Likert scale items (Jerkins & Smith, 1994).

H. P. McKenna (1994) posited that integrating one-on-one interviews during this phase can curtail panel dropout rates. Interviews, especially in-person ones, prove particularly efficacious for participants occupying leadership roles, given their constrained schedules (Rayens & Hahn, 2000). Irrespective of the chosen methodology, it is imperative to ensure participants are not inundated with an excessive array of issues identified in the initial round (Keeney et al., 2006). Data should be analyzed, and similar items should be combined to

maintain a manageable list, with careful wording and grouping to prevent bias and ensure fair representation (Brooks, 1979; Hasson et al., 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Whitman, 1990). Employing independent coders can further bolster the consistency of the analysis (Brooks, 1979). The insights gleaned from the first phase subsequently shape the survey for the study's second phase.

Phase Two. In the Delphi method's second phase, the focus shifts to gathering opinions, identifying central issues, and guiding these perspectives toward a consensus regarding survey items, as described by Hasson et al. (2000). Additionally, Brooks (1979) defined consensus as a convergence of opinions with minimal variance. However, the scholarly consensus on the precise percentage that defines agreement still needs to be discovered. While some posit it to be above 50% (Dajani et al., 1979; Loughlin & Moore, 1979; Mackey & Glass, 2005; MacLennan et al., 2018; S. McKenna, 1994), others advocate for a bracket of 70% to 80% (Boyatzis, 1998; B. Green et al., 1999; Loo, 2002; Powell, 2003; Scheibe et al., 1975; Sumsion, 1998; Vernon, 2009). A distinct school of thought emphasizes the consistency of responses across rounds over a fixed percentage (Crisp et al., 1997).

The depth of the inaugural questionnaire dictates the number of iterations. Contemporary studies typically encompass two to three rounds, diverging from the average of four (Beech, 1997; B. Green et al., 1999; Young & Hogben, 1978). In this phase, participants are furnished with an updated survey and insights from the preceding round, facilitating an understanding of collective viewpoints and prompting them to recalibrate their responses in the ensuing rounds (Brooks, 1979; Hasson et al., 2000; Jillson, 1975; Tersine & Riggs, 1976). This iterative process depends on the pre-established consensus criteria and the slated number of rounds.

Participants, during this phase, are tasked with rating or ranking items delineated in the initial phase, typically employing a 5- or 7-point Likert scale anchored by descriptors such as “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” (Clayton, 1997; Jerkins & Smith, 1994; Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The amassed data undergoes analysis, yielding a statistical summary, median, and interquartile range for each item, offering participants a benchmark of their responses vis-à-vis the collective (Hasson et al., 2000; Jenkins & Smith, 1994). This modus operandi positions the Delphi technique akin to an anonymous committee deliberation, wherein participants access a statistical summary devoid of individual attributions (Whitman, 1990). This approach allows the Delphi technique to function similarly to an anonymous committee meeting, with participants able to see a summary of statistical analysis without attribution to individual respondents (Whitman, 1990).

Phase Three. In the Delphi method, by the third round and those that follow, items that have achieved consensus are discerned and subsequently removed based on their Interquartile Range (IQR). This refinement leads to a streamlined list for panelists to further evaluate. The iterative process persists until either a consensus is achieved for all items or until there is a stabilization in the positions of the items, a perspective echoed by Brooks (1979). Consensus is typically characterized by a concentration of responses around a median, exhibiting minimal variation. Rayens and Hahn (2000) articulated that the IQR represents the disparity between the 75th and 25th percentiles. A smaller indicates a more robust consensus. This metric has been widely endorsed as a reliable measure for consensus determination in various studies (Asselin, 1984; Holden & Wedman, 1993; Scheibe et al., 1975).

While the IQR is a predominant method, other techniques, such as quartile deviation and the percentage agreement among panel members, have also been employed to gauge consensus.

The academic community presents a spectrum of views regarding the precise percentage of items that must achieve consensus for the conclusion of a study. This has led to variations in the number of rounds conducted in different studies. Generally, three to four rounds are sufficient to attain consensus, with the stability of responses as an auxiliary determinant for the study's conclusion (Delbecq et al., 1975). A study typically concludes upon meeting predefined consensus benchmarks, observing repetitive outcomes, or reaching a standstill (Loo, 2002).

It should be noted that, regardless of achieving complete consensus or stability, experts like Dawson and Brucker (2001) and Loo (2002) suggest concluding the Delphi study by the fourth round to prevent participant exhaustion. The total rounds can span 3-5, contingent on the desired consensus level (Brooks, 1979; Holden & Wedman, 1993; Murray & Hammons, 1995; Scheibe et al., 1975; Whitman, 1990). For this study, three rounds were deemed appropriate to achieve consensus in alignment with established scholarly guidelines (Delbecq et al., 1975; Diamond et al., 2014; Fan & Cheng, 2006; Von der Gracht, 2012). Should consensus prove challenging, consistency in group responses can be a credible endpoint for the study, as Doyle (1993) and Scheibe et al. (1975) posited.

Strengths and Weakness of the Delphi Method

The Delphi approach presents a robust research technique, particularly advantageous for its adaptability to electronic administration, facilitating global applicability (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Mehnen et al., 2012). This adaptability is instrumental in engaging various panelists, some of whom might be inaccessible through other qualitative methodologies, rendering the approach cost-effective and comprehensive.

Key to the Delphi method is its repeated process. Contrary to perceptions that it might foster precipitous compromises, this iterative nature is designed to yield robust, anonymous

responses, thereby fortifying the research's validity. The significance of anonymity in this method cannot be overstated. As B. Green et al. (1999) underscored, it engenders a conducive environment for candid feedback, mitigating potential biases, mainly when participants hail from potentially conflicting groups.

Delphi's iterative structure typically encompasses three rounds, each designed to facilitate participants in articulating, refining, and, if necessary, recalibrating their perspectives. Cochran (1983) posited that this structured approach fosters independent thought and consensus-building, with participants receiving aggregate feedback, culminating in a statistically representative group response.

However, like all methodologies, the Delphi method is full of challenges. Scholars such as Lang (1994) and Keeney et al. (2006) identified potential pitfalls, including the intricacies of expert selection, the nuances of survey structuring, and the complexities of data analysis. Additionally, determining an optimal panel size and achieving a consensus present their own sets of challenges. While comprehensive, using Likert-style surveys introduces the potential for participants to render hasty, less reflective responses, which could, in turn, impinge on the reliability and validity of their input. Furthermore, ensuring sustained participant commitment is paramount. As Moreno-Casbas et al. (2001) noted, the potential for shifting perceptions, especially among those anticipating professional transitions, necessitates careful consideration in exercising caution when selecting participants to safeguard the integrity of the findings.

Modified Delphi Methodology

This research employed the modified Delphi method, structured in four distinct phases:

1. Item Generation: An exhaustive review of higher education literature was conducted to curate a list of critical items (Murray & Hammons, 1995). This list was further enriched with select insights from the researcher's professional background.
2. Expert Panel Selection: A select group of field experts was meticulously recruited for participation in the research.
3. First Round: The primary phase of the Delphi procedures involved the development of a tool that employed a 7-point Likert scale. This scale spanned from “not critical at all” (1) to “critically important” (7).
4. Second Round: This phase was geared towards refining the findings from the first round.

Stakeholder checks increase the reliability of the findings and bolster the credibility of the results (Thomas, 2006). Hasson et al. (2000) offered advice about the potential influence of response rates on the credibility of research outcomes. Considering this, the researcher assiduously pursued panelists who needed to be timelier in their responses to the study rounds, aiming to guarantee substantial participation.

Tongco (2007) emphasizes the crucial role of the sample in guaranteeing the precision of the gathered data, therefore requiring the verification of the source's credibility and competency. Consistent with this guiding concept, the researcher started selecting participants for the study by searching for individuals who met the criteria on LinkedIn, a professional networking platform designed to facilitate the growth of people's professional networks and establish a broader range of business contacts (Skeels & Grudin, 2009). After the process of identification, a sample frame was carefully designed. The individuals identified within this framework were subsequently exposed to an additional selection procedure. After completing this refined selection process,

electronic communication via email was sent to these individuals, formally inviting them to take part in the research. When email addresses were not available, the researcher utilized LinkedIn Messenger as a means of communication to seek the submission of email addresses to facilitate the sending of the recruiting message.

Participant Selection

To enhance the recruitment process for this research, the study employed a two-pronged approach. The first step involved identifying eligible participants by reviewing relevant literature, focusing on those actively engaged in research and publication within the field. This step provided a foundational understanding of potential participants' expertise and areas of interest. The second phase leveraged LinkedIn to identify additional individuals meeting the study's criteria. This approach ensured a comprehensive and diverse participant pool. A sampling frame was then meticulously constructed based on these findings. Upon finalizing the selection process, participants received invitations via email. In cases where email addresses were unavailable, an initial contact was made through LinkedIn, requesting an email address for sending the official recruitment message. This methodological rigor in participant recruitment aimed to ensure a robust and representative sample for the study.

Analysis Unit. In this research, the term “expert” refers to a Black female professional with significant experience in the post-secondary sector in the United States. To qualify as an “expert,” she should currently work or have prior experience in either 2-year colleges or 4-year universities. A key criterion is that she must possess at least 10 years of experience in these institutions. Additionally, her role should be at a senior level, encompassing positions such as superintendent, chancellor, president, vice president, provost, department chair, dean or director.

These roles signify expertise and leadership within the academic community, making her insights particularly valuable for this study.

Population. Ogbeifun et al. (2016) emphasizes the significance of carefully choosing participants with extensive knowledge and expertise in the subject domain for a Delphi study. The study's population comprised Black female leaders affiliated with LinkedIn, a professional social networking platform described by Skeels and Grudin (2009). These women are either employed or have previously worked at a post-secondary institution in America.

Sample Size. As P. L. Williams and Webb (1993) pointed out, Delphi studies have yet to accept panel size universally. A panel ought to encompass a variety of perspectives on intricate topics but remain feasible for data interpretation (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). Literature, as cited by Grisham (2009) and Mullen (2003), Delphi group sizes can range from a few individuals to as many as 80 participants. However, studies with less than 10 participants are infrequent, as noted by Akins et al. (2005). While Hallowel and Gambatese (2010) mention the absence of rigid sample size guidelines, they propose that at least eight participants might be adequate. Given the attrition concerns raised by Gargon et al. (2019) and D. Hall et al. (2018), this research settled on a sample size of 25. This study was structured with a panel of 25 expert Black female leaders in post-secondary institutions holding positions of director or higher.

Purposive Sampling. According to Pajo (2017) and Creswell (2013), judgmental sampling, or purposive sampling, entails the deliberate selection of individuals who possess insight into the investigated phenomenon. This technique determines a participant group that corresponds closely with the research study's contextual requirements. Purposive sampling, described by Tongco (2007) as an effective non-random strategy, is beneficial for researching cultural domain experts. In addition, Merriam (2009) suggested selecting individuals who can

devote time to engage with and assimilate the information thoroughly. Moreover, Merriam (2009) and Tongco (2007) asserted that this method facilitates the researcher in selecting participants who are pertinent to the topic and capable of providing insightful information. This is crucial for addressing research questions effectively. The approach ensures that the participants' knowledge and experiences align closely with the study's objectives, enhancing the potential for generating meaningful and relevant findings.

Criteria for Inclusion. Inclusion and exclusion criteria refer to distinct attributes researchers use to select whether individuals should be included or excluded from the study population in a research project (Salkind, 2010). The criteria have been carefully defined to correspond with the overall aims and particular research questions proposed by the study. The specified conditions for inclusion are outlined as follows:

- Associated with LinkedIn, the professional networking platform.
- Self-identified as a Black woman, African American, or a member of the African Diaspora.
- Possessed of at least 10 years of experience in the higher education sector.
- The candidate was between 35 and 80 years old, focusing on those working in 2-year or 4-year college environments.
- A minimum of 5 years in a senior-level role. This experience could be within the current institution, span various institutions, or comprise multiple positions.
- Held a current or previously had a leadership role at the director or higher level in a 2-year or 4-year college.
- Held leadership tenure of at least 5 years at the director level or above in such educational institutions.

Criteria for Exclusion. Only those accessible between February 2024 and May 2024, the prearranged study period, were included. Additionally, individuals needing more technological resources or unwilling to engage in a minimum of one, but potentially up to three survey rounds within the stipulated research timeframe were also deemed ineligible for participation.

Criteria for Maximum Variation. Maximum variance is a methodological approach in participant selection wherein individuals are chosen based on their representation of a broad spectrum of experiences (Palys, 2008). Following applying the previously outlined criteria for inclusion and exclusion, prospective contributors surpassed 25 individuals. To enhance the diversity and inclusivity of the sample, additional criteria were subsequently introduced to encourage maximum variation:

- Preference was given to Black women who had been entrusted with several leadership duties for a period exceeding 5 years.
- Participants were grouped by their years of experience: 5-7 years, 8-10 years, 10-12 years, and 12-15 years, either in a 2-year college, a 4-year college, or a mix of both.
- The sample represented Black women leaders from 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, or a blend of the two.
- The participants hailed from a diverse geographical spread, covering all 50 states in the USA.

Protection of Human Subjects

Ensuring access to potential participants involves many steps, including formulating an inquiry strategy and obtaining necessary permission from a human independent review board, as Creswell (1998, 2013) outlined. The technique involves the submission of a comprehensive proposal to the review board, which provides a complete overview of the planned procedures and

methodologies for the project (Creswell, 1998). Pepperdine University has established explicit ethical and legal requirements to ensure the protection and well-being of interview participants. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Pepperdine University prioritizes two primary objectives: firstly, ensuring the well-being and respect of human contributors, and secondly, aiding researchers in executing studies ethically in line with pertinent guidelines (Pepperdine University, n.d.).

The research study was conducted using a panel of experts who were adult volunteers employed in higher education institutions; this group does not fall under the classification of a protected group. Recruiting participants was carried out transparently, ensuring no deceptive practices were employed. The participants were not offered any incentives in return for their participation in the study. The study posed low risks to participants, with the only possible concern being survey weariness. Participants were given assurances about the anonymity of their comments, and the study findings were only released in aggregate form. This research complies with the exemption criteria outlined in the federal regulations (45 CFR 46) by the National Institutes of Health (2005) that govern the protection of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states: (b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

- information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and

- any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place them at risk of criminal or civil liability or damage their financial standing, employability, or reputation (Section 45 CFR 46.101).

Instrument Design

Surveys have been a popular tool for researchers, including those studying gender and leadership, to collect data (Ballenger, 2010; Blake & McCause, 1991; Bingham & Nix, 2010; Jin et al., 2017; Lee et al., 1993; Lindgren, 2016; Schneider et al., 2011). For this research, the inaugural set of survey questions was formulated from an exhaustive review of pertinent literature. No pilot studies or field tests were undertaken, aligning with the standard Delphi design approach, as highlighted by Avella (2016). The Delphi method relies on collective wisdom, assuming that a group is less likely to make erroneous assessments (Hasson et al., 2000).

The study utilized questionnaires as its primary instruments, distributed to participants in two phases: round one and round two, deriving a foundational set of critical items from an extensive literature review. Subsequently, the compiled list was employed to develop a survey based on a 7-point Likert scale. The study employed a scale that ranged from *not critical at all* (1) to *extremely critical* (7). Jamieson (2004) noted that it is crucial to acknowledge the potential ambiguity in Likert scales, as respondents might interpret terms like “very” differently, and the scales might not capture nuanced “in-between” ratings, potentially affecting the data. Likert scales extensively acknowledged and employed across diverse fields, as noted by Ahuja et al. (2018), Bishop and Herron (2015), and Sullivan and Artino (2013), assess attitudes by prompting respondents to concur or dissent with a set of statements. This approach captures the cognitive and emotional facets of attitudes, as described by Likert (1932).

To enhance the Delphi study's validity, participants who possessed expertise and strong interest in the research topic were selected (Goodman, 1987). The study's validity was further bolstered by conducting successive rounds, ensuring participants had content knowledge, and maintaining high response rates (Hasson et al., 2000). Participants were provided with a document listing important definitions and detailed guidance on using the Likert scale, including clarifications for each measure, to foster a shared understanding and mitigate potential confusion over terms like “critical” and “critically important.”

Data Collection

The potential participants were initially approached by email, employing a recruitment script outlined. In cases where the email addresses were not readily available to the general public, individuals were contacted through LinkedIn Messenger to seek their personal email contact information. This information was then utilized to send the recruiting script outlined earlier. A reminder email was sent to those who had not replied 5 days after the initial contact. Upon receiving no response to the second message, a final request was sent, highlighting the ultimate participation deadline, established 3 days after receiving the email. Participants who responded after the final request were kept from the study.

Individuals who indicated their agreement to participate were given detailed instructions at the beginning of the initial survey. After completing the participant selection process, the initial survey was distributed, and respondents were asked to submit their responses within one week. Reminder messages were dispatched both in advance of the deadline and again on the deadline day to those who still needed to complete and submit their survey. As the study advanced to the second round, participants were given 10 days to finish the survey. This timeframe allows for the examination of the summary generated from the initial round of data

gathering. Participants who had yet to submit their surveys were sent reminder emails strategically, 3 days, 1 day, and the day of the set deadline.

Statement of Personal Bias

Recognizing personal biases in research is widely acknowledged. Creswell (2013) posits that openly addressing these biases related to the study is crucial for its validation. The act of disclosing relevant information is a customary approach that contributes to enhancing the correctness of the evaluation of the study outcomes. Before choosing the research topic, the researcher conducted introspective self-observation to recognize and acknowledge places where her perspectives and experiences may be relevant to the study. The researcher is of African descent, identifies as female, and is now engaged in intermediate responsibility at an educational institution that offers 2-year degree programs. Having accumulated over a decade of professional experience in higher education, the researcher's career record encompasses various positions, such as graduate assistant, director, intern, investigator, and senior internal auditor. Throughout the researcher's professional journey, she has maneuvered various challenges and obstacles in her quest for leadership positions, frequently with little or no support. Acknowledging these experiences and biases is essential for transparently communicating the lens through which the researcher approaches the study, thereby contributing to validating the research process and findings.

Data Analysis

Ogbeifun et al. (2016) asserted that reaching consensus is a fundamental component of the Delphi method and the data analysis stage of a research study. Although the main aim of a Delphi study may not necessarily be to achieve agreement, many researchers have seen it as a decisive outcome in their research endeavors, as highlighted by Von der Gracht (2012). This is

process is described by Dajani et al. (1979) as “hierarchical stopping criteria,” suggesting that consensus should be assessed only after achieving a consistent response. A majority is defined as any figure that surpasses 50%, whereas a plurality refers to the greatest share of results without reaching 49%. In their critique, Chaffin and Talley (1980) contested this method by asserting that a collective agreement may not be reliable if there is variation in individual replies. They proposed that exclusive reliance on individual stability as the solitary criterion for assessing the attainment of consensus be abandoned.

When all surveys were finished at the beginning of round one, we calculated the median, mode, and interquartile range (IQR). If an item’s interquartile range (IQR) was 20% or less of the overall range, it was considered to have gained consensus and stability. This determination was made based on the synthesis of Delphi surveys conducted by Plinske in 2008, as presented in Figure 1. After applying this procedure to each item, a concise overview of the first round was compiled for the participants before to commencing the second round.

Figure 1*Interquartile Range (IQR) Values to Establish Consensus in Delphi Research*

Author(s)	Year	Scale	Maximum IQR Used to Establish Consensus	IQR as % of the Scale
Stines	2003	6	1	17%
Kaliner et al.	2005	100	20	20%
Wicklein & Rojewski	1999	5	1	20%
Wright	2007	5	1	20%
Rayens & Hahn	2000	4	1	25%
Kim, Barnett, & Bragg	2003	7	2	29%
Osika	2006	7	2	29%
Brunner, Lienhardt, Kissling, Bachmann, & Weber	In press	10	3	30%
Mackellar, Ashcroft, Bell, James, & Marriott	2007	9	3	33%
Rasmussen, Sondergaard, Kampmann, & Andersen	2004	9	3	33%
Na	2006	7	2.5	36%
Comer, Birkenholz, & Stewart	2004	5	2	40%

Note. From *The Next Generation of Community College Presidents: Critical Characteristics, Competencies, and Professional Experiences*, by K. Plinske, 2008, (Publication No. 3331199) [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University], ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Using the findings from the first round, a new instrument was developed during the second round. Questions that achieved consensus were excluded from subsequent rounds. For the remaining items, median scores were assigned, reflecting the central tendency of the experts' responses. After the second round of surveys was completed and returned, the statistical analysis was updated for each question. This update involved recalculating the median and mode, which represent the middle and most frequently occurring values in the data set, respectively. The Interquartile Range (IQR) for each question was recalculated. Consensus was evaluated using the same criterion, which required an interquartile range (IQR) of 20% or below. Subsequently, a final examination was carried out to see whether a thorough agreement had been reached. The

research achieved its ultimate agreement when more than 85% of the items, including those from the first round, satisfied individual consensus and stability requirements.

Triangulation

As Walle (2014) described, triangulation is vital for validating and lending credibility to study results. It enhances generalizability and analysis by using various data collection methods, engaging multiple investigators, exploring different contexts and theories, and applying diverse methods (Schmidt, 1997). This process involves gathering data from multiple sources to check if results converge or diverge. The consistency of results broadens the scope of the study, thus enhancing the study's reliability and robustness (Walle, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) add that a final consensus in the survey is reached when specific stability indices are met, ensuring robust triangulation:

- Median Stability Index (MeSI): Achieved between cycles one and two, unaltered median values for less than 10% of items are desired, as indicated by a median rating difference of zero.
- The Modal Stability Index (MOSI) stipulates that items should exhibit no mode value variation between the two phases for less than 10% of the items, as evidenced once more by a zero difference in ratings.
- IQR Stability Index (IQRSI): A zero difference in IQR values between the first and second rounds should be observed in less than 10% of items.

Each index, showing no movement between rounds, indicates stability, which is crucial for achieving a final consensus. Should consensus not be attained, a third-round would ensue, adhering to the protocols established in the second round. Upon reaching a definitive consensus,

items will be organized and ranked in descending order according to their median and IQR values. A detailed account of this tabulation is provided in Chapter 4.

Coding

Coding, a significant part of analysis, is not synonymous with it, as noted by Basit (2003). This technique, used in qualitative research, streamlines data into conceptual frameworks, facilitating data summarization and categorization, as described by Saldaña (2012, 2016). This categorization facilitated by coding is crucial for developing theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Richards & Morse, 2007).

This study utilized intercoder reliability to explore the possibility of establishing a theoretical framework to elucidate critical factors influencing Black females' professional progression and success in leadership roles. This study employed a four-step coding process:

1. The researcher identified and coded key elements that exhibited consistency in the Delphi evaluation.
2. Two doctoral student co-reviewers with qualitative research and coding expertise discussed the initial codes and themes. They reviewed and validated the designated codes and themes. In cases of disagreement, the researcher sought the expert reviewers, also known as the dissertation committee, to resolve discrepancies and refine the codes.
3. The reviewers' feedback guided the coding process for the subsequent vital items.
4. The co-reviewers again reviewed and validated the remaining codes, with expert reviewers providing additional input to reach a consensus.

Researchers mention that intercoder reliability ensures consensus among multiple coders on the themes and codes assigned to the content (Bernard et al., 2016; Lavrakas, 2008). This

structured approach ensured a reliable and collaborative coding process, strengthening the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Chapter Summary

This research study selected the Delphi method to discover the factors that impact the progression of Black women, in educational settings. Linstone and Turoff (1975) advocate for this method due to its systematic approach in highlighting qualities that could support the development of future Black female leaders in post-secondary institutions. Its anonymity feature is beneficial for eliciting frank responses. R. A. Green (2014) notes that the Delphi method eliminates the need for face-to-face interviews, allowing for more diverse and inclusive participation. Consequently, this method expanded the research's reach, making it relevant nationwide.

This chapter offers an exploration of the research design, methodologies, and techniques applied to generate credible results. It revisits the primary research questions, focusing on the key skills and approaches of Black female leaders in post-secondary institutions. The chapter explains the rationale behind choosing the flexible Delphi method, considering aspects like sample size, research design, and the unit of analysis. It clearly outlines the criteria for participant inclusion and exclusion, emphasizing diverse representation. Strategies to minimize researcher bias and adherence to Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines for human subject protection are also addressed. The survey methodology and data analysis techniques undergo peer review with the data from each round of the Delphi process being analyzed using the interquartile range (IQR). An IQR of 20% or below was considered an indicator of consensus and stability on the topics. The data analysis procedure will be provided in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Survey Results

This chapter discusses data collection and examination of data. The Delphi methodology was applied to address RQ1, while coding techniques were used to analyze RQ2. These methods facilitated a comprehensive examination of the research questions.

Recruitment of Expert Participants

The recruitment of expert participants began after an initial literature review, which found significant people who had performed research or held senior-level positions at either 2-year or 4-year universities. LinkedIn also functioned as a forum for recruiting additional participants. The study's eligibility criteria required participants to be Black women aged 35 to 80, either currently employed or with prior professional experience in 2-year colleges or 4-year universities spanning at least 10 years and at least 5 years in roles at the director level or higher. This method effectively identified Black female leaders and scholars in postsecondary educational institutions.

A list of 57 people was created, and 46 of them were contacted initially, which accounts for 80% of the possible participants discovered, chosen based on their contact email availability. The people were provided with the recruiting script and the initial survey, as outlined in Appendix C. A follow-up reminder was sent to non-respondents 5 days after the first survey, followed by a final reminder 1 day before the survey deadline. These activities initiated the first use of the Delphi study method.

Delphi Phase One

Survey One Distribution

The first phase of the research entailed conducting a survey that included 53 key items, as identified in the literature and elaborated in Appendix H. The survey was administered via the

Qualtrics platform, and participants were solicited through a recruiting script. The experts were tasked with evaluating the significance of each issue regarding the professional progress of Black women leaders. The term “professional advancement” in this study denotes the combination of leadership skills and career growth that Black women have utilized to reach essential leadership positions in higher education institutions. The survey used a 7-point Likert scale for replies, accompanied by a comprehensive explanation for each scale point given to participants, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

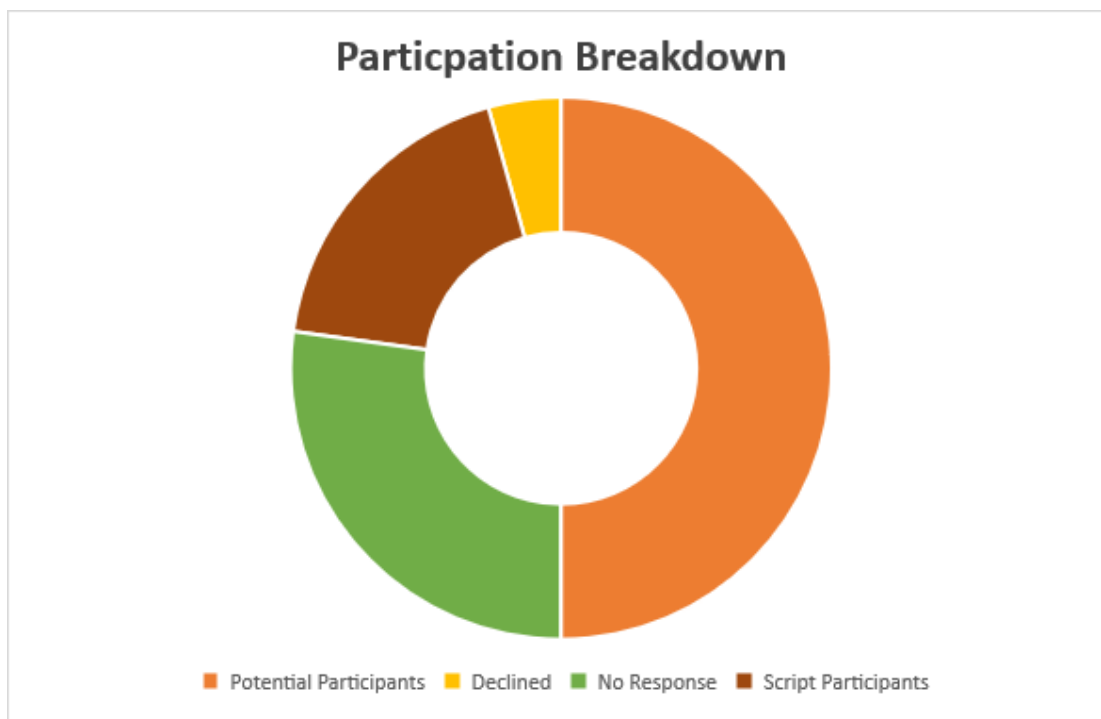
Likert-Scale Values and Definition

Likert-Scale Value	Definition
Not Critical at All (1)	This component may not provide benefit to the professional advancement of Black women in Higher education institutions.
Not Critical (2)	This component may not provide any advantages and there is a low chance it would hinder the progress of growth for Black women Higher education institutions.
Somewhat Not Critical (3)	This component is somewhat not beneficial and would not be detrimental to professional advancement of Black women in Higher education institutions.
No Basis (4)	Neutral. I don't have an opinion, on this aspect or enough experience to provide feedback this area.
Somewhat Critical (5)	This component is beneficial but not its absence would not necessarily risk professional advancement of Black women in Higher education institutions.
Critical (6)	This component is beneficial not having poses a risk to the professional advancement of Black women in Higher education institutions.
Critically Important (7)	This component is vital, and its absence would risk professional advancement of Black women in Higher education institutions.

The study initially reached 46 experts, of whom 17 consented to participate and completed the survey within the specified time frame. Four experts declined to participate, with two attributing their decision to job transitions that precluded their involvement in all three rounds of the study, and the remaining two did not specify their reasons. No response was received from 25 of the contacted individuals. The 17 participating experts were selected from the initial group of 46, meeting the participation threshold as sufficient to continue the study without additional recruitment or diversification efforts. This recruitment and participation process is depicted in Figure 2. The participants were Black women in leadership positions across various levels of higher education, including Vice Chancellors, Presidents, Vice Presidents, superintendents, deans, directors, and researchers.

Figure 2

Recruitment and Participation Breakdown



Out of the 17 experts, 15 completed the entire survey. One expert responded to 40 of the 53 questions, while another completed 17. The responses were compiled into a spreadsheet and analyzed using a specialized Delphi calculator. Of the 53 items discussed, consensus was reached on 52, identifying critical factors for Black women's successful leadership and professional advancement. The only item that needed consensus was Item 7, concerning the types of mentors.

Round One Analysis

After data collection, statistical measures, including the median, interquartile range (IQR), and mode, were determined for each item. An item achieved consensus when its IQR did not exceed 20% of its total range. Among the 53 items rated, consensus was reached on 52, indicating that 98.9% of the items agreed, with only 1.1% failing to achieve consensus. This high consensus rate underscores the significance of most factors considered crucial to Black women's effective leadership and professional development. The detailed statistical results are presented in Table 3, arranged in ascending order of IQR.

Table 3

Round One Results

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q5	Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q10	Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q14	Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q16	Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q26	Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q20	Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q31	Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q39	Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q40	Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q41	Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q44	Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q47	Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q53	Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q1	Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q4	Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q9	Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q15	Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q18	Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers.	7.00	0.75	7	Consensus
Q25	Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.	7.00	0.75	7	Consensus
Q29	Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.	7.00	0.75	7	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q28	Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.	6.00	0.75	6	Consensus
Q37	Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.	6.00	0.75	6	Consensus
Q8	Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q11	Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q12	Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.	6.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q13	Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q17	Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q19	Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q23	Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q27	Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q32	Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.	6.50	1.00	7	Consensus
Q34	Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q2	Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q3	Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q6	Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q22	Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.	5.00	1.00	5	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q24	Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q30	Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q33	Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q35	Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q36	Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q38	Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q42	Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q43	Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q45	Professional identity: One's professional self and values.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q46	Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q48	Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q49	Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q50	Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q51	Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q52	Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q7	Types of mentors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support. • Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling. • Peer mentors: Provide collegiality. 	6.00	2.00	5	No Consensus

Table 4 presents the items for which consensus was achieved, organized according to their importance as assessed by the experts ($N = 17$). Importance was gauged based on the median score, where a score of seven indicated critical importance and one signified lack of importance.

Table 4

Consensus Items in Round One

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q1	Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q4	Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q5	Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q8	Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q9	Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus
Q10	Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q11	Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q12	Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.	6.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q13	Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q14	Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q15	Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	7.00	0.50	7	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q16	Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q17	Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q18	Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers.	7.00	0.75	7	Consensus
Q19	Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q21	Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q23	Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q25	Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.	7.00	0.75	7	Consensus
Q26	Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q27	Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q29	Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.	7.00	0.75	7	Consensus
Q32	Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.	6.50	1.00	7	Consensus
Q36	Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q38	Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q43	Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q44	Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q45	Professional identity: One's professional self and values.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q46	Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q47	Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q48	Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q49	Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q50	Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q51	Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q52	Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q2	Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q3	Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q6	Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q20	Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q22	Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.	5.00	1.00	5	Consensus
Q24	Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q28	Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.	6.00	0.75	6	Consensus
Q30	Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q31	Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q33	Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q35	Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q37	Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.	6.00	0.75	6	Consensus
Q39	Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q40	Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q41	Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q42	Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures.	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q53	Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus

Except for one, all items agreed on leadership design for Black women's professional advancement and success. As a result, in Round 2, each item was returned to the panel with its median score indicated alongside. Panelists were then asked to re-evaluate the items.

Delphi Phase Two

The second round of the Delphi process was completed, with the median score shown beside each of the 53 items for the expert panel to consider. The instructions explained that the median scores were offered to help with their evaluation process. All questions were resubmitted to the panel, including neighboring median scores and comprehensive survey completion instructions. Experts were informed that they would review the group's collective median replies, allowing for a more informed second evaluation. This round tried to refine consensus by having the panel re-evaluate each item.

Distribution of Survey Two

Survey 2 was distributed to all 17 expert panelists, and 11 of the 17 responded. The data analysis is presented in Table 5, which shows the results. The responding experts unanimously agreed on all 53 items, identifying the critical factors for successful leadership and the professional advancement of Black women.

Table 5

Round Two Results

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q7	Types of mentors: (5) - Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support. - Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling. - Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.	5.00	0.00	5	Consensus
Q3	Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q24	Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q31	Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q33	Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q35	Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q39	Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q40	Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q42	Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures. (6)	6.00	0.00	6	Consensus
Q2	Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role. (6)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q6	Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women. (6)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q22	Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning. (5)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q28	Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times. (6)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q30	Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers. (6)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q37	Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs. (6)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q41	Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth. (6)	6.00	1.00	6	Consensus
Q1	Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q5	Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q8	Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q9	Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q10	Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q11	Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q13	Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q14	Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q15	Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q16	Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q18	Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q19	Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q21	Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q25	Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q26	Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q29	Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q36	Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q38	Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q43	Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q44	Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q45	Professional identity: One's professional self and values. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q49	Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others. (7)	7.00	0.00	7	Consensus
Q4	Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q12	Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues. (6)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q17	Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q20	Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship. (6)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q23	Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q27	Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q32	Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence. (6.5)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q34	Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q46	Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q47	Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q48	Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q50	Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q51	Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q52	Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales. (7)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus
Q53	Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices. (6)	7.00	1.00	7	Consensus

Out of the 53 items, Item 7, which focuses on mentor categories, obtained a median score of 5.00. Participants unanimously agreed that this item was somewhat imperative in the context of leadership frameworks for the professional achievement of Black women (see Table 6).

Table 6

Consensus Items in Round Two

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q7	Types of mentors: (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support. • Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling. • Peer mentors: Provide collegiality. 	5.00	0.00	5	Somewhat Critical

Table 7 indicates that Items 3, 24, 31, 33, 35, 39, 40, 42, 2, 6, 22, 28, 30, 37, and 41 all achieved a median score of 6.00, reflecting a unanimous consensus among the expert panel. This consensus underscores the critical importance of these items in contributing to effective leadership models that support the professional advancement and success of Black women.

Table 7*Consensus Items in Round Two*

Item #	Items	Med	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q3	Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q24	Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q31	Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q33	Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q35	Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q39	Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q40	Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q42	Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures. (6)	6.00	0.00	6.00	Critical
Q2	Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role. (6)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical
Q6	Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women. (6)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical
Q22	Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning. (5)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical
Q28	Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times. (6)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical
Q30	Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers. (6)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical
Q37	Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs. (6)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical
Q41	Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth. (6)	6.00	1.00	6.00	Critical

Table 8 reveals that the remaining Items: 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 36, 38, 43, 44, 45, 49, 4, 12, 17, 20, 23, 27, 32, 34, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, and 53, all achieved unanimous consensus, which is deemed critically important for fostering successful leadership design that enhances the professional growth and success of Black women.

Table 8

Consensus Items in Round Two

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q1	Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q5	Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q8	Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q9	Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q10	Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q11	Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q13	Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q14	Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q15	Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q16	Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q18	Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q19	Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q21	Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q25	Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q26	Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q29	Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q36	Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q38	Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q43	Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q44	Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q45	Professional identity: One's professional self and values. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q49	Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others. (7)	7.00	0.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q4	Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q12	Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues. (6)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q17	Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q20	Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship. (6)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q23	Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q27	Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important

Item #	Items	Median	IQR	Mode	Decision
Q32	Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence. (6.5)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q34	Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q46	Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q47	Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q48	Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q50	Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q51	Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q52	Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales. (7)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important
Q53	Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices. (6)	7.00	1.00	7.00	Critically Important

Final Consensus

Since Round 2 achieved unanimous consensus on all 53 items, a third round and the calculation of consensus indices, as discussed in Chapter 3, became unnecessary. The items were unanimously considered to range from critically important to somewhat critical for effective leadership models that support Black women's professional advancement and success. Each item was rated as unimportant or below somewhat critical. The conclusive consensus is detailed in Table 9, organized by descending order of importance based on median scores and their associated Likert-scale rankings.

Table 9*Final Consensus Items by Ranking*

Item #	Items	Med	IQR	Likert Scale-Rating
Q1	Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q5	Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q8	Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q9	Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q10	Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q11	Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q13	Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q14	Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q15	Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q16	Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q18	Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q19	Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q21	Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important

Item #	Items	Med	IQR	Likert Scale-Rating
Q25	Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q26	Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q29	Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q36	Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q38	Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q43	Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q44	Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q45	Professional identity: One's professional self and values. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q49	Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others. (7)	7.00	0.00	Critically Important
Q4	Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q12	Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues. (6)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q17	Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q20	Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship. (6)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q23	Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q27	Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important

Item #	Items	Med	IQR	Likert Scale-Rating
Q32	Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence. (6.5)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q34	Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q46	Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q47	Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q48	Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q50	Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q51	Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q52	Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales. (7)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q53	Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices. (6)	7.00	1.00	Critically Important
Q3	Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q24	Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q31	Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q33	Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q35	Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q39	Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical

Item #	Items	Med	IQR	Likert Scale-Rating
Q40	Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q42	Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures. (6)	6.00	0.00	Critical
Q2	Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role. (6)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q6	Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women. (6)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q22	Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning. (5)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q28	Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times. (6)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q30	Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers. (6)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q37	Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs. (6)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q41	Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth. (6)	6.00	1.00	Critical
Q7	Types of mentors: (5)	5.00	0.00	Somewhat Critical
	- Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support.			
	- Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling.			
	- Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.			

Coding

A thematic analysis was conducted using intercoder reliability to address RQ2, which asks whether the identified critical factors can inform a theoretical framework for understanding

Black women's professional advancement and success in leadership roles within higher education institutions. This analysis involved initially categorizing the consensus items into themes through coding. Subsequently, two peers were asked to review the codes for agreement, as Bernard et al. (2016) and Lavrakas (2008) mentioned. The 53 items that reached a deal were organized into seven distinct categories (See Table 10).

- **Boldness:** Items associated with risk-taking, personal branding, and visibility.
- **Opportunity:** Items highlight the significance of access to leadership development, mentorship, and networking.
- **Optimizing:** Items concentrating on developing essential skills and strategies.
- **Excellence:** Items categorized under “Excellence” focus on diversity in leadership, inclusion, and professional achievements.
- **Guiding:** Items associated with mentorship and sponsorship.
- **Liberating:** Items associated with overcoming barriers and empowering women.
- **Wisdom:** Items recognizing the importance of work-life balance, professional identity, and career satisfaction.

Table 10

Consensus Items and Assigned Codes

Critical Items	Code
Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.	Opportunity
Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.	Excellence
Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.	Excellence
Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.	Liberating

Critical Items	Code
Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.	Guiding
Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.	Guiding
Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.	Guiding
Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.	Liberating
Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.	Liberating
Types of mentors: - Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support. - Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling. - Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.	Guiding
Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.	Excellence
Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.	Wisdom
Networking: A critical strategy for job Diversity in roles advancement.	Wisdom
Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.	Boldness
Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.	Opportunity
Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	Excellence
Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.	Excellence
Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.	Excellence
Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.	Guiding
Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.	Excellence
Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.	Guiding
Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.	Excellence

Critical Items	Code
Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.	Opportunity
Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.	Excellence
Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.	Optimizing
Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.	Wisdom
Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.	Optimizing
Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.	Optimizing
Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures.	Wisdom
Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.	Opportunity
Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development.	Opportunity
Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.	Guiding
Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers.	Opportunity
Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.	Liberating
Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.	Boldness
Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches of Black women.	Wisdom
Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics.	Optimizing
Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.	Excellence
Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.	Optimizing
Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.	Guiding
Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills.	Optimizing

Critical Items	Code
Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.	Optimizing
Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.	Liberating
Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.	Wisdom
Professional identity: One's professional self and values.	Liberating
Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in a career.	Wisdom
Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.	Boldness
Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.	Guiding
Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.	Boldness
Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.	Guiding
Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles.	Liberating
Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.	Guiding

Chapter Summary

A Delphi study was employed to examine RQ1, which focuses on identifying critical factors for successful leadership and the professional advancement of Black women in higher education institutions. This study unfolded over two rounds, starting with 53 critical items and involving 17 participants in the first round. Analysis of the initial survey revealed that 98.9% of the items achieved consensus, leaving only one item without consensus. Consequently, in Round 2, all 53 items were presented again to the panel, with their median scores displayed. Eleven participants contributed to this second survey, culminating in consensus across all 53 items, thus achieving a 100% consensus rate. The unanimous agreement in Round 2 rendered a third round

and further calculations of consensus indices, as previously discussed in Chapter 3, unnecessary. By the end of the two rounds, all 53 items had reached consensus.

Addressing RQ2, which queries whether the identified critical factors can contribute to a theoretical framework or model for understanding the professional advancement of Black women in leadership within higher education, intercoder reliability was applied. The consensus-reaching 53 items were categorized into seven themes: boldness, excellence, guiding, liberating, opportunity, optimizing, and wisdom. Two peer reviewers were then consulted to evaluate the coding, reaching a consensus on the coding and themes in their review (see Appendix K).

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Suggestions

As Forthun and Freeman (2017) and Evelyn (2001) noted, U.S. higher education institutions face a leadership crisis. The matter is framed within a swiftly evolving demographic environment, with Taylor et al. (2010) forecasting that by 2050, most of the U.S. population will consist of individuals from non-white racial backgrounds. Despite the shift, Black women represented only 9% of college presidents in 2017, according to the ACE (2017b), and in 2018, they filled approximately 16,000 managerial roles within post-tertiary institutions.

Women in leadership roles need to be improved in the presence of mentors and supporters for research that focuses on their experiences, as highlighted by Bystydzienski et al. (2017), Gamble and Turner (2015), Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) and Tan (2016). This under-representation does not emphasize the difficulties in accessing mentorship and networking opportunities for career advancement but also reflects persistent issues related to bias and stereotypes impacting the professional journeys of Black women, such as in recruitment, retention, and performance evaluations (Hancock et al., 2017; Holder et al., 2015; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Ribeiro, 2016).

While data exists regarding gender and racial inequalities, it often falls short of capturing the experiences of Black women. This emphasizes a deficiency in fostering leadership and shows limited progress in narrowing this disparity (S. Davis & Brown, 2017; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR, 2022) highlighted that although women are well represented in many fields, this does not translate into equal representation in leadership roles, particularly for Black women. Black women have contributed to academia from the 1800s to the 20th century. Their numbers were restricted while their impact was profound. In institutions of

higher learning catering to students today, the issue of underrepresentation persists. The genuine insights into women's career paths, progressions, and encounters in academia should ideally come from Black female leaders.

This research aimed to discover the main competencies and successful strategies that have helped Black women achieve high-level senior posts in academic settings. The study explored best practices, career counseling, professional routes, and the political backdrop to confirm and emphasize their importance in promoting career advancement and success for Black women. It is necessary to analyze the professional progression by drawing insight from the experiences of Black women who have successfully advanced in their careers. This study characterizes career progression as a combination of leadership abilities and professional development that Black women have utilized to achieve leadership roles in post-secondary establishments. Recognizing these leadership attributes may help higher education institutions and Black women navigate their paths toward leadership positions, nurturing a more varied and inclusive leadership environment worldwide.

To delve deeper into the essential traits and strategies that facilitate attaining senior leadership positions in academic environments, the study focused on addressing the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the critical factors in a successful leadership design for Black women's professional advancement and success in Higher education institutions?
- RQ2: Can these critical factors be used to develop a theoretical framework for understanding Black women's professional advancement and success in leadership positions within Higher education institutions?

This research was vital as it sheds light on the experiences of Black women in leadership positions within higher education institutions. It explored their paths, revealing the strategies and qualities that have propelled them to success in motivating female leaders. By focusing on their obstacles and achievements, this study did not address a gap in knowledge but also sought to influence how academic institutions shape their policies. It underscored the impact of leadership in enhancing student achievement for students from minority backgrounds by providing them with relatable role models. This research's findings also contributed to psychology and leadership, offering insights into overcoming obstacles to leadership roles. This study advocated for a fair academic leadership environment, paving the way for future generations.

The Delphi approach was used to explore the research questions. From the literature, 53 critical items were extracted and included in a survey. Experts were asked to rate the significance of each item in supporting the growth and success of Black women using a Likert scale ranging from *not critically important at all* (1) to *critically important* (7). After two rounds of surveys, all 53 items reached a 100% agreement among the panel.

Upon reviewing the median, IQR, and mode values, it was determined that the items successfully met the necessary index scores, signaling that the survey had achieved a point of stability. Once consensus levels were established for each item, the researcher applied intercoder reliability to delve into the second research question. This process led to the identification of seven significant themes:

- Theme 1: Boldness: Items associated with risk-taking, personal branding, and visibility.
- Theme 2: Opportunity: Items highlighting the significance of access to leadership development, mentorship, and networking.

- Theme 3: Optimizing: Items concentrating on developing essential skills and strategies.
- Theme 4: Excellence: Items categorized under “Excellence” focus on diversity in leadership, inclusion, and professional achievements.
- Theme 5: Guiding: Items associated with mentorship and sponsorship.
- Theme 6: Liberating: Items associated with overcoming barriers and empowering women.
- Theme 7: Wisdom: Items recognizing the importance of work-life balance, professional identity, and career satisfaction.

Two peer reviewers were engaged to validate the coding, and they both agreed on how the themes for each accepted item were coded. This chapter examines the findings revealed by reviewing the data related to each research question. After presenting these findings, the chapter will then proceed to discuss the study's implications, elucidate on how the research informs the GLOW BOX model a theoretical framework, and propose avenues for future research.

Findings

Research Question One

Research question one asked, what are the critical factors in a successful leadership design for Black women’s professional advancement and success in higher education institutions? To explore this, 53 critical items were surveyed to develop to reach an agreement. Thus, 52 items reached consensus.

Critically Important Items. In the journey toward understanding the elements critical for the professional advancement and success of Black women in higher education leadership, the study identified 37 items (1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 36, 38, 43,

44, 45, 49, 4, 12, 17, 20, 23, 27, 32, 34, 49, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, and 53) that unanimously reached a consensus among experts on their critical importance. These items underscore the critical components of designing successful leadership for Black women's professional advancement while highlighting the consensus among experts. The data indicates either a median score of 7.0 or an interquartile range (IQR) of 0.0, indicating no variability in their responses, a median score of 7.0 with an IQR of 1.00, demonstrating a strong consensus despite a slight variation in reactions. Lastly, a median score of 5.00 and an IQR of 0.00 were used to emphasize items of agreement without any variation.

In the journey toward understanding the elements crucial for the professional progression and success of Black women in higher education leadership, the panel identified 22 items (1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 36, 38, 43, 44, 45, and 49) that unanimously reached a consensus on critical importance. Each of these items not only emphasized the essence of what it takes to design successful leadership but also highlighted the consistency in the responses among the experts, as illustrated by a median score of 7.0 and an IQR of 0.0, demonstrating consistency in their responses.

At the heart of these findings was Item 1 the pivotal role of mentorship, recognized by the panel as a fundamental influence on career advancement for Black women. It emerged not just as a tool for fostering Item 5 professional resilience but also as a key factor shaping Item 8 the trajectories of female leaders. Mentorship is important, according to Burke and Carter (2015), it helps with navigating transition challenges, provides career related advice, and helps promoting the progression of Black women into leadership positions. The limited presence of leaders restricts the opportunities for women to find role models and mentors in their educational

settings (Kelch-Oliver et al., 2013). The panel extended the consensus to recognizing Item 9 essential leadership with attributes such as confidence, motivation, and effective communication.

Moreover, Item 10, networking, was identified as critically important for job advancement, with Item 11, understanding gatekeeping practices and the employment of networking in recruiting processes, being highlighted. L. N. Johnson and Thomas (2012) posited that networking is a bridge that links connections within and beyond organizations to drive achievement. The panel underscored the critical importance of Item 13 organizational leadership development initiatives, emphasizing the need for embedding opportunities for networking and mentorship. Schipani et al. (2009) highlight the importance of networking in fostering leadership development, underscoring its role in facilitating career advancement.

The panel also added Item 14, creating inclusive environments for faculty members, ensuring Item 15 transparent recruitment and hiring processes, and embedding Item 16, a strong commitment to diversity in all aspects of university life, are identified as critically important. Scholars emphasize the significance of embracing an encompassing approach to feminism to drive societal shifts (Lawrence, 2017). Lindsay (2010) added that White men remain the preferred demographic regardless of the recruitment strategy. The key objective is not to favor one story over another but to acknowledge the existing range of viewpoints. These efforts are also complemented by providing Item 18, early career leadership and networking opportunities, alongside Item 19, developing skills in management and team building, and Item 38 negotiation skills, as revealed by the panel of experts. Gamble and Turner (2015) recognized that companies stand to benefit from supporting the career growth of Black women and women from non-white backgrounds.

Furthermore, Item 21, understanding organizational politics, Item 25, achieving cultural competence, and Item 26, ensuring diverse representation in leadership, underscore the holistic approach needed. Research highlights the significance of organizations in establishing environments that foster the success and integration of educators from cultural backgrounds into university communities (Gardner et al., 2014; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017; A. E. Smith, 2015). Balancing professional demands with Item 29's personal life, Item 36's advancement professionally, and fostering Item 45's professional identity is also critical. O'Bryant (2015) stated that Black women must be resilient in their pursuit of leadership. Likewise, the panel of experts also highlights the crucial importance of Item 43, diversity and inclusion initiatives; Item 44, retention strategies for Black women; and Item 49, the role of advocacy and allyship in supporting the ascent of Black women to leadership positions within the academic sphere. Gamble and Turner (2015) suggest that companies offer support and opportunities for career growth to their employees from diverse backgrounds.

The experts agreed that 15 additional items (4, 12, 17, 20, 23, 27, 32, 34, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, and 53) are critically important to illuminate the path to leadership for Black women in post-secondary establishments. This agreement was statistically affirmed by a median score of 7.0 and an IQR of 1.0, signaling a strong consensus despite slight response variability. Among these items was Item 4, influential mentors who stood out by the expert panel for their active advocacy and support for their mentees, playing a transformative role in their professional journeys. Mentors do not just offer guidance; they actively support and advocate for the progress and success of their mentees. Mentorship has proven to be a winning strategy for empowering women leaders (Morley, 2013).

The expert panel recognized Item 12 affinity groups as a proactive solution to networking challenges, offering a space for connection and support among peers facing similar barriers. Affinity groups are created in response to networking challenges and in a deliberate effort to promote leadership (L. N. Johnson & Thomas, 2012). The panel underscored the critical importance of Item 17 orientation programs, highlighting their role in acclimating staff to the campus and community, thus fostering a sense of belonging and engagement from the outset (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2017).

Item 20, Personal skills, including recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses and pursuing mentorship, were identified as foundational for personal and professional growth. Literature indicates that women mentoring other women is crucial (Brown, 2005). Similarly to Item 23, peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing were emphasized as preferred strategies for nurturing leadership skills, providing practical insights and experiences that textbooks alone cannot offer. When women mentor women, it can lead to boosted self-assurance of honed abilities, problem-solving guidance, and improved access to resources (Searby et al., 2015).

Additionally, the expert panel highlighted Item 27, professional training programs, and Item 34, skill-building workshops, for equipping Black women with the necessary skills for career advancement. These programs offer targeted development opportunities in areas critical to leadership success. Women are more likely to rise to leadership roles when they have the opportunity for professional growth early in their careers (Hannum et al., 2015).

The expert panel also celebrated Item 32, the impact of role models and representation, acknowledging how inspirational figures with diverse backgrounds can motivate and guide aspiring leaders. Literature mentions that a lack of role models poses a challenge as it hinders women from envisioning themselves in leadership positions, leading to potential discouragement

in pursuing such roles (Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The panel of experts shined a light on Item 46, highlighting the sense of fulfillment and satisfaction derived from one's career, alongside Item 48, the empowerment to make informed career decisions, were recognized by the panel as critically important for sustained engagement and success. The research mentions fulfillment and satisfaction are essential in any organization and help forecast staff happiness (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Grijalva, 2018).

Furthermore, the panel identified Item 47, professional networking specifically tailored for Black women, access to Item 50 career resources, and participation in Item 51 professional development conferences as critically important for building connections, learning, and growth. These platforms provide invaluable opportunities for sharing experiences. A. E. Smith (2015) stated that offering women substantial leadership and networking initiatives is crucial from the onset of their careers. This is because a deficiency in exposure to growth can potentially hinder their chances for future career progression. The expert panel noted the last two critically important items, Item 53, strategies for overcoming biases, and Item 52, tales of career success that inspire and guide others toward their goals. Strategies and methods designed to overcome barriers in hiring, career progression, and workplace hurdles empower women in leadership roles. It serves as a source of motivation for female leaders (Beckwith et al., 2016).

In summary, these 37 items collectively sketch a comprehensive framework for critically important items in supporting Black women's journey to leadership in higher education. They underscore the critical importance of community, skill development, representation, and empowerment, which are pivotal in navigating the complexities of professional advancement in a landscape that often presents unique challenges for Black women.

Critical. On a quest to identify critical components of what it takes to design successful leadership for Black women's professional advancement, 15 of the items (3, 24, 31, 33, 35, 39, 40, 42, 2, 6, 22, 28, 30, 37, and 41) reached an agreement level of “critical” with a median score of 6.0 and IQR 0.0 and a median score of 6.00 and an IQR 1.00. Eight of the items had an IQR of 0.0, and the other seven items had an IQR of 1.00.

Among these, 8 items (3, 24, 31, 33, 35, 39, 40, and 42) were unanimously considered “critical” by experts with a score of 6.0 and an IQR of 0.0. Mentoring relationships (Item 3) emerged as vital for advancing and retaining women in leadership positions. Mentoring offers a sense of community, career prospects, and resources within work circles that help guide individuals and introduce them to growth opportunities (List & Sorcinelli, 2018). Additionally, Item 24 on sponsorship was underscored as critical by the panelists for its role in advocating for career progression. Item 31, career coaching, emerged as another critical item and aspect, with experts providing insights on career development and effective strategies to navigate the realm. List and Sorcinelli (2018) mentioned that it is significant to cultivate connections via allies, mentorship, networking, and sponsorship. The significance of organizational inclusivity, item 33 was deemed critical by the experts, pointing to the value of embracing diverse backgrounds within the workplace to foster a more inclusive atmosphere (Barnes, 2017).

The panelist further identified the significance of understanding Item 35 career pathways, shedding light on career avenues. They also noted Item 39 the importance of personal branding in establishing and marketing one's unique professional identity. Equally, the panelist added Item 40, leadership styles, in relation to Black women being provided valuable perspectives on effective leadership approaches. Researchers mention that when barriers are removed, and attention is given to leadership traits and abilities, Black women can attain leadership positions

in post-secondary establishments (Beckwith et al., 2016; Wallace et al., 2014). Item 42 cultural awareness training was recognized for being critical in fostering an understanding of different cultures within professional settings.

All these items together paint a comprehensive picture of the critical elements supporting Black women's professional growth in post-secondary leadership. They highlight the critical need for mentorship, advocacy, personalized career guidance, inclusivity, and cultural competence. The final seven items (2, 6, 22, 28, 30, 37, and 41) reached a consensus from experts, all marked by a median score of 6.0 and an IQR of 1.0. These items were deemed critical. They encompass factors that contribute to professional growth and leadership development.

Central to these factors revolves around Item 2, the development of emerging leaders, where mentors play a role. Their guidance is essential in shaping the next generation of leaders, equipping them with the wisdom and understanding required to navigate the challenges of leadership roles (Amah, 2017). The expert panel also emphasized the critical importance of Item 6, enhancing self-confidence through women mentoring women. This peer support plays a role in bolstering confidence and empowering women to pursue leadership positions with conviction. Black women must have opportunities for development programs and connections within their circles and supportive mentoring communities to support their career progress effectively (List & Sorcinelli, 2018).

The panel also pointed out the significance of operational skills such as management and strategic planning (Item 22) for leadership. Leaders use these abilities to make informed decisions, effectively distribute resources, and steer their organizations toward success (Hackett & Byars, 1996). Moreover, according to the panel, Item 28, resilience and perseverance were

critical factors for overcoming challenges and enduring times. Leaders who can stay strong in times are often seen as resilient. According to D. Reed and Blaine (2015), resilient leaders can heal, learn, and grow despite facing challenges. Additionally, Item 30 career advancement opportunities, referred to as career mobility were underscored by the panel as critical. This highlights the significance of pathways for growth. This item also emphasizes institutions' importance in supporting Black women's upward career progression.

The panel also noted the critical importance of Item 37, which focuses on stereotypes that may impede women's career progress. Addressing and dispelling these negative stereotypes is essential to fostering an environment that empowers women as leaders. Researchers mention that Black women should employ coping mechanisms to combat stereotypes in the work environment (Mohr & Purdie-Vaughns, 2015).

Furthermore, the panel deemed Item 41 critical, emphasizing the significance of career development plans that offer strategies for advancing in one's profession. These plans serve as a guide for achieving goals. Schipani et al. (2009) emphasized the role of networking in fostering leadership development and career advancement, showcasing how it paves the way for progress in one's career. This notion was further supported by Van den Brink and Benschop (2014), stating that having career development plans in conjunction with networking and building relationships can create opportunities for career growth. In conclusion, these seven items emphasize the approach to support professional growth and leadership achievements of Black women in higher education. They underscore the role of mentorship, skill enhancement, perseverance, and strategic career planning.

Somewhat Critical. The experts agreed that one specific item is important when determining women's career progression and advancement in leadership roles within education.

The data reflects a consensus with a score of 5.0 and an IQR of 0.0, indicating consistent alignment on its relative significance, showing a shared understanding. This aspect stood out to the experts as they reached an understanding and acknowledged its importance with consent for promoting Black women into leadership positions in higher education. Item 7, which pertains to the types of mentors, received a score of 5.0 and an IQR of 0.0, signifying agreement on its importance. However, there was some slight variation in the perceived degree of significance attributed to it.

Item 7 experts recognized the importance of mentor roles in developing up-and-coming leaders' personal growth within leadership training. Ballenger (2010) explained that mentors are classified into three types: psychosocial mentors, who provide emotional support; job-focused mentors, who offer career counseling and help with career paths; and peer mentors, who provide collegiality. These mentors collectively offer a comprehensive support system, each playing a unique role in aiding the ascent of Black women to leadership roles in higher education. Their collective contribution underscores the multifaceted nature of mentorship, highlighting its importance in fostering the next generation of leaders.

Research Question Two

RQ2 asked if these critical factors can be used to develop a theoretical framework for understanding Black women's professional advancement and success in leadership positions within higher education institutions. Delving deeper, the intercoder reliability process was applied to the 53 items that reached an agreement through the Delphi analysis. This process revealed seven distinct themes, each underpinned by factors listed below. These themes and related critical items contribute to crafting a model illustrating the key critical factors, can be found in Figure 4 later in this section.

Boldness. The theme “boldness” advocates for risk-taking. Promoting individuals to push past their boundaries by embracing challenges, cultivating their identity, and proactively creating visibility and career presence. The following items are included in the theme:

- Gatekeeping: Networking methods in recruitment (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014)
- Personal branding: Marketing one's unique professional identity (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Career success stories: Sharing inspirational achievements (A. E. Smith, 2015; LeanIn, 2022)
- Career resources: For Black women's growth (LeanIn, 2022; A. E. Smith, 2015)

These critical items recommend taking risks to develop a brand and enhance visibility. Additionally, individuals must take strategic risks because they might lead to advantages. Therefore, brand creation is essential for distinguishing oneself in a competitive environment. These factors emphasize the need to enhance visibility to take advantage of chances and advance in one's profession.

Excellence. This theme champions excellence, prioritizing leadership diversity, and organizational commitment to inclusion in the work environment where everyone can meet their full potential. The following factors were included in that category:

- Career pathways: Progression routes and ladders (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Career advancement strategies: Professional moving up plans (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Female leaders' trajectories: Influenced by mentorship (Kern, 2015)
- Leadership representation: Diversity in roles (LeanIn, 2022)
- Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Promoting organizational diversity (Cox & Blake, 1991)
- Recruiting and hiring process: Known for diversity (Gardner et al., 2014)

- Diversity dedication: In all communications (Gardner et al., 2014)
- Orientation program: Familiarizing with the community (Gardner et al., 2014)

Many of these factors have played a role in supporting Black women's leadership advancement, offering an example to higher education institutions that encourage diversity in leadership roles and demonstrate a strong dedication to fostering inclusivity within an organization.

Guiding. The third theme, "guiding," mentions the critical position of mentorship and sponsorship in career advancement. The following items were included:

- Mentoring relationships: Essential for success and retention (Gardner et al., 2014)
- Mentorship: Influences career advancement significantly for Black women (Ballenger, 2010; Catalyst, 2012; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hackett & Byars, 1996)
- Types of mentors: The importance of diverse mentorship includes psychosocial, job-focused, and peer mentors (Ballenger, 2010)
- Development of emerging leaders: Mentors' critical role (Amah, 2017)
- Powerful mentors: Their active advocacy for mentees (Ballenger, 2010)
- Sponsorship: Senior leaders' advocacy for others (Ibarra et al., 2013; A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Career coaching: For career growth and strategies (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Overcoming stereotypes and bias: Through targeted strategies (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Widatalla, 2019)

These items aim to succeed by encouraging diversity in leadership roles and emphasizing inclusion across post-secondary institutions. Focusing on the variety of perspectives in leadership

positions can enhance decision-making processes. This approach underscores the dedication to fostering an atmosphere where all individuals are valued and supported.

Liberating. Factors focusing on breaking down barriers and dismantling preconceived stereotypes and biases to empower Black women to attain gratifying, self-determined career paths. This theme includes the following items:

- Career empowerment: Enabling control over career decisions (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Professional resilience: Using mentoring as a tool (Grant, 2012)
- Self-confidence enhancement: Through women mentoring women (Brown, 2005)
- Negotiation skills: Critical for agreements and advancements (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming professional challenges (Grant, 2012)
- Retention strategies: For maintaining Black women in roles (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Professional identity: Developing one's professional self (A. E. Smith, 2015)

Many Black women have encountered barriers such as stereotypes and prejudices that have prevented them from advancing in their careers (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015). The goal is to tackle and eradicate the issues that impede their development. Thus, eliminating these issues through help, encouragement, and representation to empower Black women is necessary so that they can navigate and conquer such challenges. In addition, it guarantees that these women possess the independence and backing required to make informed career choices and establish environments where their skills and efforts are acknowledged and appreciated (A. E. Smith, 2015).

Opportunity. This theme supports the significance of mentorship, networking, and access to leadership development programs. Included are the following key components:

- Career mobility: Moving up in careers (A. E. Smith, 2015)

- Professional networking for Black women: Building connections (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Peer networking, mentorship, shadowing: Leadership development strategies (Tessens et al., 2011)
- Affinity groups: Proactive networking reactions (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014)
- Leadership development initiatives: Networking and mentorship opportunities (Gardner et al., 2014)

These items illustrate the value of networking, mentorship, and participation in leadership development programs. Spaces must be created so Black women can create connections that lead to new prospects and perspectives. Mentorship is key in steering and molding career trajectories (A. E. Smith, 2015; Tessens et al., 2011). Providing access to leadership training initiatives can equip these women with the abilities and self-assurance to progress into leadership roles. Together, these components are necessary for cultivating professional advancements and setting the stage for leaders and future leaders.

Optimizing. This theme focused on cultivating skills and strategies to boost leadership and professional growth. The items below are included in this theme:

- Operational skills: For strategic planning and financial control (Tessens et al., 2011)
- Professional training programs: Skill development courses (Eagan & Garvey, 2015)
- Career development plans: Structured for growth (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Political skills: Navigating organizational dynamics (Tessens et al., 2011)
- Management and personal skills: This includes conflict resolution and team building (Tessens et al., 2011)
- Skill-building workshops enhance skills (Eagan & Garvey, 2015)

- Professional development conferences: For learning and networking (Eagan & Garvey, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014)

Black women must focus on mastering how to guide with impact and honesty while also handling the intricacies of today's work environment (D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Eagan & Garvey, 2015; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). By engaging in training and growth initiatives, people are provided with the resources for making decisions, managing teams, and planning strategically. The overall goal is to improve leadership skills and nurture an environment of ongoing learning and development that brings advantages to both the individual and the organization.

Wisdom. The final theme emphasizes diverse leadership styles and cultural competencies. The following items are included in the theme:

- Leadership styles understanding: Tailored insights for Black women (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Cultural training: Awareness and competence development (Grant, 2012)
- Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication (Morley, 2013)
- Work-life balance: Managing career and personal life (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Achieving contentment (A. E. Smith, 2015)
- Networking: For job advancement (Schipani et al., 2009; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014)

It is necessary to understand the subtleties of dynamics individuals can use to improve their capacity to lead inclusively and empathetically. These items encourage a cohesive and efficient work environment but also prepare leaders to navigate the challenges of a global

workforce. Therefore, by highlighting the importance of diversity and cultural sensitivity, leaders can be provided with the skills to adjust and succeed in a culturally diverse world.

Implication of the Study

This research sought to support Black women's growth and leadership development, which could significantly impact post-secondary institutions and societal realms. These implications offered insights into academia, organizational influence, and society while promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Academic Impact

This study could expand knowledge of leadership development, diversity, and inclusion. It may also present a framework for investigating intersectionality in leadership roles. In educational development, these findings could shape the creation of programs and leadership curricula that better represent the experiences of Black women and women of color, thereby nurturing a more varied pipeline for future leaders.

Organizational Influence

Organizations could use this study to review and reassess their policies, procedures, and programs to offer support to women in leadership positions. This might include creating customized mentorship initiatives, enhancing diversity training, and re-examining recruitment and promotion standards. The study also highlighted the significance of cultural shifts within organizations to cultivate an environment where diversity is genuinely appreciated and inclusive strategies are effectively implemented. This research emphasized moving beyond superficial diversity campaigns toward making organizational changes. Lastly, the study employed strategy for retention. By identifying key factors influencing the success and obstacles experienced by Black women in leadership roles, organizations could create practical approaches to retain and

support these individuals. This may include addressing issues like career progression and achieving a work-life balance.

Social Impact

This study can raise awareness and advocacy. This study can also highlight Black women's challenges when striving for leadership positions and the structural reforms necessary to break down these barriers. This can also heighten awareness and drive advocacy efforts to promote opportunities for Black women and women of color in industry leadership roles. Additionally, empowering these women by offering a blueprint for leadership roles. In doing so, other under-represented groups could be inspired to establish frameworks tailored to their specific circumstances and obstacles.

Experts in the field of education agree that the critical items identified are crucial for the career advancement of Black women. This insight provides a blueprint for educational institutions to foster change through leadership development and personal empowerment. The goal is to create environments where Black women leaders can thrive without being discouraged by perceived obstacles. Post-secondary institutions should actively contribute to creating an environment that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds, including those with limited representation. Despite striving to attain positions of power, women's journey has often been filled with challenges. This study highlights critical competencies that post-secondary institutions can use to help create conditions for the success and advancement of women, particularly Black women, in leadership roles.

Recommendation-GLOW Box Model-Delphi

The researcher's previous GLOW BOX model presented a specialized toolkit to empower Black women leaders in higher education (See Figure 3). The toolkit focused on personal and

professional growth elements. The included items were:

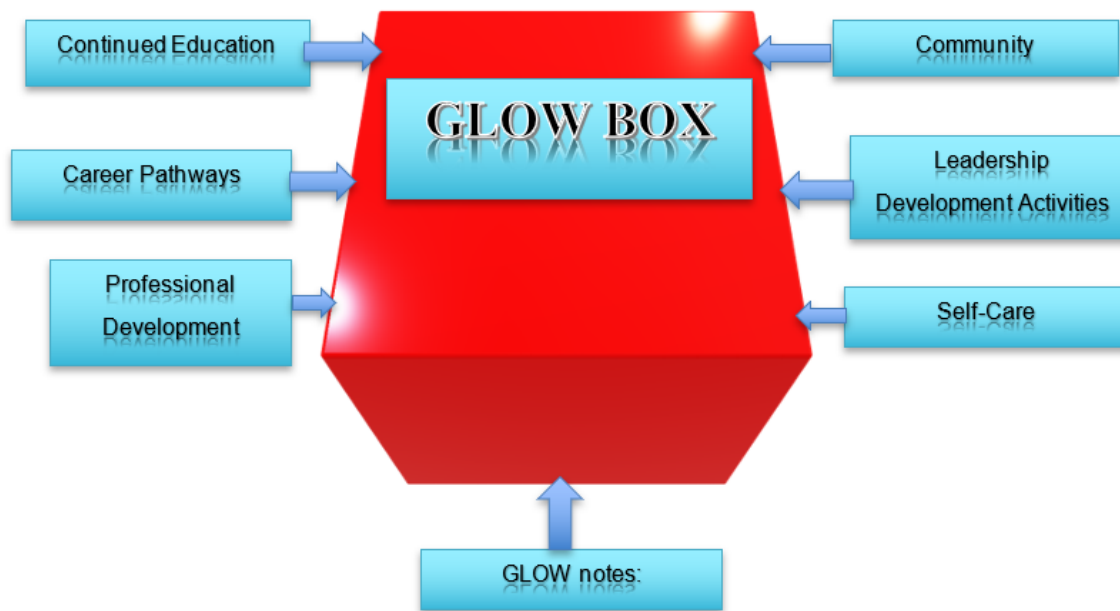
- Continued education
- Career pathways
- Professional development
- Community
- Leadership development activities
- Self-care
- Glow-notes

Every single item in the researcher's previous work was validated. In addition, these other items were also validated in this study:

- Boldness
- Excellence
- Guiding
- Liberating
- Opportunity
- Optimizing
- Wisdom

A new model was developed based on the latest list of items and the researcher's previous work.

The model incorporates previous research and the results of this study.

Figure 3*Previous GLOW Box – Version 1****GLOW Box Model***

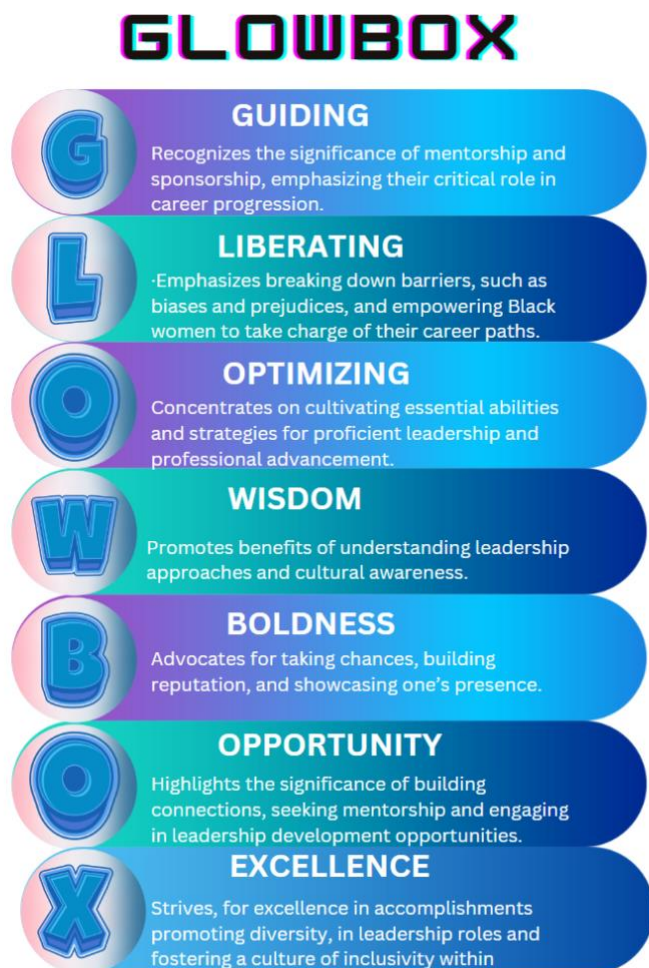
Combining all the items given to form a GLOW Box Model establishes a foundation for empowering and promoting Black women in leadership positions. The model includes guidance (G), liberation (L), optimization (O), wisdom (W), boldness (B), opportunity (O), and excellence (X). This framework incorporates strategies for growth mentoring roles, personal development, and organizational approaches to assist women on their leadership paths. The comprehensive model integrates insights from a range of research, theoretical viewpoints, and panel experts to ensure it is supported by facts and rooted in the experiences of Black women in leadership. Citing works by experts and professionals from many disciplines establishes a basis for the elements of the model.

The model is structured around the acronyms GLOW (Guiding, Liberating, Optimizing, Wisdom) and BOX (Boldness, Opportunity, and eXcellence – emphasizing the letter X). Each

area chosen addresses the essential factors (See Figure 4).

Figure 4

GLOW Box Model – Version 2



The following explains each part of the Version 2 GLOW Box model.

- **Guiding:** Recognizes the significance of mentorship and sponsorship, emphasizing their critical role in career progression.
- **Liberating:** Emphasizes breaking down barriers, such as biases and prejudices, and empowering Black women to take charge of their career paths.

- **Optimizing:** Concentrates on cultivating essential abilities and strategies for proficient leadership and professional advancement.
- **Wisdom:** Promotes benefits of understanding leadership approaches and cultural awareness.
- **Boldness:** Advocates for taking chances, building a reputation, and showcasing one's presence.
- **Opportunity:** Highlights the significance of building connections, seeking mentorship, and engaging in leadership development opportunities.
- **eXcellence:** Strives for excellence in accomplishments, promoting diversity in leadership roles and fostering a culture of inclusivity within organizations.

The GLOW Box model was developed collaboratively and iteratively, considering input from Black women leaders, allies, and diversity experts. It is crafted to be flexible, allowing for adjustments and enhancements as insights and data emerge. This comprehensive framework acts as a roadmap for Black women aiming for leadership positions and serves as a blueprint for institutions that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. It embodies an approach to leadership growth, merging empowerment with systemic transformations to cultivate environments where Black women leaders can thrive.

Changes and Additions in the Comprehensive Framework

The comprehensive framework significantly extends the initial GLOW Box model by including more critical items for leadership advancement and development. An explanation of the changes is listed:

- **Broader Focus:** The original GLOW Box model was tailored specifically for Black women in post-secondary leadership; the expanded framework offers a wider

application across various industries. It integrates additional factors that address systemic barriers, workplace culture, and societal expectations, making it relevant for Black women aspiring to leadership positions in many environments.

- **In-depth Components:** The framework explains each component of the GLOW acronym (Guiding, Liberating, Optimizing, Wisdom) and includes Boldness, Opportunity, and Excellence as components. This offers a guide for development, encompassing mentorship, resilience, skills development, cultural competence, networking, and achieving excellence.
- **Incorporation of Research and Theories:** The updated model combines insights from research studies and theoretical viewpoints, anchoring the elements in evidence-based approaches and acknowledging the nature of intersectionality within leadership.
- **Addressing Structural and Organizational Transformation:** Unlike the model's focus on development and conquering personal and career hurdles, the holistic framework underscores the importance of instigating systemic and organizational changes. It calls for implementing policies, practices, and cultural transformations within institutions to foster the progression of Black women leaders.
- **Strategies to Combat Stereotypes and Prejudice:** The expanded framework outlines Strategies to challenge stereotypes and prejudice, recognizing them as obstacles to advancing Black women in leadership roles. It proposes steps like diversity programs, mentorship for enhancing fortitude, and strategies for cultivating personal brand presence and negotiation skills.

- The updated model emphasizes networking and mentorship, cultivating connections through peer networking, and utilizing mentorship and sponsorship as crucial strategies for advancing one's career.
- The revised framework now highlights development opportunities explicitly, including training programs, workshops, and conferences. It emphasizes the importance of honing political and personal skills crucial for leadership.
- The comprehensive framework underscores the significance of understanding leadership styles and cultural competencies for effectively leading in diverse settings.
- Lastly, the expanded model emphasizes fostering diversity and inclusion within organizations. This includes advocating for recruitment processes that promote diversity in leadership roles and implementing orientation programs to nurture a work culture.

Recommendation for Future Research

In the future, this study can present the ideal of exploring intersectionality. It could lay the groundwork for investigations into how intersectionality shapes leadership development and career progression, encouraging nuanced research on how race, gender, and other identity factors intersect. In the realm of Longitudinal Research, conducting studies over a period could shed light on the lasting impact of the GLOW Box Model and similar interventions on career progression and leadership growth. Comparative studies on future research may be worth examining how effective the GLOW Box Model is in sectors (such as academia, corporate, and nonprofit) to uncover key competencies for women leader success).

Regarding policy development, this study can aid in establishing guidelines for best practices. The study has the potential to shape industry standards for supporting the progress of

Black women leaders through recommendations on mentorship, sponsorship, and professional development initiatives, in addition to advocating for legislative changes. The findings from the study could serve as a basis for advocating cultural shifts that foster diversity and inclusivity in leadership across societal levels by promoting fair hiring practices and endorsing work-life balance.

The GLOW Box model can offer expansion and inclusion. Though the model initially focuses on Black women, its concepts could benefit many individuals. Examining how it can be applied to underrepresented groups, leadership roles might expand their influence, fostering diversity and inclusivity in different fields.

In summary, the implications of studying can influence academic discourse, organizational practices, societal attitudes, and policy development. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding leadership development for Black women and offers practical solutions for creating more inclusive and supportive environments.

Final Thoughts

However, there is a lack of research outlining the competencies and strategies that lead to the success of Black women in leadership roles within post-secondary institutions, as discussed by Griffin et al. (2016) and A. West (2011), the paths to their progress remain primarily uncharted and enigmatic. This study has identified factors that empower women to navigate and conquer obstacles. Although these factors do not eliminate the challenges encountered, they offer perspectives and strategies for dealing with and conquering these barriers. It is evident that more than simply recognizing these hurdles is required; there must be an effort to maneuver through them using proven methods and effective strategies.

Empowering women in colleges and universities requires an approach that focuses on making systemic changes, offering tailored support, and fostering an inclusive atmosphere. Setting up mentorship and sponsorship programs to address Black women's obstacles is vital. More importantly, providing opportunities for leadership development can help enhance their skills, negotiation abilities, and self-assurance. Institutions must break down barriers by updating policies and practices to create an environment that values and celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes recognizing the accomplishments of women in academia and ensuring their input is acknowledged in decision-making processes. Investing in research to better understand the needs and achievements of women in education will help develop more effective support strategies. Establishing connections and promoting networking opportunities are essential for building community and advancing career prospects. Embracing technology can offer innovative support while advocating for policies at all levels, demonstrating a commitment to fostering fair academic environments.

By prioritizing these approaches, women can be empowered to excel in education, enriching the academic community with their varied perspectives, resilience, and excellence. To the researcher, this study is significant. Working in education, the researcher has witnessed firsthand the opportunities for advancement available to Black women. Thus, this research reinforces the belief that with support and resources, Black women can thrive as leaders despite challenges. Observing the resilience, determination, and shared understanding among these women regarding elements of leadership has been incredibly inspiring. Based on their survey feedback, these women have listed the factors according to their professional backgrounds in striving for leadership positions, highlighting their dedication, worth, and impactful contributions

to the industry. The initiative of these women to share their expertise and perspectives on attaining success in leadership roles is genuinely admirable and deserves recognition.

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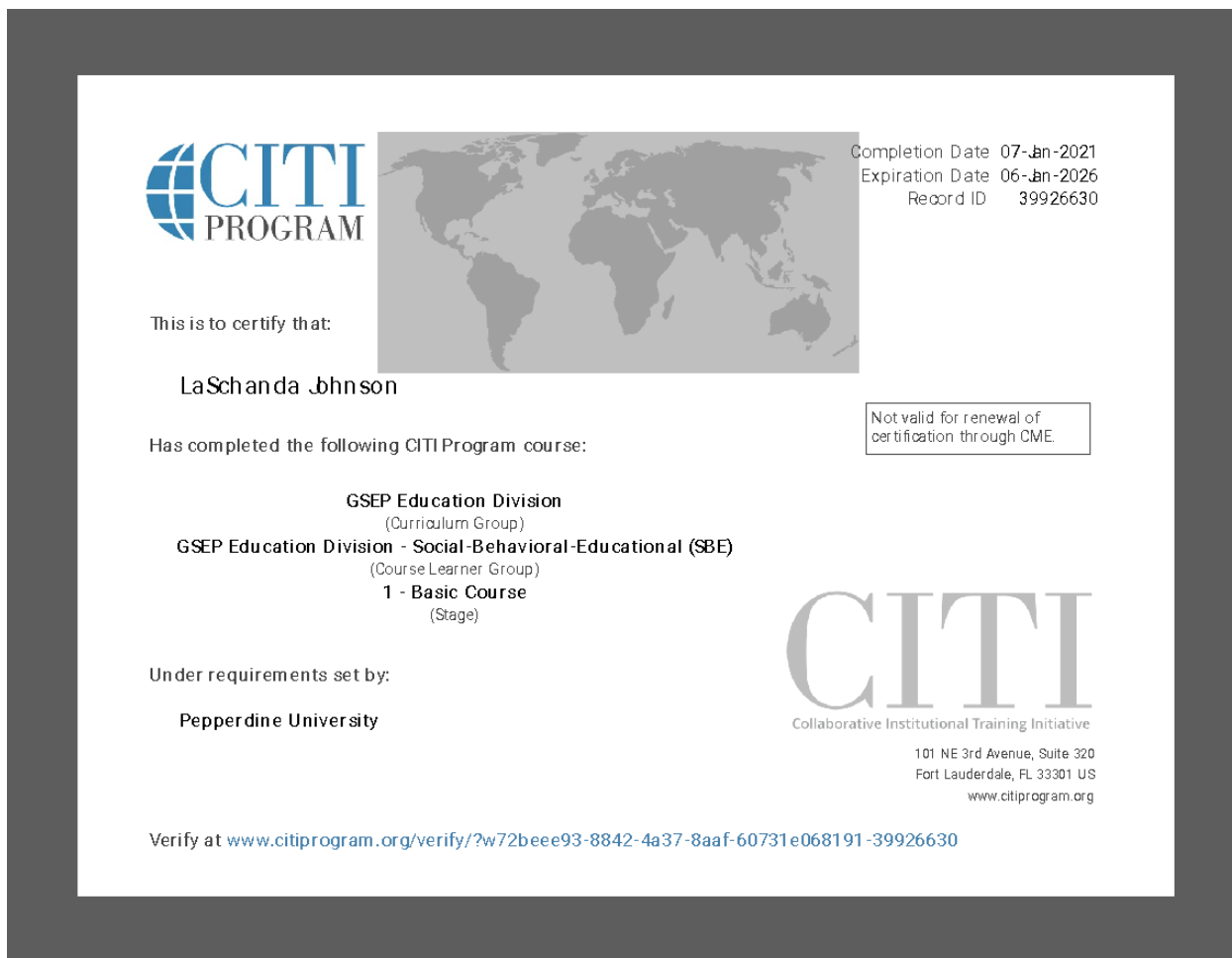
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APPENDIX A

CITI HSR Certificate



APPENDIX B

IRB Approval Form

eProtocol
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 01, 2024

Protocol Investigator Name: Laschanda Johnson

Protocol #: 22-09-1952

Project Title: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROFESSIONAL PROGRESSION OF BLACK FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Laschanda Johnson:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Script



Dear [Name],

My name is LaSchanda Johnson, a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. My research focuses on discovering key practices and competencies that enable Black women to achieve senior leadership positions in academic institutions. I would like to invite you to take part in this study.

Should you choose to participate you'll need to fill out a three-part questionnaire. This survey is designed to gather insights into the attributes and factors that support women in securing leadership roles within colleges and universities. Each section of the survey should take 30 minutes to complete. Will be conducted online.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary Rest assured that your identity will be kept confidential both during and after the study. To safeguard your confidentiality, several measures will be taken, including the use of firewall-protected and password-secured email communications by the university, anonymizing the data with pseudonyms, and separating various data elements strategically.

If you're interested in contributing to this research, kindly complete the survey by Friday, March XX, which can be accessed via this [link].

Should you have any inquiries, you can reach me via email.

Thank you for thinking about this.

Best wishes,

LaSchanda Johnson, Ed.D., MBA
Ph.D. Doctoral Candidate
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

APPENDIX D

First Online Questionnaire



I am grateful for your willingness to contribute to my doctoral research, which explores the vital competencies, tasks, and behaviors critical for Black women leaders in higher education institutions.

In the subsequent sections, based on my literature review, you will find various competencies, tasks, and behaviors identified as key for Black women leaders in these institutions. You are asked to rate the importance of each item from your perspective, using a scale where 1 indicates minimal importance and 7 represents utmost importance.

Please be aware that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the full liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, with the assurance that such a decision will not affect your relationship with Pepperdine University, me, or any other entities involved.

After completing your evaluation, please submit your responses through the Qualtrics survey platform by clicking the SUBMIT button. Once again, thank you for your invaluable contribution to this research.

Sincerely,

LaSchanda Johnson

Doctoral Candidate, Pepperdine University

APPENDIX E

Follow-Up Email



Dear Expert:

I appreciate your willingness to help with my research focusing on key competencies success strategies, that are crucial, for Black women leaders in post-secondary settings.

In the following sections you'll discover a range of skills, tasks and behaviors that are considered important for Black women leaders in these institutions based on my research findings. I kindly request you to rate the significance of each aspect from your perspective on a scale where 1 signifies importance and 7 denotes utmost importance.

Please note that your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the freedom to opt out at any point without any impact on our relationship or connections with Pepperdine University or other relevant parties. Once you've finished evaluating, kindly share your responses via the Qualtrics survey platform by clicking the SUBMIT button. Again thank you for your input, into this research project.

[Link]

Sincerely,

LaSchanda Johnson

Doctoral Candidate, Pepperdine University

APPENDIX F

Critical Items

Critical Items	References
Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.	Ballenger, 2010; Catalyst, 2012; D. R. Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hackett & Byars, 1996
Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.	Amah, 2017
Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.	Gardner et al., 2014
Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.	Ballenger, 2010
Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.	Grant, 2012
Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.	Brown, 2005
Types of mentors:	Ballenger, 2010
- Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support.	Ballenger, 2010
- Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling.	Ballenger, 2010
- Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.	Ballenger, 2010
Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.	Kern, 2015
Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.	Morley, 2013
Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement.	Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014; Schipani et al., 2009
Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.	Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014
Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.	Johnson & Thomas, 2012
Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.	Gardner et al., 2014
Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015
Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	Gardner et al., 2014

Critical Items	References
Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.	Gardner et al., 2014
Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.	Gardner et al., 2014
Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.	Tessens et al., 2011
Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.	Tessens et al., 2011
Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics.	Tessens et al., 2011
Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.	Tessens et al., 2011
Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development.	Tessens et al., 2011
Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.	A. E. Smith, 2015; Ibarra et al., 2013
Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.	Grant, 2012
Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.	LeanIn, 2022
Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015
Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.	Grant, 2012
Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.	LeanIn, 2022
Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.	Cox & Blake, 1991
Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015

Critical Items	References
Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.	Pizarro & Kohli, 2018
Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches of Black women.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures.	Grant, 2012
Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.	Cox & Blake, 1991
Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Professional identity: One's professional self and values.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in a career.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.	A. E. Smith, 2015
Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.	A. E. Smith, 2015; LeanIn, 2022
Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.	Eagan & Garvey, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014
Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.	A. E. Smith, 2015; LeanIn, 2022
Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.	Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Marte, 2019

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

IRB #: 22-09-1952**Formal Study Title:**

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROFESSIONAL PROGRESSION OF BLACK FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Authorized Study Personnel:Principal Investigator
LaSchanda Johnson**Key Information:****If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:**

- Females between the ages of (35-80)
- Procedures will include contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via questionnaire, analysis of data, documentation of findings.
- The completion of the questionnaire 3 times.
- The total time commitment of 90 minutes (30 minutes for each cycle).
- There is minimal risk associated with this study.
- You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation.
- You will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether to participate. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below. I am available to answer any questions you may have prior to your commitment to participation. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a leader in the Higher education industry. You must be 35 years of age or older to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of this study is to determine what pivotal practices and competencies have facilitated the ascent of Black women to senior leadership positions within post-secondary institutions. The goal is to create a model with these qualities to help shape Black women career paths to senior- roles of leadership.

What will be done during this research study?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire for a total of 3 cycles. Each cycle will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You will be asked a series of questions aimed at figuring out how industry experts perceive certain program qualities. While the research will take approximately 26 to 52 weeks, your participation will only take 90 minutes over the course of several weeks.

How will my data be used?

Your questionnaire responses will be analyzed and aggregated in order to determine the findings to the established research questions.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality. You may also experience fatigue, boredom, or anxiety as a result.

What are the possible benefits to you?

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The benefits to society may include a better understanding of success strategies and factors used to propel Black Women into leadership roles in academia. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from any additional recommendations that are shared through this process.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. There are no alternatives to participating, other than deciding to not participate.

What will participating in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be de-identified and stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and until the study is complete.

The only people who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific

meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant

Name:

(First, Last: Please Print)

Participant

Signature:

Signature

Date

APPENDIX H

Round One Survey

Critical Items

Instructions: Below is a list of components relevant to the professional advancement of Black Women in higher education institutions. You are requested to rate the importance of each item based on your perception. The rating scale ranges from 1 to 7, where 1 signifies 'not critical at all' and 7 denotes 'critically important'. Detailed definitions for each level of the scale are provided below for your reference.

For this study, the term 'key factors for the advancement of Black women in higher education institutions' refers to those elements that assist Black women in securing and maintaining top-level executive positions in these institutions. Additionally, these factors are considered crucial in fostering the professional growth of Black Women in higher education environments.

Likert-Scale Value	Definition
Not Critical at All	This component significantly hinders the professional advancement of Black women in higher education institutions.
Not Critical	This component is not advantageous, and there is a low likelihood that it will negatively impact the effectiveness of professional advancement for Black women in higher education institutions.
Somewhat Not Critical	This component is not beneficial, but it also would not be harmful to the professional advancement of Black women in higher education institutions.

Likert-Scale Value	Definition
No Basis	Neutral: No strong opinions regarding this component, or lack of experience to make an informed comment.
Somewhat Critical	This component is advantageous, but its absence would not jeopardize the professional advancement of Black women in higher education institutions.
Critical	This component is beneficial, and there is a slight chance that its absence could risk the professional advancement of Black women in higher education institutions.
Critically Important	This component is essential, and its absence would jeopardize the professional advancement of Black women in higher education institutions.

Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Types of mentors:

- Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support.
- Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling.
- Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

X→

Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

X→

Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

X→

Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

X+

Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

X+

Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

X→

Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Professional identity: One's professional self and values.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-



Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

APPENDIX I

Round 2 Survey Questions



Dear Expert:

Thank you once more for taking part in my Ph.D. study, which is focused on identifying key competencies and success strategies for Black female leaders in post-secondary institutions. I have processed the data by computing the median response for each question in the survey. This median value reflects the evaluation of each question's significance. The median scores are now indicated next to each item, providing a ranking from critically important (a median score of 7) to not critical at all (a median score of 1).

I invite you to review these median scores and reconsider your assessment of the importance of each question. Using the 7-point scale provided, where 1 signifies least importance and 7 indicates most importance, please re-evaluate, and rate each item's importance.

Your continued involvement and willingness to contribute to this research are deeply valued. Thank you for your commitment.

Sincerely,

LaSchanda Johnson
Doctoral Candidate, Pepperdine University

APPENDIX J

Round Two Survey

Critical Items

Instructions: Below is a list of components relevant to the professional advancement of Black Women in higher education institutions. You are requested to rate the importance of each item based on your perception. The rating scale ranges from 1 to 7, where 1 signifies 'not critical at all' and 7 denotes 'critically important'. The Median score has been placed next to each, question for your review. Detailed definitions for each level of the scale are provided below for your reference.

For this study, the term 'key factors for the advancement of Black women in higher education institutions' refers to those elements that assist Black women in securing and maintaining top-level executive positions in these institutions. Additionally, these factors are considered crucial in fostering the professional growth of Black Women in higher education environments.

Q1 Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q2 Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q3 Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q4 Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q5 Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q6 Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q7 Types of mentors: (5)

- Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support.
- Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling.
- Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q8 Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q9 Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q10 Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q11 Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q12 Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q13 Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q14 Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q15 Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q16 Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q17 Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q18 Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q19 Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q20 Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q21 Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q22 Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning. (5)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q23 Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership development. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q24 Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q25 Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q26 Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q27 Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q28 Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q29 Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q30 Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q31 Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q32 Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence. (6.5)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q33 Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q34 Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q35 Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q36 Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q37 Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q38 Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q39 Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q40 Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q41 Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q42 Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q43 Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q44 Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q45 Professional identity: One's professional self and values. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q46 Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q47 Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q48 Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q49 Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q50 Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q51 Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q52 Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q53 Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
 - Critically Important (7)
-

APPENDIX K

Peer Review

Dear Peer Reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to help with my research project. Below you'll see a table that's set up to match the survey questions, with the study's research questions effectively.

Please take a moment to look at each research question to its survey questions in the table. Assess if each survey question is relevant to the paired research question. If a survey question directly relates to the research question mark it as "Keep." If a survey question doesn't seem related mark, it as "Delete." If you think a survey question could be better matched with the research question by making changes, please provide your suggestions in the space provided. Also feel free to suggest any survey questions that you think would benefit the study.

Once you've finished reviewing and analyzing this form kindly send it back to me via email. Your insights and input are highly valued. Thank you for taking part in this aspect of my research.

Table K1

Research Questions and Survey Questions

Research Questions	Keep or Delete	Comments
RQ1: What are the critical factors in a successful leadership design for Black women's professional advancement and success in Higher education institutions?	Keep	
RQ2: Can these critical factors be used to develop a theoretical framework for understanding Black women's professional advancement and success in leadership positions within Higher education institutions?	Keep	

	Survey Questions	Keep Or Delete	Comments
1	Mentorship: A critical aspect influencing career advancement for Black women.	Keep	For all survey questions add which challenge, obstacle, barrier, strategy or best practice the literature mentions
2	Development of emerging leaders: Mentors play an indispensable role.	Keep	
3	Mentoring relationships: Crucial for success and retention.	Keep	
4	Powerful mentors: Actively advocate for their mentees.	Keep	
5	Professional resilience: Mentoring as a tool for Black women.	Keep	
6	Enhance self-confidence: Women mentoring other women.	Keep	
7	Types of mentors: Psychosocial mentors: Provide emotional support. Job-focused mentors: Offer career counseling. Peer mentors: Provide collegiality.	Keep	Provide brief statement of the type of mentor
8	Trajectories of female leaders: Favorably influenced by mentorship.	Keep	
9	Essential leadership attributes: Confidence, motivation, and communication.	Keep	
10	Networking: A critical strategy for job advancement.	Keep	
11	Gatekeeping: Employing networking methods in recruiting.	Keep	
12	Affinity groups: Formed as a proactive reaction to networking issues.	Keep	
13	Organizational leadership development initiatives: Embedded opportunities for networking and mentorship.	Keep	
14	Professional Development: Cultivating inclusive settings for diverse faculty members.	Keep	
15	Clear and widely known process: For recruiting and hiring diverse staff.	Keep	
16	Strong dedication to diversity: Ensuring value in all university communications.	Keep	
17	Orientation program: Familiarizing staff with campus and community.	Keep	
18	Leadership and networking opportunities: Early in careers.	Keep	

	Survey Questions	Keep Or Delete	Comments
19	Skills for management: Including conflict resolution, negotiation, and team building.	Keep	
20	Personal Skills: Recognizing strengths and weaknesses, seeking mentorship.	Keep	
21	Political Skills: Understanding organizational political dynamics.	Keep	
22	Operational Skills: Including financial control and strategic planning.	Keep	
23	Peer networking, mentorship, and shadowing: Preferred strategies for leadership	Keep	
24	Sponsorship: Advocacy by senior leaders for others.	Keep	
25	Cultural competence: Understanding and interacting across cultures.	Keep	
26	Representation in leadership: Diversity in leadership roles.	Keep	
27	Professional training programs: Courses for career skill development.	Keep	
28	Resilience and perseverance: Overcoming challenges; enduring tough times.	Keep	
29	Work-life balance: Balancing career demands with personal life.	Keep	
30	Career mobility: Ability to move up in careers.	Keep	
31	Career Coaching: Guidance for career growth and strategies.	Keep	
32	Role models and representation: Inspirational figures; diverse presence.	Keep	
33	Organizational inclusivity: Embracing diverse backgrounds in workplaces.	Keep	
34	Skill-building workshops: Sessions to develop specific skills.	Keep	
35	Career pathways: Career progression routes and ladders.	Keep	
36	Career advancement strategies: Plans to move up professionally.	Keep	
37	Overcoming stereotypes: Challenging and rejecting generalized beliefs.	Keep	
38	Negotiation skills: Ability to discuss and reach agreements.	Keep	
39	Personal branding: Creating and marketing one's unique brand.	Keep	

	Survey Questions	Keep Or Delete	Comments
40	Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches of Black women.	Keep	
41	Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth.	Keep	
42	Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures.	Keep	
43	Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.	Keep	
44	Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles.	Keep	
45	Professional identity: One's professional self and values.	Keep	
46	Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career.	Keep	
47	Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections.	Keep	
48	Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions.	Keep	
49	Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others.	Keep	
50	Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth.	Keep	
51	Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking.	Keep	
52	Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales.	Keep	
53	Strategies for overcoming bias: Approaches to challenge prejudices.	Keep	

Q40 Understanding Leadership styles and Black women: Insights into leadership approaches (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q41 Career development plans: Structured plans for career growth. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q42 Cultural awareness training: Training to understand different cultures. (6)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q43 Diversity and inclusion initiatives: Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q44 Retention strategies for Black women: Keeping Black women in roles. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q45 Professional identity: One's professional self and values. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q46 Career satisfaction and fulfillment: Feeling content and fulfilled in career. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q47 Professional networking for Black women: Building professional connections. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q48 Career empowerment: Enabling career control and decisions. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q49 Advocacy and allyship: Supporting and standing up for others. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q50 Career resources for Black women: Tools and resources for career growth. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q51 Professional development conferences: Events for career learning and networking. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

Q52 Career success stories: Inspirational career achievement tales. (7)

- Not Critical at all (1)
- Not Critical (2)
- Somewhat Not Critical (3)
- No Basis (4)
- Somewhat Critical (5)
- Critical (6)
- Critically Important (7)

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 - Not Critical (2)
 - Somewhat Not Critical (3)
 - No Basis (4)
 - Somewhat Critical (5)
 - Critical (6)
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-